12 – DINING HABITS IN TURKISH AND EARLY MODERN TIMES

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF THE WRITTEN SOURCES AND THE PICTORIAL EVIDENCE

12.1 Introduction
The purpose of this chapter is to look at the Post-Medieval ceramics found on the Boeotian sites from a functional perspective. More particularly, I will try to discuss the relation between changing shapes and techniques of these archaeological artefacts and the history of food and dining habits in central Greece throughout the Ottoman and Early Modern periods.

Evidently, this is a vast and complex subject, of which I can present here no more than a first survey of the sources and the possibilities for further research. In order to do that, I will address five questions: what kind of food and which type of cookery were dominant in the Ottoman Empire? What were the ingredients used in recipes? How were meals served, and what do we know about dining habits and table manners? What kind of furniture and tableware were used? And, on a more regional scale: what kind of food and drink could the villagers in Boeotia have produced and used in the locally available pottery? To answer these questions I will try to make use of written sources and pictorial evidence from the Ottoman and Early Modern periods.

It is not, however, my intention to strive for completeness in my search for written sources and iconography for these two periods. This chapter is rather a preliminary attempt towards the study of the relationship between material culture and the history of food and of dining habits in the Eastern Mediterranean during Ottoman and Early Modern times. I was helped by some publications, which produced summary studies on the history of food and dining habits in the Ottoman Empire (Ursinus 1985; Reindl-Kiel 1991; 1993; 1995; Araz 1996 and Yerasimos 2001).

12.2 The written sources on food and dining habits
The written sources which can be used in an effort to explore the use of food and dining habits in Ottoman and Early Modern times include both European and Ottoman texts. Most prominent among the European sources are the diaries or accounts of Western travellers (a varied group of diplomats, embassy employees, travel writers, scholars, pastors or returned captives). The Ottoman sources include budgets of pious foundations, cookbooks, books on dining etiquette and the 15th-16th century tax registers of the Boeotian villages.

The accounts of European travellers who passed through Greece in their journey to Constantinople (or other Eastern destinations) are a primary source specifically for the study of dining habits in the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. An important example is the diary of the German traveller Hans Dernschwam (1494-1568), who travelled in the party of the Habsburg ambassador and wrote in his private notebook much about the culinary customs of the common Turkish household. Furthermore, the accounts of the British professor from Cambridge Fynes Moryson (1566-1629) and the Flemish scholar and diplomat Ogier Ghislain Busbequius (1522-1592) are useful sources for daily life in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th century (fig.12.1).

Because these visitors from the West described the eating habits during Ottoman times rather accurately, we know quite a lot about the Turkish cuisine. In fact, these foreigners often described the dining rituals and practices in the Ottoman Empire in more detail than the Turks themselves, probably because as travellers they were ‘outsiders’ in a culture foreign to them, and thus were in a position to record what was ‘peculiar’ (that is: ‘un-European’) in the Ottoman etiquette and culinary conventions.

However, the interpretation of these European sources is not unproblematic, as the Ottomanist Suraiya Faroqhi has rightly pointed out in her book Approaching Ottoman History (Faroqhi 1999, 110-143). Some – if not many – travellers had the tendency to use their travel account as a moral tale, or even worse, to invent stories or ‘authorities’ they ‘quote’ for the sake of captivating their readers. Others had the tendency to copy the writings of their predecessors in their search for scholarly credentials. In addition to this, as Faroqhi points out, it is often ‘difficult to find words for novel experiences, and travel
in the Balkans and Anatolia was an once-in-a-lifetime experience for most writers’ (Faroqhi 1999, 126).

All this makes it necessary to try and balance the European accounts with the Ottoman view of daily life in the Empire, as a sort of control of the Western traveller’s biases and idiom. Unfortunately, Ottoman travellers and writers (e.g. Evliya Çelebi, Yusuf-al-Sirbim and Gelifbolulu ‘Ali) apparently did not pay much attention to dining habits of common people in the Empire. Other primary sources, which could shed light on the subject or which could be explored for controlling the Western travellers’ accounts, such as budgets of pious foundations, cookbooks (fig. 12.2), books on food etiquette and the 15th-16th century tax registers of the Boeotian villages, I was only able to study if they had been used or published in secondary literature.

12.2.1 THE TRAVELLERS’ ACCOUNTS OF FOOD

Through the ages, most European travellers generally found the Turkish cuisine too plain for their liking, noticing in particular the lack of sauces, gravy or garnishes (e.g. Nicolay 1577, 177-78; Moryson 1617, 128).

In 1551 AD, the French traveller and geographer Nicolas de Nicolay wrote, for instance: ‘Der T urcken speiss ist schlecht, sparlich und grobe, ohne gefüll, bruhe, saltzen, specerey oder Confect […] so vergeleichen sich ihre kuchen noch Koch, gar nicht mit den unsern’, or: ‘The Turkish food is bad, frugal and unrefined, made without feeling, stock, salt, spices or confectionery […] you can not in the least compare their cuisine or cook with ours (Nicolay 1577, 177-78). His contemporary, the British scholar and traveller Fynes Moryson quite agreed with him: ‘They are ignorant of the Arts of birding, fouling, hunting, or
The Turks usually ate in Von Martels 129 was cooked in Babinger 128). Generally this was cooked in Babinger 128). The Turks ate this soup also for breakfast: 124 in Babinger 128).- 26, 1923). Moryson 29 who served during 16th century Flemish diplomat Ogier Ghislain Busbequius described the Turks as very sober in their diet: ‘The Turks are so frugal and think so little of the pleasures of eating that if they have bread, salt, some garlic or an onion and a kind of sour milk which they call yoghurt, they ask for nothing more. They dilute this milk with very cold water and crumble bread into it and take it when they are hot and thirsty […] it is not only palatable and digestible, but also possesses an extraordinary power of quenching the thirst’ (Busbequius 1589 in Von Martels 1994, 92-93).

Busbequius also noted that the Turks did not need hot food or meat during their travels. Their meals consisted mainly of yoghurt, cheese and fruits stewed in water. This food cost them so little that Busbequius reckoned that one of his own countrymen would spend more on food in one day than a Turk in twelve days. Even at formal banquets only rice with mutton or chicken was served by the Turks, followed by cakes and sweetmeats (Busbequius 1589 in Von Martels 1994, 92-95).

According to his contemporary, the German traveller Hans Dernschwam, the food of the common people in Turkey was so simple because they ‘knew little of the art of cooking’ – especially their wives. ‘Their main dish is just czorba, that is a soup dish’ (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 123). Generally this czorba was cooked from mutton stock and thickened with rice, but sometimes cracked wheat (bulgur) was added in place of rice. The soup was seasoned with lemon juice, vinegar and a little pepper (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 123). The Turks ate this soup also for breakfast: ‘Der turkhen prauch ist, frue zuessen. Auch wan er nur aufgestanden, ist er ein czorba, das ist ein suppen von waitz’, or: The Turkish custom is to eat early in the morning. Also when a Turk just gets up, he eats a ‘czorba’- that is a soup made of wheat (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 124).

Additional information about the eating habits of the Turks was given by a Spanish slave, who served during the 16th century for three years as a physician to Sinan Pasa, the admiral of the Ottoman fleet. In his memoirs the Spaniard complained that the Turks were not particularly concerned with food: ‘If you ask me, they eat to live, not because they take pleasure in food’ (Viaje in Solalinde 1919, 254-57).

In the soldier’s quarters of the Janissaries (the Sultan’s standing infantry corps), Busbequius was informed that few of the Ottoman soldiers ever ate meat. He was shown a Janissary ‘eating a mixture of turnip, onion, garlic, parsnip and cucumber, seasoned with salt and vinegar, from a ceramic or wooden dish’ and drinking nothing but water. Busbequius, therefore, concluded that this simple diet was as good for the Ottoman soldier’s health as for his purse (Busbequius 1589 in Von Martels 1994, 258-59).

A century later, the British scholar Fynes Moryson also commented on the spare diet of the Ottomans, recording that the Turks did not eat pork, fowl nor fish, but much yoghurt, unleavened bread, chicken, rice and fruit throughout the year. He thought that it was no wonder they found it easy to keep an army in the field, because ‘the greatest men were content with rice to eat and water to drink’ (Moryson 1617, 128).

It is no surprise that the Turks themselves had a different opinion about the food they ate. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi visited Vienna during a trip with the ambassador Kara Mehmed Pascha in 1665 AD. While describing meals for patients in the Viennese hospitals, Evliya praised the Turkish cuisine as follows: ‘Only the Ottoman people know how to eat. Even in India and Persia the food is not good: just the rice dishes there are famous’ (translated in German by Kreutel 1987, 180). Evliya’s contemporary, the Egyptian writer Yusuf al-Sirbini, was also quite enthusiastic about Turkish cooking. He stated that ‘even better than in Cairo the dish is prepared by Abnā’ al-Turk, whose way of cooking is the most delicious’ (as cited by Baer 1980, 29; see also his note 12 for the Arab text).

