

Daily Life Encounters between the Byzantines and the Ottomans\*

Bizanslılar ve Osmanlılar Arasında Kültürel Karşılaşmalar

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**Abstract**

The Byzantines and the Ottomans were both rivals and neighbours. They were also in close cultural contact: they observed each other's customs, clothing and food. Byzantine literary texts from this period, such as histories and dialogues on Christianity and Islam, are invaluable sources in this sphere, offering insight not only into these respective religions but also providing many instances of cultural encounters. This paper presents some vignettes of daily life encounters between the Byzantines and the Ottomans, especially exploring the Byzantines' perception of the Ottomans' customs and food. We will analyse selected passages from the history of John VI Kantakouzenos and the dialogues of Gregory Palamas and Manuel II Palaiologos from this perspective. We will discuss the authors' perception and representation

\* An earlier and much shorter version of this paper was presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Medworlds Workshop, Coexistence in Practice: Politics, Trade and Culture in the Late Medieval Anatolia and Iberia, hosted by ORDAM, Fatih Sultan Mehmet University, 16-17 May 2022, Istanbul. I extend my thanks to the organisers and the participants for their feedback.

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of the Ottomans as the “other” through depictions of food, customs and daily life routines. Furthermore, these accounts will be supplemented with some key travellers’ accounts, such as those of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavjio and Bertrandon de la Broquièere. The representations of the Ottomans in these travellers’ accounts will be compared with those of the Byzantine authors. At the same time, the insights they offer into the lives of the Byzantines and the Ottomans will also be investigated.

**Keywords:** Byzantine-Ottoman relations, religious dialogue, cultural history, history of food, late medieval Anatolia.

### Öz

Bizanslılar ve Osmanlılar hem rakip hem de komşuydular. İki toplum, birbirleriyle yakın kültürel temas içindeydiler ve birbirlerinin adetlerini, giysi ve yemeklerini gözlemliyorlardı. Tarih eserleri, Hristiyanlık ve İslam hakkında yazılmış Bizans diyalogları gibi Geç Bizans metinleri bu konular için son derece zengin kaynaklardır; sadece bu iki dinin algılanışına ışık tutmaz, ayrıca pek çok kültürel karşılaşma anlatısı bulundurlar. Bu makale, Bizanslılar ve Osmanlılar arasındaki bazı günlük hayat karşılaşmalarını ele almayı, özellikle Bizanslı yazarların Osmanlıların adetleri ve yemekleri hakkındaki görüşlerini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Makalede, VI. Ioannes Kantakouzenos’un tarih eserinden ve Gregorios Palamas ile II. Manuel Palaiologos’un diyaloglarından pasajlar incelenecektir. Yazarların Osmanlılara olan bakışı ve onları yemekler, adetler ve günlük hayat rutinleri üzerinden ‘öteki’ olarak tasvir etmeleri tartışılacaktır. Ayrıca, bu anlatılar Ruy Gonzalez de Clavjio ve Bertrandon de la Broquièere gibi dönemin bazı seyahatnameleriyle desteklenecektir. Bu seyahatnamelerdeki Osmanlı tasvirleri Bizans yazarlarının tasvirleriyle kıyaslanacak, seyyahların Bizanslıların ve Osmanlıların hayatlarına dair anlatıları incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bizans-Osmanlı ilişkileri, dinî diyalog, kültürel tarih, yemek tarihi, Geç Orta Çağ Anadolu.

The Byzantines and the Ottomans were both rivals and neighbours, co-existing and fighting each other simultaneously. As such, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed on one hand, the rapid expansion of the Ottoman Empire and, on the other hand, the equally rapid decline of Byzantium. Naturally, in addition to their intense political, military and economic interactions, the Byzantines and the Ottomans were also in close cultural contact with each other<sup>1</sup>. They traded, inter-

<sup>1</sup> See for instance, Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans*, Ashgate,

married, converted to each other's religion, sampled each other's food and clothing; they observed each other's habits and routines in daily life. Some of these they approved, even adopted, some, they rejected. Aspects of daily life such as dining rituals, food, clothing and social practices yield no less insight into historical realities than military and political affairs- arguably, sometimes do so even more. They may serve as markers of identity, denote social hierarchy, rank and gender. Through the depictions of daily life, one can gain invaluable insights about the cross-cultural influences of the era, as well as into perceptions of "self" and "the other".

As a preliminary to this paper, clothing stands as an illustrative example of these cross-cultural influences, not only between the Byzantines and the Ottomans, but also extending to the Balkans, Western Europeans and Mamluks. In the 1360s, the Byzantine intellectual and historian Nikephoros Gregoras tellingly complained of the fashions of his time in a much-cited passage, bitterly remarking that clothing no longer served as a marker of one's identity: *...one could no longer tell whether a person was a Roman or belonged to some other gens. For their clothing was not entirely in the Persian (e.g. Turkish) fashion, or purely in the Latin, or even entirely Gothic, or Serbian, Bulgarian, or Hungarian*<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, several headgear and clothing items encountered in Pseudo-Kodinos, the fourteenth century book of ceremonies, betray Persian or Turkic origin and names<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, many examples of Byzantine visual

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Aldershot 2007; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1995; Michel Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine et pays de Rûm turc: histoire d'un espace d'imbrication gréco-turque*, Isis Press, Istanbul 1994; Rustam Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, Brill, Leiden and Boston 2016.

2 Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia*, Vol. 1-2, ed. L. Schopen, Weber, Bonn 1829-1830, Vol. 3, ed. I. Bekker, Weber, Bonn 1855; III, p. 555. 'τί δ' ἂν τις φαίη καὶ περὶ τῶν ἐνδυμάτων, ὅσα κἀν τοῦτοις παρηνομήθη, καὶ ὅπως ἐχτετόπισται τοῦ γνωρίμου τε καὶ νυνήθηκε πολιτεία, ὡς μηδὲ γινώσκεσθαι ἔτι ὅστις Ῥωμαίων καὶ ὅστις τῶν ἄλλως ἐχόντων· οὔτε γὰρ Περσικὴ τις ἄκρατος ἢ στολὴ γέγονεν ἤδη Ῥωμαίοις, οὔτε Λατινικὴ τελέως, οὔτε μὴν τις Γοτθικὴ καθάπαζ, οὔτε εἴ τις Τριβαλλῶν καὶ ἅμα Μυσῶν καὶ Παιόνων·' Translation from Anthony Kaldellis, "Ethnicity and clothing in Byzantium", *Identity and the Other in Byzantium*, eds. Koray Durak - Ivana Jevtić, Κοσ University Press, Istanbul 2019, pp. 41-52, p. 51. Of course, the Byzantines also adopted styles from the Balkans and the Western Europeans, and vice-versa. Since this paper focuses on the case of the Byzantines and the Ottomans, these discussions have been omitted here. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Maria Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, Brill, Leiden and Boston 2003, pp. 51-99 and Joyce Kubiski, "Orientalizing costume in early fifteenth-century French manuscript painting (Cité des Dames Master, Limbourg Brothers, Boucicaut Master, and Bedford Master)", *Gesta*, Vol. 40/No. 2, 2001, pp. 245-254.

3 This "oriental" style of dress could already be observed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries but had started dominating courtly fashion in the fourteenth century. Thus, its appearance long pre-dated the Ottomans and had influences from the Persian, Mamluk and Seljukid cultures, see *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies*, eds. and trans. Ruth J. Macrides,

material from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, such as the famous donor portrait of Theodore Metochites in the Chora Monastery, depict Byzantine men decked out in caftan-like garments and Mamluk style headgear. Even at a glance, some of the patterns found on these clothes are also reminiscent of their Ottoman counterparts, which is hardly surprising given the vibrant textile market of the region. Both the Byzantine and the Ottoman elite had access to the same imported luxury textiles; silk, wool, velvet or cotton from Venice, Florence, Narbonne, Toulouse or the Flemish lands, as well as from Persia and beyond<sup>4</sup>. Chinese and Iranian silks, Flemish, French and Florentine textiles flowed on the trade route that crossed Anatolia and stretched from Sivas to Constantinople, inherited by the Ottomans from the Mongols. In addition to the Byzantine capital Constantinople, Turkish cities such as Balat, Efes, Foça, Amasya and Aydın were significant trade centers; and by the mid-fourteenth century, the Ottomans had signed trade agreements with Genoa and Venice<sup>5</sup>.