In general, it is clear that Turks did eat meat, and that they preferred mutton to any other meat, and that it was served in nearly every meal for those who could afford it (Nicolay 1577, 177; Moryson 1617, 128). Mutton was boiled first for making soup, and was then chopped very fine and mixed with fried onions (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 123). The Turks usually ate only mutton, lamb and chicken, either stewed or roast, rarely any beef, veal nor game, and their only flavouring was garlic (Nicolay 1577, 177-78; D’Ohsson 1791, 24-25). Most Turkish dishes were served with their own gravy. There were no separate sauces served with the food.

Although one Western traveller called the mutton flesh ‘very savoury’ (Moryson 1617, 129), others complained
that the roast meat was not healthy and ‘without any taste’ (Nicolay 1577, 178).

Served with their meat, the Turks ate rice cooked with butter and mutton broth. This pilav was second in popularity only to soup (Viaje in Solalinde 1619, 254-57). To make the pilav, rice was first boiled in water, and then fried in butter or fat. Fried almonds were sometimes scattered on top of the pilav before it was served (Nicolay 1577, 176; Dernschwam 1553-55, 123). Other travellers specifically mention the generous use of butter and other fats.

Other side dishes were white bread or small round buns, made from unsalted dough. Dernschwam thought it was remarkable that the Turks always demanded freshly-baked bread. If the bread was even one day old, the bakers reduced the price from two loaves for one asper to three loaves for the same money (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 48-9; 125). Sesame or black cumin were often pressed on the bread before it was baked, or the bread was smeared with sesame oil (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 128; Moryson 1617, 128). Later, during the 18th century, the Dutch pastor Herman van der Horst again records that sesame seed was ‘generally in use by the Turks to bake it on the crust of their bread’ (tr. Schmidt 2000).

While the well-to-do classes ate mutton and fresh bread, the lower classes managed on a more modest diet. Garlic, onions, radish, carrots and cheese were eaten every day, though fish and other seafood were almost absent (Lubenau 1587-88 in Sahm 1915, II 10-12; Moryson 1617, 128; D’Ohsson 1791, 28). The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi considered fresh or salted fish and sea food as a nourishment worthy for drunkards and Christians (Yerasimos 2001, 17).

The food of the poorest was usually very simple: they lived almost entirely on green vegetables, beans and lentils (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 124). Courgettes and egg-plants were stuffed with finely chopped mutton mixed with garlic, spices and salt, and cooked in plain water. Usually, yoghurt was spread over this type of dish just before it was served (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 124).

The Turkish yoghurt, sour and salted, won Dernschwam’s praise. According to him, it was found in all villages, and for eating it everybody had to wear a spoon on their belt. Often it was also drunk mixed with water: ‘Andere nation wurden krank darvon, schadt inen nichts’, or:

People from other nations become ill from it, but it does not hurt them (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 124). His 16th century contemporary, Fynes Moryson added that the Turks ‘willingly eate curds turned sower and mingled with bread and water, commonly called ‘Mishmish’, and fresh cheese or curds, and have plentie of milke, aswell of cowes as of goates (Moryson 1617, 128).

Also fruit was eaten, often after a meal. Dernschwam and Moryson mention apricots, melons, little plums, cherries, oranges, pomegranates, figs, raisins, lemons, melons, dates and peaches (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 123; Moryson 1617, 129). According to the 16th century British traveller George Wheler, the best melons in the world came from the Greek island of Zante, ‘if I may compare them with what I have eaten in England, France, Italy and Turkey’ (as cited by Elliot 1978, 18). Citrus fruits were also grown on the Greek islands. George Sandys praised, for instance, the orchards of the island of Chios, as full of ‘Oranges, Lemons, Citrions, Pomegranates and Figs’ (Sandys 1615, 13). Also his contemporary, the French traveller Sire Du Loir mentioned Chios as almost the only island supplying Istanbul with ‘Cytrons, d’Oranges et de Grenadines’ (Du Loir 1654, 20).

Turks seemed to have a great taste for sweet things, but these were never eaten with the meal except at wedding parties and banquets. The sweetening was provided from honey or a thick molasses made from grape sugar or other fruit, called pekmez. Honey was considered by the Turks to be a noble product. They used it in many dishes and drinks (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 46). According to one 17th century traveller, the island of Chios had ‘the best hony in the world’ (Sandys 1615, 12).

Apparently, the most ordinary drink of the Turks was just water (Nicolay 1517, 178; Wheler 1682, 204). Water, or sometimes sherbets, were drunk at the end of a meal. Sherbets were refreshing drinks made of among other things lemon juice, sugar, honey and water, sometimes flavoured with ambergris or musk. During summertime, sherbets were cooled with ice or snow from the mountains (Lubenau 1587-88 in Sahm 1915, II 10-12; Nicolay 1517, 178; Moryson 1617, 129; see also Carswell 1976, 38-45 with a list of texts mentioning sherbets). They also drank liquids made of medicinal herbs, ‘to purifie and coole the blood’, and they drank it hot (Moryson 1617, 129). According to the Armenian
Tosuniyan, who westernized his name to D’Ohsson, the Turks drank aquavit (‘eau-de-vie’) as an alcoholic digestive, but no beer, cider or punch (D’Ohsson 1791, 67). Not only the Turkish soldiers drank alcohol, but ‘even religious men, will drinke wine largely, even to drunkenness’ (Moryson 1617, 129; Nicolay 1577, 178). ‘The Turkish souldiers being to fight, if they can find no wine, drinke then iuyce of balcke poppy, called opium’ (Moryson 1617, 130).

Dernschwam judged that the best wines came from the Greek Islands (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 101). The Dutch diplomat Frederik Gysbert van Dedem van de Gelder, who travelled to Istanbul in 1785 AD, seemed to agree with him on that and had a good appetite for the wines of the islands Tinos and Samos, preferring in particular the one from Samos (Van Dedem 1785 in Schmidt 1998, 150-151). Noteworthy is also Dernschwam’s remark that (although they drank it) no wine was made by the ‘Turks themselves, and that they did not have fine sets of drinking cups’. During autumn they either stored the grapes for the winter, or boiled them to make sherbet by adding honey to the grape juice. They also made good vinegar from poor wine (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 101).

There was no lack of wine in the Aegean area, as Greeks and Jews made large quantities of it. They lacked the proper presses and they did not have good barrels or cellars for storing. In the villages, the wine was kept indoors on ground level (not below ground) in upright barrels from which the villagers drew wine in cups or jugs as they needed it. Dernschwam even saw wine covered with a layer of oil to preserve it. Because of these primitive storage methods, the wine mostly lost its taste and colour, and often turned bitter (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 101-103).

A kind of lime or rosin was used to preserve the wine and to protect its colour. However, the lime and rosin also gave an odd and unpleasant taste which apparently lingered in the mouth, and made some people sick. The 19th century traveller Edward Dodwell complained, for instance, about the wine he drank in central Greece that it ‘was execrable and so impregnated with rosin, that it almost took the skin from our lips!’ (Dodwell 1819, 155). Retsina was not an attractive drink for this traveller: ‘one ocue, or two pounds and 3 quantrises weight of terpentine is infused in each barrel […] the same proportion of rosin is used at Patra; but in many parts of Greece half of this quantity is reckoned sufficient. I have no hesitation in asserting, that the sour beer of England is in general preferable to the resinous beverage of Greece’ (Dodwell 1813, 212).

12.2.2 The Travellers’ Accounts of Dining Habits
According to the travellers’ accounts most of the ordinary houses in the Ottoman Empire had no specific dining area, since all rooms were multi-purpose and suitable for dining (Moryson 1617, 126-27; D’Ohsson 1791, 32; Dodwell 1819). In almost all traditional households (especially among the well-to-do classes) the men ate separately from the women (who ate in the harem). There were two meals a day: between 10 and 11 in the morning and in the early evening, half an hour before sunset (D’Ohsson 1791, 30).

Before meals, everybody washed their hands, particularly the right hand which was reserved for clean activities such as eating. At the beginning of the 19th century Edward Dodwell described the washing ceremony in a household in Krissa in central Greece as follows: ‘Before sitting down to dinner, as well as afterwards, we had to perform the ceremony of the ‘cheironiptron’, or washing of the hands: a tin basin, which the Turks name ‘levenni’ (leğen in Turkish) is brought round to all the company, the servant holding it on his left arm, while with the other hand he pours water from a tin vessel, called by the Turks ‘ibrik’, on the hands of the washer, having a towel thrown over his shoulder, to dry them with. The towel is called ‘mandiili’, from the ancient word ‘magdalia’. The ceremony is performed not only before and after meals, but is practised by Greeks and Turks before commencing their orations’ (Dodwell 1819, 156).