In 1437, the Castilian traveller Pero Tafur noted that the entourage of the Ottoman Sultan Murad II was attired in long cloaks and mantles of fine woollen cloth, brocade and silk—all imported from Italy<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, textile production in Anatolia itself under the Ottomans and other Turkish emirates was vibrant, and these also undoubtedly found their way into the wardrobes of the elite Byzantines. The traveller Ibn Battuta, while visiting Anatolia as early as the 1330s, was showered with high-quality textiles and items of clothing by various Turkish emirs, of both imported and locally produced kinds. Ibn Battuta was especially impressed by the cotton fabrics produced in Domuzlu/Denizli, mostly produced by the local Greek women; the white textiles of Domuzlu, edged with gold embroidery, were also mentioned by the early Ottoman chronicler Yahşi Fakih<sup>7</sup>. Later, the Ottoman

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Joseph A. Munitiz and Dimiter G. Angelov, Routledge, Farnham 2013, pp. 304-305, 329-330 and 357.

4 See Elizabeth Zachariadou, “The presents of the emirs”, *Cultural and Commercial Exchanges between the Orient and the Greek World*, Centre for Neohellenic Research, Athens 1991, pp. 79-84, re-printed in eadem, *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans* Ashgate, Aldershot 2007, Study V and Nikolaos Vryzidis, “Late Byzantium as a Eurasian borderland: trade, material and visual culture at the western end of the Silk Road”, *Byzantiaka* 36, 2022, pp. 237-264.

5 Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600*, Phoenix Press, London 2000, pp. 245-254.

6 Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures, 1435-1439*, trans. Malcolm Letts, Gorgias Press, London 1926, p. 127.

7 For some examples see *The Travels of Ibn Battuta: A.D 1325-1354*, 3 Vols, English trans. H. A.

Bursa would also become a significant center of silk production, and Bursa silks would be highly coveted by the elite consumers<sup>8</sup>.

As in the case of the circulation of textiles and clothing styles, Byzantine literary texts also preserve the memories of such cultural encounters and influences. For instance, for the fourteenth century, the travellers' accounts and the Byzantine anti-Islamic dialogues provide fascinating insights into the daily life encounters between the Byzantines and the Ottomans. This paper will focus on three late Byzantine authors, John VI Kantakouzenos, Gregory Palamas and Manuel II Palaiologos, supplementing their narratives with travellers' accounts. Although earlier Byzantine literary works and Turkish epics have benefitted from many robust studies on the depictions of the self and the other through analyses of daily interactions and especially food, Kantakouzenos' history and the anti-Islamic dialogues of the latter two authors have not received much attention in this sphere<sup>9</sup>. These works have been selected on account of the insights they offer into their personal experiences among the Ottomans; by analyzing their writings and supplementing their discussions with various travellers' accounts, this paper will endeavour to present some snippets of daily life encounters between the Byzantines and the Ottomans. Yet, one must bear in mind that although all three works stemmed from the personal memoirs of their respective authors, they

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R. Gibb, based on French ed. and transl. Chares Defrémery and Beniamiano. R. Sanguinetti, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962, p. 425, 442, 446, 449; Zachariadou, "The presents of the emirs", p. 82.

8 İnalçık, *The Classical Age*, pp. 245-254. For the early Ottoman Bursa, now see Suna Çağaptay, *The First Capital of the Ottoman Empire: The Religious, Architectural and Social History of Bursa*, I.B. Tauris, London and New York 2020.

For the cross-influences of Byzantine and Ottoman textile traditions in Greek clerical garments in the Ottoman Empire see Nikolaos Vryzidis, "Ottoman textiles and Greek clerical vestments: prolegomena on a neglected aspect of ecclesiastical culture", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 42/Issue 1, 2018, pp. 92-114.

9 For some recent work see Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors, Martyrs and Dervishes: Moving Frontiers, Shifting Identities in the Land of Rome (13-15<sup>th</sup> centuries)*, Brill, Leiden and Boston 2019; Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, "Taam, Şölen, Oruç ve Bizanslı Öteki (13-15. Yüzyıllar)", *Türkiye'de Bizans Çalışmaları Yeni Araştırmalar, Farklı Eğilimler*, eds. Koray Durak, Nevra Necipoğlu, Tolga Uyar, İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2022, pp. 517-527 and Charis Messis, "La mémoire de 'Je Souffrant'. Construire et écrire la mémoire personnelle dans les récits de voyage", *L'écriture de la mémoire: la littérature de 'historiographie, Actes du colloque international sur la littérature Byzantine, Nicosie 6-8 mai, 2004*, eds. Paolo Odorico and Panagitos Agapitos, Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est-européennes, Paris, 2006, pp. 107-146. Siren Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar: the portrayal of the Ottomans in the Dialogue with a Persian of Manuel II Palaiologos", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 41/Issue 2, 2017, pp. 208-228.

were not composed as travel reports or as extremely faithful depictions of these experiences. Instead, the narratives were often modified and embellished versions of the authors' experiences, laced with literary features and strategies aimed at representing the author as a morally and culturally superior Christian amidst the "barbarian" others. The line between reality and fiction in these texts was thus blurred<sup>10</sup>. But, even if these texts reflect modified versions of the authors' experiences, an analysis of their daily life narratives offers significant insights into their perceptions of the Ottomans. Indeed, in texts from any era that offer observations on "others", daily life narratives such as depictions of the food, social customs and language do not merely serve as pleasant vignettes for the audience. Instead, they usually serve the literary function of drawing a distinction between "us" and the "other" through showcasing practices that are considered foreign and strange<sup>11</sup>. Ultimately, this paper will explore especially the perception of the Ottomans' daily routines and food, discussing how the authors of these three Byzantine authors and travel accounts used narratives of daily life to highlight the perceived cultural differences of the Ottomans while portraying themselves as the morally and culturally superior party in this relationship.

The first author we will discuss is John VI Kantakouzenos (r.1347-1354), a Byzantine statesman who made a successful bid for the imperial throne in 1346 after the death of Andronikos III Palaiologos (d. 1341) — he would also later compose a history and several theological works, including anti-Islamic treatises<sup>12</sup>. Originally appointed as a regent for the minor emperor John V Palaiologos by the late emperor, John Kantakouzenos clashed with the Empress Mother Anna of Savoy and her faction. During the civil strife for the throne, Kantakouzenos was proclaimed emperor and was crowned in Adrianople in 1346. To gain the upper hand against his rivals, Kantakouzenos sought Turkish allies, making overtures

10 On fictionality and its function in Byzantine texts such as hagiography and romances, see Charis Messis, "Fiction and/or novelisation in Byzantine hagiography", *The Ashgate Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, Vol. 2, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, Ashgate, Farnham 2014, pp. 313-342.

11 Anthony Kaldellis, *Ethnography After Antiquity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2013; Tia Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists: The Errors of the Latins*, University of Illinois Press, Illinois 2000; Catia Galatariotou, "Travel and perception in Byzantium", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 47, 1993, pp. 221-241; Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors and Dervishes*, especially pp. 57-87.

12 A classic, but now dated study of Kantakouzenos is Donald Nicol, *The Reluctant Emperor*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. For the history of Kantakouzenos; John Kantakouzenos. *Historiarum Libri IV*, ed. Ludwig Schopen, 3 Vols, Weber, Bonn, 1828-1832, and for his anti-Islamic treatises, see Karl Förstel *Johannes Kantakouzenos. Christentum und Islam. Apologetische und polemische Schriften*, Orlos-Verlag, Altenberge 2005.

first to the Emir of Aydınoğulları, Umur Bey, and later to Orhan Bey of the Ottomans. He spent considerable time dining and conversing with Umur Bey; the Byzantine historian Nikephoros Gregoras famously likened Kantakouzenos and Umur to the mythical friends Orestes and Pleiades. While Gregoras made the comparison to subtly criticize Kantakouzenos for fraternizing with a “barbarian”, the friendship between the two men is also noted by the Turkish poet Enveri<sup>13</sup>. Yet, Kantakouzenos forged a much more significant bond with another Turkish emir, Orhan of the Ottoman Emirate, by offering him a daughter in marriage, as well as giving him passage to Rumeli. In exchange, Orhan Bey and the Ottomans furnished Kantakouzenos with much-needed military and political support<sup>14</sup>.