After washing the hands, people sat for dinner on large cushions or on a carpet around a low table, which was basically a large round tray (a so-called sini) put upon a base (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923, 126; D’Ohsson 1791, 32-33; Dodwell 1819, 156). The tray was made of copper, or in later times enamel with floral designs. It was set upon a small wooden column or trestle on top of a large cloth (a sofra), which was laid on the floor (Dernschwam 1553-55 in Babinger 1923; D’Ohsson 1791, 32). The foldable wooden trestle, either plain or polished, was made of wood and generally had six legs. Only four to six diners could sit around the sini; in case there were more guests a second or third sini was put on the sofra (D’Ohsson 1791, 31).
Stools or chairs were not available; everyone sat on the ground (Knolles 1621, 833; Lubenau 1587-88 in Sahm 1915, II 10-12). The diners sat around the tray on their knees, or one knee raised and the other left flat on the ground (D’Ohsson 1791, 33). To the astonishment of the travellers, even the richer classes sat on the ground ‘like Tailors with thier knees bended […] or upon the grasse when they eate by Rivers sides and in Gardens’ (Moryson 1617, 128). Some Westerners felt uneasy and even embarrassed with these sitting procedures, as Edward Dodwell recalled at the beginning of the 19th century: ‘We sat on cushions placed on the floor; and our dress not being so conveniently large as that of the Greeks, we found the greatest difficulty in tucking our legs under us, or rather sitting upon them, as they do with perfect ease and pliability. Several times I was very nearly falling back, and overturning the episcopal table, with all its good things’ (Dodwell 1815, 157).

Simplicity ruled during meals: even the wealthiest tables were not provided with a table cloth, individual plates, forks or knives (Rycaut 1668, 84). Only some flat pieces of bread ‘of two or three different qualities’ were dispensed on the tray, sometimes combined with a simple salt cellar (D’Ohsson 1791, 33). The large flat pieces of bread were either leavened or unleavened, and could be used as small plates (Moryson 1617, 128).

In well-to-do households, servants would file in carrying the food in serving dishes of metal or ‘porcellana’ with a lid (Nicolay 1577, 176; Schweigger 1639, 148; D’Ohsson 1791, 32). The evening meal in these households consisted of several dishes of soups, pilavs and stews, always served consecutively and in quick succession. Paul Rycaut and the count D’Ohsson both emphasised that the dishes were ‘served in by one at a time, which as soon as touched or tasted, are taken off to make room for another’ (Rycaut 1668, 84; D’Ohsson 1791, 33). There was usually only one serving dish with food at the centre and no individual plates. According to Moryson, all diners ate out of this communal dish: ‘I have often seene Men of the better sort, eating out of the feeting pot, without any dish set before them’ (Moryson 1617, 129).

Solid food was eaten with the (right) hand, and for this reason it was always prepared in pieces of suitable size. Large pieces of mutton (or fowl) were served boned and so well cooked that they could easily be broken up at the table (D’Ohsson 1791, 28-29). Several travellers noticed that the Turks stewed their meat until it was very tender ‘so as they make breake it with their fingers, for they have no knives, neither have a variety of dishes set before them, but all sitting in a circle, fall upon one dish. Taking meat, they all together say a prayer or grace, and talke not whilst they eate, but silently fall hard to their worke’ (Moryson 1617, 128).

The only cutlery available on the dining table were spoons. They were only used for soup and other liquid dishes. One 17th century traveller mentioned that ‘every one has lying by him a Wooden spoon, which holds three or four times as much as any of our ordinary ones, and whereof the handle is of a length proportionable; for as to Gold or Silver spoons, it is not their custome to use any’ (Tavernier 1677, 66). Another Westerner remarked two centuries later that they were still ‘the only article of luxury upon a Turkish dinner-table’ (White 1846, II 49).

As indicated above, knives and forks were unnecessary because the food was cut and well cooked during the preparation. Even members of the upper classes were not accustomed to use cutlery in Ottoman times, as is suggested by J.C. Hobhouse, who was travelling in Greece in 1809-10 AD. He was invited for dinner in Livadhia at the house of the rich Logothetis family. Filled with terror and confusion, Hobhouse observed the table manners of his host’s wife, because this lady ‘to imitate European customs’ took up an olive in her fingers, and afterwards stuck it on a fork (Hobhouse 1813, 262).

For most households in the Ottoman Empire, one simple dish, one wooden spoon, or one drinking-cup of leather or wood were sufficient for all meals (Moryson 1617, 128). Of particular interest in this respect is the remark of Edward Dodwell, who was invited for dinner in a Greek house at Krissa (in Phokis) at the beginning of the 19th century. During this meal he dined at a low round table of tinned copper, the sini, and sat on cushions on the floor. Besides complaining about the bad wine Dodwell also spoke (with disgust) about the communal large goblet, the ‘kyliks philotisia’, which served for the whole party. He emphasized with abhorrence the fact ‘that both Greeks and Turks use only one glass at meals’ (Dodwell 1819, 156-57).

The French traveller Eugène Yemeniz had the same experience some thirty years later during a baptism at Erimocastro (modern Thespiae) in Boeotia. During the ceremony only a single glass for all, as well as one fork,
one plate and one napkin were used (Yemeniz 1845, 280). His contemporary, the British officer’s wife Esme Scott-Stevenson was even ‘aghast’, when she was invited for dinner in the village of Lefka on late 19th century Cyprus.[1] After helping her to some chicken broth, her host ‘suddenly helped himself to a few spoonfuls, which he ate with a great deal of noise and lip-smacking, and then as suddenly proceeded to fill up my plate with the same spoon’ (italics in text; cf. Scott-Stevenson 1880, 171).

Filled with disgust, she concluded that ‘even the educated Turks have not the least delicacy in eating. Unacquainted with the usages of good society, they cannot understand our objections to their manners’ (Scott-Stevenson 1880, 172).

Tavernier explained that the Turks did not drink heartily until after the meal; while the meal is in progress they assuaged their thirst by helping themselves with long wooden spoons from ‘cups of porcelaine which hold about two quarts’ full of sherbets’ (Tavernier 1677, 67). After meals, sherbets were served in wealthy households in large Porcelain bowls, often placed on plates of the same material ‘or other leather decorated with gold’ (Bon 1604-7, 106; Knolles 1621, 833; Schweigger 1639, 148; Du Loir 1654, 169; Tavernier 1677, 66).

For wiping their hands during and after dinner, each diner shared a long narrow towel around the entire table to cover everyone’s lap. Poorer people would use grass during outside meals instead of the towel (Moryson 1617, 128). Individual napkins were also used in well-to-do households. A servant sometimes offered an embroidered napkin to each diner, who put this on the right shoulder covering the breast and thighs with it. At the same time, another napkin was used for cleaning the fingers (D’Ohsson 1791, 34). Then the hands were washed again under water poured from a tall ewer into a copper bowl with a perforated cover.

After the meal was over, in wealthy households the diners would drink a cup of coffee which aided the digestion. Edward Dodwell noticed that strong thick coffee, without sugar, was handed round after dinner: ‘the cup is not placed in a saucer, but in another cup of metal, which the Turks call ‘zarf’, and which defends the fingers from being burnt; for the coffee is served up and drank as hot as possible’(Dodwell 1819, 157). While drinking their coffee, most men would smoke a pipe in the chibouk style (D’Ohsson 1791, 87; Hobhouse 1813, 262). According to Dodwell, ‘the life of a Turkish gentleman consists almost entirely of smoking tobacco, drinking coffee, and counting his beads. The former is indispensably necessary for his happiness’ (Dodwell 1819, 152).

12.2.3 THE BUDGETS OF PIous FOUNDATIONS

The budgets of pious foundations, founded by the Ottoman Sultans, are an additional source of information about the use of food among people outside the Ottoman Court. These documents originate mainly from the 16th century and show the use of food products of consumers in urban centres (unfortunately, most of these lists have been published in only Turkish; cf. Reindl-Kiel 1991, 182, note 5).

One source, which has been published in English, is an account list of the food consumption in the imaret (a complex of public buildings and institutions, offering free meals to the poor) of Sultan Selim II in Konya, which encompasses the period from 1594 AD to 1601 AD. The list shows that the most significant ingredients for preparing dishes were meat (probably mutton) and rice, both food products with a higher social status (Faroqhi 1984, 328, table 33; here table12.1). Rice was traditionally considered superior to bulgur (cracked wheat). In the Konya imaret it was undoubtedly used for the preparation of soup or pilav, which were made especially during the month of fasting (Ramadan) and for feasts. The consumption of rice was generally about one half of the consumption of flour in these foundations (İnalçik 1982).

Other main ingredients on the list are wheat (for preparing bread or soup), clarified butter for cooking the dishes (oil was often only used for lamps), honey and currants (for sweet dishes). It was a custom in these foundations to serve rice dishes and sweet dishes on Fridays and holy days, which would explain the large amounts of rice, butter and honey used.

Apart from the above mentioned ingredients, the account list of the imaret of Konya also mentions almonds, Coriander raisins, wild apricots, figs, starch, pepper, chickpeas, saffron and flour. The almonds, raisins, apricots and figs were perhaps used for making asure (a pudding containing grains, nuts and dried fruits). It is perhaps remarkable that cane sugar is not mentioned on the list, nor dairy products (such as milk or yoghurt) and vegetables. Furthermore, fish seems to be lacking on the menu of this pious foundation. In fact,
in most of these large foundations food products rich of calories seem to dominate the daily meals, which contained approximately 2000-2500 calories a meal (cf. Yerasimos 2001, 42).

12.2.4 Cookbooks

Regular recipes of the Turkish cuisine appeared in print only from the 19th century onwards (see Kut 1996, 62-68 for a good overview of old manuscripts on Turkish cuisine²). On the other hand, the dictionary Divanıî Lugât’-Tûrîc (‘Compendium of the Turkish dialects’), which was already written in the 11th century (between 1069 AD and 1073 AD) by the Turkish scholar Mahmud el-Kâgarî in Baghdad, contained references to typical Turkish foods (such as ‘ayran’, a yoghurt drink, or ‘pekmez’, a grape extract). However, this compilation of Turkish languages was not intended as a cookbook. References in it about food and drink suggest, however, that the cuisine at that time was largely based on grain and animal products (Kut 1996, 38). Two centuries later, food occupied an important place in Mevlânî Celâleddîn Rûmî’s work Mesnevi, written in 1273 AD. It mentioned dishes of the Seljuk period in Anatolia, among them ‘tutmaç’ (a thick soup made with noodles, to which yoghurt is added before eating) (Kut 1996, 40-41). In Mevlânî’s poetry one can find not only examples of a religious tradition imbued with food metaphors, but also many references to food, wine, cooking, kitchen, bread etcetera. In it one can almost find a complete list of kitchen utensils and ingredients used by the Seljuks in the 13th century (among them typical ingredients of the later Turkish cuisine such as ‘bulgur’, ‘sherbet’, ‘helva’ and ‘yoghurt’). Mevlânî’s poems seem to suggest that in addition to meat and cereal dishes the Seljuks ate a lot of vegetables (spinach, onions, eggplant, leeks, celery, turnips, lentils and a variety of beans). In that sense, his poetry is rather associated with asceticism than with hedonistic gluttony.

The earliest surviving ‘real’ Turkish cooking manual dates from the mid 19th century. This cookery book, titled Melceü’t-tabbâhîn (literally ‘Refuge for Cooks’), was adapted for Turkish readers by Mehmet Kâmil, a teacher at the College of Forensic Medicine in Istanbul (Kut 1996, 67). However, the work, printed in Istanbul in 1844 AD, was actually based on much older, hand-written recipes from 1260 AD.

The ninth edition of Melceü’t-tabbâhîn was translated in the English language as the Turkish Cookery Book by Turâbî Efendi, and, according to him, this was done to be as ‘accurate and concise’ as possible (fig. 12.2). Turâbî’s cookbook was dedicated to the late Viceroy of Egypt on the occasion of a banquet given on board the Viceroy’s yacht in 1862 AD, and published two years later. This first Turkish cookbook in the English language offered an excellent ‘entry’ for a larger audience into the Ottoman cuisine.

Table 12.1 Account list of food consumption in imaret of Sultan Selim II in Konya, 1594-1601 AD (after Faroqhi 1984, table 33).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Clarified butter</th>
<th>Honey</th>
<th>Almonds</th>
<th>Currants</th>
<th>Coriander raisins</th>
<th>Wild apricots</th>
<th>Figs</th>
<th>Starch</th>
<th>Pepper</th>
<th>Chickpeas</th>
<th>Meat</th>
<th>Saffron</th>
<th>Flour</th>
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<tr>
<td>1002-12  1794-1795</td>
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<td>1003-12  1796-1797</td>
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<td>1004-12  1797-1798</td>
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<td>1006-12  1799-1800</td>
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<td>1008-12  1801-1802</td>
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<td>1009-12  1802-1803</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ Unit of measurement unknown.
² Raisins alone.

k keyl, kL kiyye of Karaman, 1.2344 kg (?); d dirhem, 3.086 g; kO Ottoman kiyye, 1.2828 kg. Except where the kiyye-i osmani is expressly mentioned, it is assumed that accounts were kept in kiyye of Karman.
Forty years later, it was followed by another cooking manual, this time in the Turkish language and popularized for the Turkish market with the appropriate title Ev Kadini (literally ‘Housewife’).

Turâbî’s Turkish Cookery Book of 1864 AD (re-published in 1996 in a facsimile edition) seems to have been the foundation for all following works, and must therefore be considered as a basic compendium of Turkish food. It contains 253 recipes, divided into twenty sections: varying from meat stocks to jams and reserves. Of all ingredients (ca. 120 in total) counted in the 253 recipes of this edition, the ten most used ingredients are: 1) salt (161 times); 2) butter (128 times); 3) pepper (113 times); 4) onions (89 times); 5) sugar (87 times); 6) eggs (76 times); 7) mutton (68 times); 8) flour (51 times); 9) lemons (48 times) and 10) cinnamon (45 times).

The high regard for butter (and sheep fat) in the recipes of Turâbî’s Turkish Cookery Book (in second place) seems to be quite normal in pre-Industrial societies of the East (cf. also the 15th-16th century recipes in Yerasimos 2001 for the most favourite ingredients for the Ottoman elite: ‘rice, sugar and butter’). For most dishes in Turâbî’s recipes exclusively clarified butter is used, which has a long tradition in the Islamic world. The sequence of frying and then boiling (instead of the
other way round) has also been derived from the East, namely from Arabic cuisine (Van Winter 1998). Olive oil, which was of course not readily available outside the Aegean area (but which was much used in the Greek/Roman/Byzantine cuisine), is not so much used in these recipes. It appears only in fish soups and a few fish dishes.

Meat dishes form also an important group in Turâbî’s recipes (in seventh place): fish, poultry and game are not so popular. Meat means primarily mutton (or lamb). The meat dishes are prepared with a wide range of cooking techniques (e.g. frying, roasting, boiling) and are sometimes even sweetened (revealing the Eastern preference for sugar, which is in 5th place in these recipes). Turkish cuisine tends to cook meat in small pieces together with various vegetables. Turks like well cooked meat, which frequently errs on the side of over-cooking, because the Islamic ban on ‘eating blood’ (for instance, red meat) was observed as far as possible. The result is often over-dry meat from which all the juices have evaporated.

Pepper, salt and cinnamon are the most popular spices in the Turkish Cookery Book (see tables 12.2 and 12.3). Other spices, which are used in much smaller quantities, are garlic, mixed spices, cumin, nutmeg and sago. Also parsley and lemon juice are often used as seasonings (see tables 12.2 and 12.4). In addition, sugar, onions, eggs, flour and rice are indispensable ingredients in many dishes. Food products from the New World such as potatoes, tomatoes and maize were not yet important in the Turkish cuisine of that time.

12.2.5 A BOOK ON DINING ETIQUETTE
Rules of etiquette relating to food and eating in Ottoman times often derived from Islamic doctrine. A fundamental publication on the etiquette of food and dining habits according to Islamic rules is the 11th book of Ihya’ulu’l-Dîn, written around 1100 AD by the famous Arab theologian and mystic Abu Hamîd Muhammed Al-Ghazzâlî (tr. Kindermann 1964). This manual for the faithful Muslim includes sections on correct behaviours before, during and after meals. It gives practical instructions how to eat as an individual or how to eat in the company of other diners. Furthermore, it advises on how to invite people, how to serve food to guests and how to be hospitable towards them.

Under the credo ‘food is part of religion’, Al-Ghazzâlî gives his readers practical (and often sensible) dining rules, such as washing hands before and after meals, using a toothpick after meals and only to eat when one is hungry (Kindermann 1964, 3). Out of modesty towards Allah, a good Muslim had to eat on the ground (eating from a sofra, or leather blanket) instead of from a table. The sitting position on the ground had to be correct: this was either on both knees, or one could sit on the left knee with the right leg up.

According to Al-Ghazzâlî, one should praise Allah before and after dinner. The actual eating was of course done with the right hand, beginning (and finishing) with a pinch of salt. One should not use knives for cutting the food: ‘break it with your teeth’ is Al-Ghazzâlî’s advice (Kindermann 1964, 9). Furthermore, one had to take small bites from the food, chew it well and to swallow it down in the mouth before taking the next bite. It was forbidden to clean the hands on the bread (instead one should clean them on a napkin), to blow on hot food, and to spit or breathe in a jug before drinking from it. One was also not supposed to drink anything else during meals than a little cold water. The thought behind this was that not drinking would strengthen the stomach. One had to take the communal drinking jug with the right hand with the words: ‘In the name of Allah’, and then sucking the liquid instead of gulping it. During dinner, one was not supposed to look at what your neighbour was eating, but to stay humble and only occupied with yourself.

One was advised to stop eating before one was full, then to lick the dirty fingers and clean them with a napkin, and finally wash the fingers with tepid water. It was not appropriate, though, to spit in the washing-bowl in the company of other diners. After dinner, one should use a toothpick for cleaning food remains between the teeth. The prophet said: ‘Eat your meals with your teeth’ is Al-Ghazzâlî’s advice (Kindermann 1964, 9). Furthermore, one had to take the communal drinking jug with the right hand with the words: ‘In the name of Allah’, and then sucking the liquid instead of gulping it. During dinner, one was not supposed to look at what your neighbour was eating, but to stay humble and only occupied with yourself.

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Additional information on food in Boeotia is sometimes supplied by travellers' accounts. Through these tax registers and travellers' accounts, the outlines of the rural way of life in Boeotia emerge in Ottoman times.