Kantakouzenos narrates several episodes of personal contact with the Turks in history, including Theodora’s wedding and subsequent visit. One should bear in mind that his lengthy history is not merely an invaluable historical source for the period, but also functions as an apology for Kantakouzenos’ role in the civil war, his usurpation and reign. As such, the history also incorporates many of the author’s own experiences, but seeks to narrate them to present the emperor in a favourable light. This can also be traced in Kantakouzenos’ narratives of the Turks, in which he strives to portray himself as inspiring great respect among the Turks, thus lending legitimacy to his alliances with them. For instance, it has been noted that while describing a meeting with Turkish pirates in 1348, Kantakouzenos represents himself as standing alone without any fear, encircled by the Turks who performed the Byzantine *proskynesis* ritual and also kissed his feet<sup>15</sup>. The wedding of Theodora and Orhan Bey was celebrated in the summer of 1346 in Selymbria as Kantakouzenos had not yet been able to enter Constantinople<sup>16</sup>. As her father narrated in meticulous detail in his history, the bride Theodora

13 Gregoras, II, pp. 649-650; Enveri, *Le Destan. d’Umur Pacha (Düsturname-i Enveri)*, ed. and trans. Irène Mélikoff-Sayar, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1954, pp. 83-85.

14 According to Enveri, a daughter of Kantakouzenos supposedly was first offered to Umur Bey as a bride, who attempted to charm her proposed husband. However, Umur Bey declined the offer of marriage by claiming that he and Kantakouzenos were “brothers”; Enveri, pp. 83-85; Nicol, *Reluctant Emperor*, pp. 35-36.

15 Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, p. 218; Kantakouzenos, III, p. 65. Shukurov also discusses other instances of Turks depicted as performing *proskynesis* and showing great reverence to Byzantine emperors in Kantakouzenos’ narrative, *Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, p. 216-218.

16 Kantakouzenos II, p. 585-589; Gregoras II, p. 762-763. Anthony A. M. Bryer, “Greek historians on the Turks: the case of the first Byzantine-Ottoman marriage”, *Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to R. W. Southern*, eds. Ralph Henry C. Davis and John M. Wallace-Hadrill, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981, pp. 471- 493.

Kantakouzene was displayed to the crowds on a platform upon the opening of the curtains that concealed her, surrounded by eunuchs. This aspect of the wedding ceremony reflects strong elements from the Byzantine court ceremonial *prokypsis*. Kantakouzenos, who frequently employed narratives of ceremonial and ancient customs in his history to legitimize his usurpation, probably narrated Theodora's wedding display in such detail to lend legitimacy to this unconventional marriage<sup>17</sup>. Orhan Bey did not attend the ceremony, but Kantakouzenos offered lavish entertainment both to the Byzantine and Ottoman parties. Theodora was later escorted to Bithynia by her Ottoman entourage and according to her father, she remained a faithful and exemplary Christian at the Ottoman court. While the early Ottomans could allow foreign brides to keep their religions, Kantakouzenos emphasizes Theodora's strong Christianity to defend the controversial marriage — that of a legitimate daughter of an emperor to a non-Christian.

After John VI Kantakouzenos emerged as the victor in the Byzantine civil strife, Orhan Bey and Theodora met with him to celebrate. The families gathered in Skoutari in the spring or early summer of 1347, where according to Kantakouzenos, the Byzantines and the Ottomans hunted and feasted together<sup>18</sup>. Although this is an oft-cited passage, the literary function of the detailed narration on the feast, such as the seating arrangement, has not received due scholarly attention. However, in his history, Kantakouzenos relates some intriguing aspects of the occasion and fashions the feasting narrative to represent himself as the superior party. Although the exact date of Skoutari's conquest cannot be determined, it was clearly in the hands of the Ottomans by the time of the gathering. This can also be inferred from Kantakouzenos' narrative, who albeit avoiding acknowledging the region as Ottoman territory, tellingly refers to Skoutari as 'being thus named locally' (ἐγγχωρίως ὀνομάζεται)<sup>19</sup>. In the narrative, the Byzantine emperor subtly portrays

17 Pseudo-Kodinos, pp. 1-10. On *prokypsis*, see *ibid* pp. 401-411.

18 Kantakouzenos, III, p. 28-29.

19 Timothy Miller, *The History of John VI Cantacuzenus (Book IV): Text, Translation and Commentary*, The Catholic University of America, PhD thesis, 1975, p. 267, argues that Skoutari must have been conquered after the conquest of İznik in 1331, and before the entry of Kantakouzenos in Constantinople. He also points out Kantakouzenos' manner of referring to Skoutari, interpreting it as supplementary evidence for the Ottomans' possession of the region. More recently, Rustam Shukurov also considers Skoutari to be in Turkish hands in 1347 at the time of this meeting, also placing the conquest of Mesothynia in the 1330s, Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, pp. 148-154, p. 222. Moreover, Kantakouzenos' narration of how he came from Constantinople to meet with Orhan, and his later departure to Constantinople, accompanied by Orhan's sons and Theodora, also seems to indicate that Skoutari was no longer Byzantine territory at the time.