The tax registers show that the Boeotian villages produced mainly cereal grains such as wheat, barley, oats and millet. The main crop in Boeotia, wheat, was grown all over the Ottoman Empire and accounted in some cases to circa 80% of the cultivated land. The second crop was often barley. This implies that the villagers in Boeotia must have eaten quite a lot of bread, or perhaps bulgur, boiled cracked wheat and considered as inferior to rice. Bulgur, which is rich in protein and easy to preserve, was generally eaten at all three meals in other villages in the Ottoman Empire.

Archaeobotanical evidence from an excavation in central Turkey seems to corroborate this grain-based diet. A sample of charred plant remains from Ottoman times shows that bread wheat was the main crop on this site, followed (at a distance) by two row hulled barley and rye (Nesbitt 1993). Furthermore, at the excavation of Panakton in Boeotia seeds of barley were identified by a palaeobotanist within the soil deposits of a Late Medieval house (Gerstel 1996, 149).

In the early 19th century the traveller Edward Dodwell distinguished two types of bread which were eaten in Boeotia. He reported that every family in the village of Davli in Boeotia baked a loaf of ‘delicate white bread’ in an oven as a present for the village priest. This must have been special bread, made of fine wheat, because the common bread in Boeotia is described by Dodwell as being heavy, coarse and gritty: ‘It is covered with ashes, and thus badly baked’ (Dodwell 1819, 203).

According to the census lists the city of Livadheia in Boeotia had ‘a boza maker’ in 1506 AD (Kiel 1997, 325). This seems to indicate that in the beginning of the 16th century people drank a beverage with the name boza or bouza, a mild alcoholic liquid made of a bad quality barley. Apparently, boza was not forbidden by the Islamic laws because it was made from grain and not grapes. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi wrote in the 17th century about this type of beer: ‘It is permitted to drink boza as it gives strength even to soldiers of the faith’ (as cited by Mansel 1995, 174).

Unfortunately, we do not have much information on the production or consumption of maize (a New World product; then named galembok) in the 16th century tax registers of Boeotia, for it only gained economic importance in Greece and in the Balkans after the 17th century (Stoianovich 1966). In the Boeotian tax registers maize is recorded for the first time in the years 1724-25 AD, although one should bear in mind that we have no registers for Boeotia between 1570 and 1724 and that maize was probably introduced in Central Greece well before 1724-25 AD (Kiel 1997, 338). A century later, its production must have been increased enormously, because the British traveller William Leake mentioned in 1835 AD that the Theban plain ‘produced maize’ in the summer (Leake 1835, 216). He also was convinced that the fertility of the Kopais Lake area was shown by its maize, because ‘I counted 900 grains in one cob’ (Leake 1835, 158). Leake’s contemporary, the Frenchman Eugène Yemeniz remarked also on the prosperity of the lake area, because he noticed ‘fields of maize, rice, madder, tobacco and cotton until the shores of the Kopais Lake’ (Yemeniz 1869, 198).

As indicated earlier, rice was another basic ingredient in the Ottoman diet, although it is not mentioned in the 15th century tax registers for Boeotia. The textual sources suggest that at first rice was imported in Greece from the East, but in later times cultivation followed the path of Ottoman settlement in the Balkans and Hungary. In Thrace, Macedonia and Thessaly the production of rice was introduced around the second half of the 15th century (İncalı 1982). Ottoman tax registers of the 16th century (of 1526 AD and of 1570 AD respectively) mention Christian and Muslim cultivators of rice in the plain east of Livadheia (Kiel in Bosworth et al. 1986, 773). In the early 19th century rice was still produced in Boeotia, because Edward Dodwell and William Leake mentioned ‘fields of cotton and rice’ near the towns of Livadheia and Thebes (Dodwell 1819, 269; Leake 1835, 119).

The cultivation of rice demanded irrigation, but the crop has a high ratio of yield. There was always a great demand for rice in the Ottoman markets, especially in the rapidly growing urban centres. This kept the price for this staple food relatively high. The sale of rice was regulated, and according to the historian Halil İnalcık, only state owned rice could be sold in the markets or shops for a period of 8 months (in a later period 6 months) after the harvest. He also remarks that in the year 1480 AD ‘out of 6,176 muds (1583 tons) of the state share of rice produced in the Filibe region [in
Macedonia] and its dependencies, 3,497 muds was sold in the market for 547,488 akças or about 11,000 gold ducats' (İnalçık 1982, 115 and note 140). According to the Ottomanist Suraiya Faroqhi, the high prices made the consumption of rice the privilege of wealthy and middle class households. Due to transport costs, she remarks, 'it was probably seldom consumed by peasants outside of the producing areas' (Faroqhi 1977, 171).

The Boeotian tax registers rarely seem to indicate that the cultivation of fruits and vegetables was practised in almost every village on a small scale (perhaps only for household use), especially lentils, beans and chickpeas are mentioned (sometimes also almonds, onions and pine-resin). Only for the village of Muzaraki (so far in publication) were types of legumes enumerated separately, such as beans, lentils and chickpeas (Kiel 1997, table IV). Chickpeas, beans, or lentils were common side dishes for villagers during the Ottoman period (see also İnalçık 1993, 170). As crops they were sometimes rotated with wheat, maize and barley.

The Aegean region has always been known for its olive cultivation and although not a very common feature in the Ottoman diet, olive oil was probably used in the rural kitchen (apart from it being used for lamps). According to the Ottoman tax registers, the cultivation of olives is listed in the Aegean from the second half of the 16th century, and especially during the 17th century (cf. Karidis & Kiel 2000, 140-41 and Yilmaz 1995, 222-27 for example on Lesbos and the neighbouring mainland). It has been suggested that olive cultivation in Greece was a commercial product, not a subsistence product (Jameson et al. 1994).

Furthermore, the introduction of new types of food, such as potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum peppers, squash, red beans and green beans made their way to the Ottoman Empire during the 15th and 16th centuries. According to Suraiya Faroqhi, beans, fruit and rice perhaps added variety to the peasant diet: ‘the poorer people must have eaten a lot of onion and garlic to flavour their coarse bread, and cheap vegetables must have been important ingredients for their thick soups’ (Faroqhi 1977, 169).

Interesting in this respect is the remark of the British traveller George Wheler, who in the early spring of 1676 AD noted that the garden of the Monastery of Hosios Loukas was 'well planted with Beans and Pease'. He was enjoying there a supper which consisted of 'a Plate of

![Fig. 12.3 Miniature by Levni, Surnâme-i Vehbi, Topkapi Palace Museum Library (fol 73b), 1712 AD (after Arsel 1996, 81).](image1)

![Fig. 12.4 Miniature by Levni, Surnâme-i Vehbi, Topkapi Palace Museum Library (fol 50a), 1712 AD (after Arsel 1996, 103).](image2)
drunk at Livadheia one and a half century later (Wheler 1682, 470; Dodwell 1819, 212). William Leake mentioned that the chief produce of the island of Euboea was wine: ‘from Cumae and Katsrevala alone, 20,000 barrels of 54 okes are sent to Smyrna and the Black sea, of which the average price on the spot is five piastres a barrel’ (Leake 1835, 253).

Vineyards would also have been a source of raisins and currants. Moreover, many areas probably made use of grape extract or pekmez for sweetening dishes. Since pekmez was prominent in the kitchen accounts of pious foundations and not too expensive, we may assume it was a popular ingredient (Faroqhi 1977, 172).

The stock-raising of sheep and goats is recorded in the Boeotian tax-registers. The village of Mavrommati, for instance, listed 4493 sheep in the year 1724 AD. The 18th century French traveller F. Beaujour praised the sheep from Livadheia as being better, larger and stronger than the ones from Thessaly and Macedonia (Beaujour 1787-97, 138). The Boeotian sheep produced meat, wool, milk and dairy products. Yoghurt and cheese were important sources of protein in the villager’s diet, because these products would not easily spoil in the absence of refrigeration. Meat was often a lesser source of protein, because it was more expensive. Most villagers probably consumed it only on special ceremonial occasions, a few times each year.

delicate white Honey-combs, with Bread and Olives, and very good Wine’ (as cited by Eliot 1978, 13).

Beekeeping seems to have been a traditional activity in most Boeotian villages (already in Late Roman – Early Byzantine times the archaeological record shows a large number of beehive fragments; see Ware 4). The tax on honey is listed in the Ottoman tax registers in nearly all Boeotian villages, and its value seems to have been large (M. Kiel, pers. comm.). George Wheler observed another garden at Hosios Loukas, which was ‘furnished with four or five hundred Stocks of Bees’ (as cited by Eliot 1978, 13). Its main products were honey for sweetening dishes and drink water, as well as beeswax for candles. Sugar, produced in Cyprus and Egypt, was probably not used as a sweetener by most villagers in Boeotia. Cane sugar from Cyprus was sent exclusively to Istanbul, where the Ottoman court was the main consumer (Yerasimos 2001, 36).

Although wine is almost absent in the Ottoman tax registers (instead one can observe references of wine-most for very young wine), the villagers in Boeotia must have produced and consumed wine. Other written sources show that the size of vineyards and their value varied from one place to another. George Wheler praised the ‘the best Wine, the most generous and well tasted’ of Thespiae in the 17th century, whereas Edward Dodwell complained about wine ‘of the worst quality’

Fig. 12.5 Engraving with Ottoman dining scene, 1608 AD (after Schweiger 1608).

Fig. 12.6 Icon of the Life of Saint Alexios by Stefanos Tzankarolas, Antivouniotissa Museum, Corfu, Post 1571 AD (photo: Antivouniotissa Museum, Corfu).
Another source for controlling or adding perspective to the Western travellers’ accounts is the pictorial evidence for dining habits in the Ottoman Empire. There exist several Ottoman miniature paintings portraying banquet scenes at the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. From the 16th century onwards, the Ottoman court sponsored book miniatures illustrating the dynastic chronicles of that period (Faroqhi 1999, 47). An excellent source for Ottoman banquet scenes is, for instance, the book Surnâme-i Vehbi (now in the Topkapi Palace Museum), which illustrates the circumcision celebrations for the sons of Sultan Ahmed III in 1712 AD.

According to the historian Nurhan Atasoy, the Ottoman miniature is – besides a work of art – a good source of historical information (Atasoy 1971). She argues, for example, that the miniatures in the book Şehinsahanname (which describes the reign of sultan Murad III until 1581 AD) depict the events as they really happened. In addition, she is convinced that the miniatures in another book, called the Hünername of 1588 AD, show the actual vessels in use on the table, although it is often difficult to make a clear distinction between Iznik Ware and Chinese blue-and-white Porcelain. Although Atasoy’s view that the Ottoman miniature painting can provide historical information seems plausible, it would be naive to accept them at face value as a source of ‘press photographs’ of daily life in the Ottoman era. It is important that the pictorial information is combined and controlled with data from other sources in order to be fully understood.

The pictorial evidence seems in particular suited to show differences between oriental and occidental dining habits in the Eastern Mediterranean during the Ottoman period. For this so-called ‘Western model’ (as opposed to the Eastern type of dining habits), I will make use of book miniatures, icons and oil-paintings found in parts of Greece which were under Venetian domination in Post-Medieval times (e.g. the Ionian Islands and the Cyclades).

Finally, attention will be given to pictorial evidence of the 19th century as a period of transition to a more modern dining style.

### 12.3.1 The Eastern Model

Some of the miniature paintings in the Surnâme-i Vehbi offer a quite detailed picture of Ottoman wining and dining in the early 18th century. All depicted banquet scenes share several fundamental features: people are sitting on the ground around a low table, consisting of a large round tray on a wooden trestle (the so-called sini). The table is set upon a large cloth or carpet, which is laid on the floor. Servants file behind the guests while carrying the food from the kitchen in metal dishes, covered with a lid. On the sini one can notice only one main dish (often a large, wide-open bowl) with food at the centre, used by all diners. Adjacent to it are sometimes a few plates with olives or cloves(?) perhaps as side dishes or small appetizers. In not one of the miniatures is there a depiction of individual plates, or of forks or knives for the diners. Furthermore, people appear not to drink during dinner, because there are no cups or beakers on the table.

On some paintings, solid food (such as chicken, fish, mussels and a rice dish with chicken) is taken from the communal bowl by all diners with two fingers of the right hand (fig. 12.3). At other banquet scenes, individual spoons are placed in front of each guest, while there is a large serving soup tureen at the centre of the table (fig. 12.4). Spoons seem to have been used only for liquid dishes, such as soup, compote and pudding. Obviously, everyone is expected to eat with their spoon from the same communal dish. (The written sources show that there even existed a complex etiquette of communal soup eating, whereby the right side of the spoon was only used to dish the liquid up and the left side to eat from (Ursinus 1985).

Other pictures with dining Turks (such as illustrations in Western travellers’ accounts) show exactly the same scenery as the Ottoman miniature paintings with the banquet scenes in the Topkapi Palace. On a 17th century engraving in Salomon Schweigger’s book Eine neue Reissbeschreibung aus Teutschland nach Constantinopel...
und Jerusalem (1639), for instance, one can see people sitting on a carpet on the floor, around a low round table and with a communal large dish at the centre. There are no drinking utensils nor forks and knives on the table. One spoon is used by all three diners to eat the rice dish (pilav) from the main dish (fig. 12.5).

This first survey of the pictorial evidence on dining habits in the Ottoman Empire seems to suggest that both Eastern and Western depictions of eating scenes confirm to the descriptions in the travellers’ accounts in great detail. The ‘Eastern model’ of dining was apparently the standard: a communal dish with hardly any cutlery and additional pottery on the table.

12.3.2 THE WESTERN MODEL

In parts of the Aegean area which were kept longer under Venetian control (such as the Ionian Islands and the Cyclades) the pictorial evidence seems, however, to contain certain deviation from the standard Eastern model. Here, one can notice more ‘Western’ dining habits on pictures from the 16th century onwards. For instance, an icon of 1571 AD from Corfu, now in the local Antivouniotissa Museum, shows a high square table, laid with a white table cloth (fig. 12.6). The guests (probably members of the local aristocracy) are sitting around the table on nicely carved Renaissance stools in some sort of separate dining room. There are several dishes with food placed irregularly on the table, as well as a few individual plates. The diners seem to eat from earthenware tableware with a smooth glossy surface (Maiolica from Italy?), sometimes painted with a family’s coat of arms.

Apart from the introduction of the separate dining room to facilitate a more private way of eating, one can also observe the increase in use of glass vessels in the 16th and early 17th centuries. On the same icon from Corfu, one diner on the right holds a delicate wine-jug of transparent glass in his hand (fig. 12.6). Another diner on the left holds a thin-walled transparent wine-glass in his hand. This seems to be a Venetian goblet with a tall stem and round base, favoured by the wealthy classes of society. He holds the glass at the base and not at the stem or cup. This way of holding a glass is a typical Western dining habit in this period (it can be seen on many contemporary Western pictures). Perhaps this was done because of hygienic reasons, or because the drinker does not want to pollute the glass with his greasy fingers.

The increasing popularity of drinking glasses from the 16th century onward has often been ascribed to its relative exclusiveness. According to the British glass-specialist Hugh Willmott, the use of glass certainly had the social benefit of expressing refinement and achieved position within society. He regards glass vessels as ‘potentially powerful means of expressing hidden codes of meaning and aspiration’ (Willmott 1997, 188).

Furthermore, he notices that drinking vessels of transparent glass had the ‘unique ability to not only reveal but
also raise the profile of its contents in a way not achievable in other material (Willmott 2002, 197).

With the rise of a new, prosperous class in the 16th and 17th centuries also in Greek lands, there was a growing demand for new delicacies and luxurious possessions. One of the many manifestations of this new opulence was an increase in the variety of ways in which food was prepared and in the amount of effort that was expended on dining in style. In regions where the Western style of dining had influence, this meant an increase in the quantity, shape and variety of tableware and by the appearance of the ‘service’ or matching collection of settings (Goldthwaite 1989). In these regions of the Ottoman Empire, Maiolica from Italy (Ware 27 in Boeotia) began to assume a significant role because of its glossy white surface which could easily be painted in the most fashionable styles.

The change towards this ‘conspicuous consumption’ is obvious on 16th to 18th century icons from Greece with Venetian presence. Even biblical banquets, such as the ‘Hospitality of Abraham’ or the ‘Marriage at Cana’, became quite sumptuous in table setting. On two 18th century icons from the island of Zakynthos, for instance, one can observe elaborate carved tables laid with fine embroidered tablecloths (figs. 12.7 and 12.8). Furthermore, one can notice a greater variety in tableware, such as Maiolica vessels, the introduction of two candlesticks, more wine glasses and wine jugs of fine Venetian glass, and individual cutlery sets of a sharp-pointed knife and a two-pronged fork for each diner.

Although we have seen the fork as an invention of the East, it was from Italy that the practice of eating with a knife and fork as a set together was introduced into the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean during the 16th century.[3] An early illustration with the names of a fork (forcina), a spoon (cuchiar) and knife (coltello) can be found in one of the oldest Italian cookbooks, Cuoco Secreto di Papa Pio Quinto, written by Bartolomeo Scappi in 1570 AD (Forbes 1969, 65, fig. 33).

Other ‘Western-influenced’ icons show individual plates in front of all diners, such as the icon depicting the ‘Marriage of Cana’ from an early 18th century church on the island of Melos (Vionis 2001, 72). The use of separate eating settings on the dining table can also be seen on an icon of the first half of the 18th century from the island of Levkas, depicting the ‘Birth of Saint John the Baptist’ (fig. 12.9). Apart from several individual plates, there are also two matching dishes and one matching soup tureen on the table, creating a nice set or ‘service’ of Maiolica vessels.

The pictorial evidence clearly indicates that the standard ‘Eastern model’ of communal dining in the Ottoman Empire existed next to a ‘Western model’ of individual dining (cf. table 12.5).

12.3.3 The 19th Century

Only with the introduction of European fashions in the Ottoman Empire during the early 19th century, dish meals in upper-class Turkish households began to be served in the ‘Western style’ at tables with separate place settings (Scarce 1996, 88). Meals became larger and
more elaborate with a menu of several courses. Tableware and eating utensils known in the West were now introduced, and imported Porcelain from Europe was used to beautify the dinner tables. It became now quite fashionable to use knives and forks which were heavily decorated (engraved, curled or chased) on every surface. One can notice, for instance, such a cutlery set (consisting of a gold damascening spoon, fork and knife) of the mid 18th century in the Sadberk Hanim Museum in Istanbul (SHM, 100-101; here fig. 12.10).