himself as almost the host of this gathering on Ottoman soil. For instance, while speaking about the table where the two rulers dined, Kantakouzenos points out that the emperor and Orhan, his son-in-law, dined there. He puts himself as the first occupant of the table and labels Orhan Bey in terms of his relationship with the emperor, that is, himself. Again, when narrating that Orhan's sons dined at nearby tables, he points out that they were not far from the emperor's—his—table. Moreover, he stresses that all the Byzantine and Ottoman nobles who dined together were overseen by the emperor; Kantakouzenos is represented as the one presiding over the feast<sup>20</sup>. As such, it can be proposed that Kantakouzenos subtly strives to portray himself as the superior figure, almost as the host in these celebrations. Yet, in this gathering, since Skoutari was in the hands of the Ottomans, the host would have been Orhan Bey, and the table would be seen as that of the Ottoman ruler. Both in Byzantine and Ottoman dining etiquette, hospitality and offering food to one's guests, conferred prestige to the host, while dining together signalled mutual esteem<sup>21</sup>. Thus, by discreetly representing himself almost like the host of this gathering in Ottoman territory, Kantakouzenos portrays himself not only as having amicable relations with his son-in-law, but also as having more prestige vis-à-vis the Ottoman ruler.

Moreover, Kantakouzenos narrates that he and Orhan Bey sat at a table together while Orhan's four sons from other wives did so nearby; other Ottomans and Byzantines dined while reclining on carpets, presumably not using a table. This is evident through Kantakouzenos' use of the word table *trapeza* (τραπέζα) for the rulers' arrangement and the expression of reclining on carpets (ἐπι ταπίτων ἦσαν ἀνακεκλιμένοι πρὸς τὸ ἐσθίειν) for the others. The Turkish habit of reclining on carpets and rugs, not using seating, is also noted by the travellers of the era. In the 1330s, Ibn Battuta narrates how the prince of Hamidoğulları sat on a rug on the floor, leaning on a cushion, while in 1432/33 Bertrandon de la Broquière describes the same arrangement for the ruler of Karamanoğulları<sup>22</sup>. In contrast, Byzantine imperial and aristocratic households used thrones and various types

20 Kantakouzenos, III, p. 28; '...πρὸς τὸ ἐσθίειν, ὅσον ὄρασθαι ὑπὸ βασιλέως...; 'συνήθειον δὲ βασιλεὺς μὲν καὶ Ὀρχάνης ὁ γαμβρὸς ἐπὶ τραπέζης τῆς αὐτῆς, οἱ υἱοὶ δὲ τέτταρες ὄντες, ἐξ ἑτέρων γυναικῶν αὐτῷ γεγεννημένοι, ἐφ' ἑτέτρας οὐ μακρὰν τῆς βασιλείως.'

21 Nicholas Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life in Medieval Anatolia: A New Social History*, University of Texas Press, Austin 2014, pp. 92-93.

22 Ibn Battuta, p. 423; Bertrandon de la Broquière, *A Mission to the Medieval Middle East. The Travels of Bertrandon de la Broquière to Jerusalem and Constantinople*, trans. Thomas Johnes, introduction by Morris Rossabi, I.B. Tauris, London and New York 2019, p. 186.