An oil-painting of a late 19th-early 20th century banquet at Yildiz Palace in Istanbul (now in the Istanbul Museum of Painting and Sculpture) gives a good impression of these Westernized dining habits among the Ottoman elite (fig. 12.11). The guests are sitting at a central large table with accompanying chairs instead of sitting on the ground around a traditional low sini. The table is covered with a large white damask cloth which reached all the way down to the floor. European Porcelain dinner-services from Germany or from France appear to have replaced traditional Porcelain bowls from China. The table is laid with complete place settings, containing cutlery and a napkin. Various wine-glasses are accompanied by water-glasses and glass jugs for each diner. In the centre of the table are tall silver or silver-gilt ornaments with branches (also called ‘épergne’) for holding a variety of food. Other table-equipment is arranged around these central ornaments.

Although in the 19th century (after circa 1840 AD) the ruling elite in Istanbul gradually switched over to more Western dining habits, serving each person a portion on a separate plate, the tradition of eating communally from one dish must have persisted much longer in the provinces. In central Greece, this custom perhaps lived on into Early Modern times (even among the local elite). An illustration in the traveller’s account of Louis Dupré from 1825 AD, for example, depicts the Voivode of Athens while dining in the Eastern fashion (fig. 12.12). The diners are sitting on the floor or on a low bench. They are eating with their hands from a communal dish, which was placed at the centre of a sini.

It is highly probable that the lower classes in rural areas of central Greece also preferred to stick to old dining habits. In the Benaki Museum at Athens there is a lithograph by Gille based on a design of the Estonian baron Otto Magnus von Stackelberg (1786-1837), who travelled in central Greece at the beginning of the 19th century (Stackelberg 1831). The lithograph depicts dinner time in a village hut in Eleusis in Attica, and it is clear that the Greeks sit on the floor around a low round table and eat with their hands from a large communal dish (fig. 12.13).

The 19th century was, in short, for the Ottoman Empire a transitional period from a traditional to a more modern or Westernized way of life, though the Western style of eating was slowly but surely getting the upper hand. Both the Eastern model and the Western model of dining habits existed within the Ottoman Empire and the newly-formed Greek state.
There is one last written source of information which may shed light on the use and distribution of ceramics in the Ottoman Empire in a more direct way. These are the texts on the production and use of Iznik Ware and Kütahya Ware, the two types of luxury pottery whose production was regulated centrally by the Ottoman court.

12.4 Iznik Ware and Kütahya Ware in the written sources

There is one last written source of information which may shed light on the use and distribution of ceramics in the Ottoman Empire in a more direct way. These are the texts on the production and use of Iznik Ware and Kütahya Ware, the two types of luxury pottery whose production was regulated centrally by the Ottoman court.

12.4.1 The use of Iznik ware in the written sources

There are many remarkable aspects of the Topkapi Palace, but for archaeologists, one of the most remarkable aspects is the almost total absence of surviving Iznik pottery. The palace yielded only broken pieces from excavations on the premises, in stark contrast to the large quantities of Chinese Porcelain which survived in the palace (and in the private collection of the Sultans). This means that we have to rely almost entirely on documentary references in order to establish what extent – in what way – Iznik pottery was used at the Sultan’s court.

The relevant Ottoman documents, examined by Nurhan Atasoy, consist of schedules of fixed prices, probate inventories and various palace registers such as treasury accounts, stocktaking records, sale registers, palace kitchen records and inventories of gifts. The earliest dated document mentioning Iznik ceramics in use at the Topkapi Palace can be dated to the year 1489-90 AD (Atasoy & Raby 1989, 30). This register lists the types, quantities and prices of items, including Iznik pottery, purchased for the Imperial Kitchens. We learn from it that the cost of 97 Iznik vessels was at that time 1916 akçe.

Another kitchen record from 1582 AD provides evidence that during special occasions (such as the festivities for the circumcision of the son of Sultan Murad III, which lasted 52 days and nights), 541 extra Iznik plates, dishes and bowls were purchased from the bazaar, in addition to the Chinese Porcelain, copperware and Iznik ceramics that were brought out of the Palace kitchens (Atasoy & Raby 1989, 14).

The documents and Ottoman miniatures also show that Iznik ware was mainly used in the palace as an everyday ware (fig. 12.14). Even in the 16th century, when the quality of fabric and decoration of Iznik ceramics reached its peak, the Ottoman Sultans preferred the more expensive and valuable foreign wares (such as Chinese Porcelains). The archival sources suggest that Iznik ware was stored in large quantities in the Imperial Kitchens of the Topkapi Palace, ready for use on a day-to-day basis. The documents refer to ‘compote bowls’, ‘large yoghurt bowls’, ‘salad and sweetmeat dishes’, ‘lamb dishes’, and even to ‘dishes for various puddings’ or ‘for clotted cream’.

Prices and quantities in the probate inventories of Edirne’s wealthy residents (such as drapers and members of the military class) seem to indicate that, compared to Chinese Porcelain, Iznik pottery was relatively cheap and widely available for the upper classes (Atasoy & Raby 1989, 25-7). The potter’s skill and the taste of the decoration made them an acceptable, ready to use substitute for Porcelain, as well as for metal.

On the other hand, it seems that Iznik Ware was the top end pottery in elite houses outside the Palace. It has rightly been suggested that Iznik pottery perhaps filled the gap between wood, tinned copper or crude pottery kitchen wares on the one hand, and gold and silver on the other (Rogers 2000). There is ample evidence that Iznik pottery was considered to be the high status alternative for vessels of wood, base metal (brass or copper), or even metal (though it was valued lower than Chinese Porcelain).
12.4.2 The use of Kütahya ware in the written sources

Probate registers often list ceramics from Iznik and Kütahya together with Chinese Porcelain in inventories of estates. They show that Iznik pottery is always and Kütahya Ware is mostly valued lower than Chinese Porcelain. For one inventory (of the possessions of one Haci Hürem Bey, dated 1623 AD), however, we find that a piece of Chinese Porcelain is valued at 150 akçe (silver coins), compared to 60 akçe for an Iznik dish and no less than 500 akçe for a Kütahya dish (Carswell 1991, 53; Akalin & Bilgi 1997, 13).

The most distinctive products of Kütahya were thinly-potted, polychrome painted vessels in a fine, whitish frit. Small coffee cups (often with matching saucers), bowls, jugs and coffee pots made up the majority of production (see fig. 12.15). The shapes of the coffee cups were probably taken from Chinese Porcelain or from Porcelain made at Vienna and Meissen (Germany) about 1730-1740 (Lane 1939, 236).

In the written sources of the time there are numerous references to the use of this sort of coffee cup. In 1839 AD the Western traveller Ami Boué described the serving of coffee in the Ottoman Empire, apparently referring to Kütahya Ware: ‘Der Kaffee wird in sehr kleinen, weissen Porzellantassen […] aufgetragen, welche oftmals mit einem feinen Goldrand, aber nur bei sehr reichen Leuten mit Malereien verziert sind’, or: The coffee is served in very small, white cups made of porcelain […] which are often decorated with a fine golden rim, but only very rich people have them with painted decoration (as cited by Ursinus 1985, 157).

Remarks on the consumption of coffee are, for instance, frequent in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s famous ‘Turkish letters’, written while she accompanied her husband on a trip in 1718 AD (fig. 12.16). She reported that after the end of meals she often was offered coffee served in small cups of the finest ‘China with soucoupes of gold’ (Montagu 1763 in Jack 1993, 116). According to Montagu, coffee was drunk in hamams, at picnics, in public gardens and in the houses of rich ladies (Montagu 1763 in Jack 1993, 59, 73, 86 and 88). There were sets of metal coffee pots, Porcelain cups in filigree holders, and small dishes for offering coffee and refreshments to the guests. It has therefore been suggested that in the early 18th century Kütahya Ware was well suited to the pleasure-seeking, romantic atmosphere that

Fig. 12.15 Miniature of a Kütahya coffee cup and saucer, Topkapi Palace Museum Library, H. 2164 (fol 12a), early 18th century (after Atasoy & Raby 1989, fig. 20).

Fig. 12.16 Portrait of the British traveller Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1709-1762 AD) (after Jack 1993).
prevailed among the wealthy classes during the ‘Tulip Age’ of the Ottoman Empire (Watson 1988).

The delicacy of the Kütahya cups indeed suggests that they were probably made for intimate gatherings of the Ottoman elite, rather than for robust public use in coffee houses and bazaars. Coffee drinking had become a sort of national pastime in the 18th century (Vroom 1996). It was not only drunk in coffee houses, but also in the harem, in the hamam (bath-house) and at garden parties and picnics throughout the Ottoman Empire.