of seating, as well as tables and chairs for dining<sup>23</sup>. Kantakouzenos presumably conveys these details of the gathering not only to enrich his narrative, but also to showcase the cultural similarities and differences of the Ottomans, the “others” in the relationship. Highly attentive to hierarchy and rank also elsewhere in his history, Kantakouzenos emphasizes his -also Orhan Bey’s- higher rank in this Byzantine-Ottoman gathering by pointing out the separate dining arrangement for the two rulers. Seating according to one’s rank and standing in a feast or dinner, was part of the dining etiquette both for the Byzantines and the Ottomans<sup>24</sup>. The closest one was to the ruler or the host, the higher rank it denoted. Indeed, this was a signifier that both Kantakouzenos and Orhan Bey would be familiar with and thus culturally united the two rulers. However, dining tables seem to have been introduced for the more prestigious ‘host’ corners. Thus, it seems that Orhan Bey and his sons did not dine à la Ottoman but sat at a ‘proper’ table like the Byzantines would. This could either have been done on Kantakouzenos’ request, or on Orhan Bey’s initiative, who perhaps wished to offer Kantakouzenos a more familiar dining arrangement. The rest dined while reclining on carpets in the “other” Turkish manner; and within this group, the Byzantines went along with the Ottomans. Later, Orhan’s sons and some high-ranking Ottomans accompanied Theodora to Constantinople while the Ottoman ruler did not join them<sup>25</sup>. Once more, Kantakouzenos strives to represent himself as a gracious host to the Ottomans, emphasizing that they had been hosted honourably (εὐερεγτηθέντων φιλοτίμως) in Constantinople by the emperor<sup>26</sup>.

In the cases of Gregory Palamas and Manuel II Palaiologos, we will focus on some passages from their anti-Islamic dialogues. The origins of this tradition of anti-Islamic treatises went back to the eighth century. These treatises were also

23 Parani, *Reconstructing the Reality of Images*, pp. 159-173. However, the common people usually did not own dining tables and chairs, instead making use of folding tables and trays, tops of chests or niches in the walls; Nicolas Oikonomides, “The Contents of the Byzantine House from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 44, 1990, pp. 205-214. Finally, the custom of the Ottomans to recline/lean on carpets and cushions should not be confused with the earlier Byzantine custom of reclining on couches for dining in elite settings.

24 For medieval Anatolian and Muslim dining customs and seating hierarchies, see Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life...*, pp. 79-80.

25 Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, p. 222, interprets Orhan’s refraining from a visit to Constantinople as a move of power-signalling; by avoiding stepping on Byzantine soil, Orhan also avoids becoming a guest of the emperor in Byzantine territory. Telling, he also had not travelled to Selymbria for his wedding to Theodora.

26 Kantakouzenos, III, p. 28.

rooted in the *Adversus Iudaeos* literature, texts penned against Judaism, and both genres functioned not as comparative theological studies, but as vehicles to assert the superiority of Christianity<sup>27</sup>. Thus, Islam was never accurately represented in these works and their authors relied on earlier Byzantine treatises, usually merely proliferating their faulty contents. Not only strange beliefs and practices—like revering the star of Aphrodite or viewing the angels as corruptible—are falsely attributed to Islam, but even the most important theological sources of Muslims, namely the Quran and the hadith, remain undiscussed. The proliferation of Byzantine anti-Islamic literature also had deep connections with the increase in Byzantine-Muslim contacts. For instance, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the rapid Ottoman conquests, increasing conversions to Islam and face-to-face contacts between the Christians and the Muslims were the factors contributing to the surge of anti-Islamic treatises. While some of the anti-Islamic treatises could lack any attempt at establishing characters and settings, those of Palamas and Manuel II possess many elements of story-telling, vivid character portrayals and episodes of daily life narratives, displaying strong literary flavour<sup>28</sup>.

Gregory Palamas (c.1296-1359), an archbishop and eminent theologian, was another Byzantine who had the opportunity to observe Ottoman daily culture like Kantakouzenos, albeit under very different circumstances<sup>29</sup>. While travelling

27 See Çelik, “The emperor, the sultan and the scholar...”, p. 211-212. Some earlier important Byzantine anti-Islamic works are those of John of Damascus (8<sup>th</sup> c.), Niketas Byzantios (9<sup>th</sup> c.), George Monachos (9<sup>th</sup> c.), Zigabenos (12<sup>th</sup> c.) and Niketas Choniates (12<sup>th</sup> c.). Some general studies on Byzantine anti-Islamic literature are John Meyendorff, “Byzantine views of Islam”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 18, 1964, pp. 263-286; Théodore Houry, *Polémique byzantine contre l’Islam; VIIIe-XIIIe siècles*, Brill, Leiden 1972.