### Dining Habits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TURKISH</th>
<th>16th-18th C.</th>
<th>19th-20th C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Eastern style’</td>
<td>Parts of Greece</td>
<td>Parts of Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no specific dining area</td>
<td>under Ottoman rule</td>
<td>under Western influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low round table; no stools or chairs</td>
<td>high square table</td>
<td>high square table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one centrally placed main dish with food</td>
<td>several main dishes</td>
<td>all food in separate dishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no drinking vessels</td>
<td>individual plates of Italian Maiolica</td>
<td>individual plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communal dishes of Porcelain</td>
<td>drinking goblets of transparent glass</td>
<td>drinking goblets of transparent glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoons only for liquid food</td>
<td>cutlery sets, consisting of sharp-pointed knives and two-pronged forks</td>
<td>cutlery sets, consisting of sharp-pointed knives and two-pronged forks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no knives or forks</td>
<td>candle-standards</td>
<td>candle-standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>much use of watery and greasy dishes: soups, stews and pilavs</td>
<td>use of bread, wine, fish and olive oil</td>
<td>use of bread, wine, fish and olive oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of rice, sugar, mutton and butter; hardly use of olive oil</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pottery Shapes in Boeotia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TURKISH</th>
<th>CENTURIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16th-18th C.</td>
<td>Imports of Italian wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts of Greece</td>
<td>relatively small deep bowls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>under Ottoman rule</td>
<td>introduction of trefoil-mouth jugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>introduction of tin-glazed wares (e.g. Maiolica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>finds of glass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EARLY MODERN</th>
<th>19th-20th C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imports for display in household</td>
<td>Imports of Italian wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial-made pottery</td>
<td>relatively small deep bowls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass-produced tablewares</td>
<td>introduction of trefoil-mouth jugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction glazed domestic wares</td>
<td>Introduction of tin-glazed wares (e.g. Maiolica)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EARLY MODERN</th>
<th>POTTERY SHAPES IN BOEOTIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imports for display in household</td>
<td>Glazed domestic wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial-made pottery</td>
<td>Graffito factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass-produced tablewares</td>
<td>Cobalt-enameled wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction glazed domestic wares</td>
<td>Allover glossed wares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 12.6 Dining habits and pottery shapes: Turkish to Early Modern periods.
Evlıya Çelebi recorded in his traveller’s account as many as 300 coffee houses and 500 coffee merchants in Istanbul alone, as well as the coffee cups found in the markets in Istanbul in regards to the varying levels of prestige associated with the different types (Kut 1996; Baram 1999). According to Uzi Baram, coffee drinking was the only drinks offered during but mostly coffee merchants in for each diner, but there were summary). According to Uzi Baram, coffee drinking embodied during the 17th and 18th centuries ‘the new, the modern, the rebellion against the social order’. However, he suggests that by the end of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, it became ‘old-fashioned, the vestige of an old empire’, and eventually to be replaced by tea and nationalism (Baram 1999, 151).

Lemon-squeezer were also made at Kütahya in the first quarter of the 18th century (Carswell 1976). Lemons were not grown in Northern Turkey, but we learn from various sources that lemons and lemon-juice were imported from the Aegean to Istanbul in the 17th and 18th centuries for making lemon sherbet. Obviously, a lemon squeezer of Kütahya Ware would be something only to be found in well-to-do households.

12.5 Summary

The written sources (mainly travellers’ accounts) as well as the pictorial evidence (mainly miniatures and icons) clearly suggest that there existed two styles of dining habits in the Aegean area from the 16th century onwards. The dining habits in an ‘Eastern style’ were quite different from those in a ‘Western style’ and it seems that these differences are reflected in the pottery finds from Boeotia (see table 12.6).

The ‘Eastern style’ of dining was characterized by the absence of a specific dining area and of stools or chairs. The diners were sitting on the ground around a low round table, the so-called sini. They were eating with their hands from a centrally placed communal dish. In Boeotia, an increase can be noted from the 16th century onwards of large open glazed dishes with an average rim width of 24-31 cm. (see chapter 7). These dishes are either monochrome glazed (Ware 29) or under glaze painted (Ware 31 and 32).

Obviously this eating with the hand from a communal dish happened with the right hand according to Islamic doctrine. The Islamic culinary laws demanded that the diners did not use knives or forks to cut their meat, but broke and ate it with their fingers. Pieces of bread were laid on the sini for each diner, but there were no individual plates, no individual cutlery-sets nor napkins. There were also no drinking vessels on the sini; all the guests drank after the meal. The only utensils used were spoons, for common households made of wood, for eating soup and other liquid or greasy dishes (such as stews, prepared with butter and not with olive-oil). Fellow-diners had to follow the intricate etiquette of eating soup communally, whereby the right side of these spoons was used only to dish the liquid up and the left to eat from it.

In well-to-do households, the dishes were handed over by servants, forming a row from the kitchen to the sini where people were eating. On the menu were probably soup, mutton and rice (pilav) cooked in butter, and the food was served in large dishes, made of metal or earthenware. Perhaps the diners also ate from more expensive table wares, such as Porcelain and Iznik Ware.

After dinner, the diners in well-to-do households washed their hands and drank coffee. Probably the coffee was served in decorative coffee cups of Porcelain or of Kütahya Ware, which were very popular among the Ottoman elite in the 18th century. In addition, water and sherbets were the only drinks offered during but mostly after the meal. While drinking their coffee, most guests would smoke a tobacco pipe in the chibouk style. In Boeotia, fragments of Porcelain (Ware 33) as well as of Kütahya Ware (Ware 36) and of one tobacco pipe (Ware 37) have been found.

The dining habits in a ‘western style’, on the other hand, show the introduction of a separate dining room for a more private way of eating. Diners were sitting on chairs, stools or benches around a high square table covered with a white tablecloth. The table was set either with white napkins, or with a longer supplementary tablecloth, which guests could use to wipe their hands or mouths. Candle-standards for lighting the dining room were also placed on the table.

It was customary to use several small bowls or dishes of earthenware, metal or wood, which were placed irregularly on the table. Diners shared these dishes of food between two or more, helping themselves from the nearest part, taking no more than their share. In Boeotia, one can notice, for instance, from the Late Byzantine/Frankish period onwards relatively small deep bowls with an average rim width of 17-20 cm. (e.g. Wares 24 and 25).
Furthermore, diners started to eat from fine tableware, made of earthenware with a smooth glossy surface, at meal-times in the Western style. The growing demand for new delicacies and luxurious possessions lead to the conspicuous display in Italian Maiolica of the separate ‘dinner service’ or matching collection of settings, sometimes painted with a family’s coat of arms. On the Boeotian sites one can observe the introduction of tin-glazed wares such as Maiolica from Italy (Wares 27 & 28).

The Western Mediterranean diet for the well-to-do classes was based on the Greek/Roman/Byzantine cuisine, including bread, wine, olive oil, a variety of vegetables, fish and roasted or boiled meat. Wine and water were served in trefoil-mouth jugs, and were drunk from cups and goblets. Glass or silver would have appeared on the table of the wealthy. Drinking goblets and jugs of transparent glass became more fashionable from the 16th century onwards.

‘Western’ cutlery sets were now introduced, consisting of sharp-pointed knives and long two-pronged forks (for cutting and transferring pieces of meat), and sometimes spoons (for liquid or semi-liquid foods). Guests could also have brought their own knives. Roasted meat was carved at the table; the sauce came in a separate small bowl. The long-pronged forks helped the meat when carving; in Italy they were also used for eating pasta, as well as for fruit.

Of course, the relation between Eastern and Western dining habits and the respective diet during the Turkish and Early Modern periods on the one hand, and pottery found on the Boeotian sites on the other hand is complex and not straightforward. Still, this first and preliminary survey of the written texts and the pictorial evidence on dining habits and diet in Post-Medieval times seems to suggest a pattern of mixed relationships which is interesting enough to serve as an incentive for further research. The main relation is that the differences between communal dining (the ‘Eastern model’) and a more individual dining (the ‘Western model’) seems to be reflected during the 16th century in the notable variation between smaller and larger rim shapes of the ceramics found in Boeotia (as depicted in table 12.6).

I would suggest that in Boeotia there were rather clear changes from communal dining in Byzantine times to a transitional, more Western form of small group dining in the Frankish period, and back to communal dining again in the Turkish era. These developments may have been the result (direct or indirect) of the arrival of new political rulers, who opened up the region to new, Western dining habits, but they may have been also the result of larger socio-economic changes, and probably they were the result of both.

**Notes**

1. I am grateful to Dr. Michael Given of Glasgow University (UK) for this reference.

2. Noteworthy is also the recent discovery of a 15th century manuscript in a library in Istanbul, which is a Turkish translation of an Arab cookbook of the 13th century, the *Kitâb al-tabîkh* from Baghdad, but which also appears to have 82 added recipes from an unknown manuscript. The name of the 15th century compiler is Mehmed bin Mahmoud Shirvâni. According to the discoverer of the 15th century Turkish manuscript, Stéphane Yerasimos (2001, 11-13), the Ottoman court probably has asked Shirvâni to give a Turkish translation of dishes which were in use in that time, reflecting in that way Ottoman cuisine of the 15th and 16th centuries.

3. The use of the fork as a table implement was introduced in France in 1379 AD, in Italy in the 15th century and in Britain in the 17th century.