28 Çelik, “The emperor, the sultan and the scholar...”, pp. 211-212, 215; Elizabeth Zachariadou, “Religious dialogue between the Byzantines and Turks during the Ottoman expansion”, *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, eds. Bernard Lewis and Frederich Niewöhner, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1992, pp. 289-304, reprinted in Elizabeth Zachariadou, *Studies in Pre-Ottoman Turkey and the Ottomans* Ashgate, Aldershot 2007, Study II; Speros Vryonis, “Byzantine attitudes towards Islam during the late Middle Ages”, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, Vol. 12/No. 2, 1971, pp. 263-286 and Apostolos Karpozilos, “Byzantine apologetic and polemic writings of the Palaeologan epoch against Islam”, *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 15/No. 2, 1970, pp. 213-248.

29 The complete oeuvre of Palamas relating to his Ottoman captivity has been edited and translated into French in Anna Philippidis-Braat, “La captivité de Palamas chez les Turcs, dossier et commentaire”, *Travaux et Mémoires*, Vol. 7, 1979, p. 109-222. See now Norman Russell, *Gregory Palamas: The Hesychast Controversy and the Debate with Islam. Documents Relating to Gregory Palamas*, Liverpool University Press 2020, for an English translation of this “dossier”, an Daniel J. Sahas, “Captivity and Dialogue: Gregory Palamas (1296-1360) and the Muslims”, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. 25, 1980, pp. 409-436, for an earlier English translation of the “Letter to

from Tenedos to Gallipoli in the summer of 1355, Palamas was caught up in a storm and ended up being captured by Ottoman pirates in Lampsakos. According to Palamas, upon witnessing the respect he commanded among the local Greek population, the Ottomans demanded even a higher ransom. Palamas spent many months among the Ottomans, he was taken to Bursa and then finally conveyed to İznik. On the journey to İznik, he met and conversed with Ismail, a grandson of Orhan Bey, mingled with men of religion and at Orhan Bey's court he engaged in a public debate on Islam and Christianity, with some men called *khiones* (χιόνες), sometimes interpreted by scholars to be Islamicized Jews<sup>30</sup>. Later, he wrote some letters and a dialogue based on his sojourn and the debates he participated in. As in the case of many other Byzantine travel accounts and anti-Islamic dialogues, Palamas' writings should not be read as exact transcriptions of the debates, but as literary works, as modified and embellished versions of Palamas' actual experiences, possibly with some fictional aspects<sup>31</sup>. Throughout his narratives, he represents himself as the suffering and righteous Christian amidst the Muslim "others", and his account borrows elements from travel romances and hagiography<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, as in the cases of other Byzantines who engaged in debates with Muslims, Palamas emerges as the superior discussant in all conversations, his opponents rarely able to make any sound argument against him. Overall, despite their generally respectful and tolerant attitude, the Ottomans emerge as the "others" and the "barbarians" in Palamas' narrative. Yet, it is also unfair to dismiss Palamas' entire captivity oeuvre as fictional. His capture and the events that transpired are verified by other sources, while Palamas' narrative is also adorned with quite accurate

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His Church". On Palamas' writings see also George Arnakis, "Gregory Palamas among the Turks and documents of his captivity as historical source", *Speculum*, Vol. 26/No. 1, 1951, pp. 104-118 and Zachariadou, "Religious dialogue..."

30 On the much debated identity of *khiones* see Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", pp. 214-218 and Russell, *Gregory Palamas...*, p. 379. A newer interpretation arguing that the name signified a place origin and not a Jewish root for these men; Ruth A. Miller, "Religious v. ethnic identity in fourteenth-century Bithynia: Gregory Palamas and the case of the Chionai", *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13, 2007, pp. 27-42. More generally, for Orhan bey's patronage of theologians and religious figures, Haşim Şahin, *Dervişler, Fakihler, Gaziler. Erken Osmanlı Döneminde Dini Zümreler (1300-1400)*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul 2020, pp. 186-201.

31 On this issue concerning anti-Islamic dialogues of the Palaiologan era see Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar...", pp. 217-218. For Byzantine travel accounts and their literary constructions of the self, Galatariotou, "Travel and perception in Byzantium", pp. 221-241.

32 Messis, "La memoire de 'Je Souffrant'...", pp. 107-146, especially pp. 120-121.

and intriguing insights into the Ottoman culture he observed<sup>33</sup>. As in the case of Kantakouzenos, the literary function of food and daily life routines in fashioning the depiction of the “other” in Palamas’ account has not received much attention.

According to Palamas’ narrative, on his way from Bursa to İznik, Palamas was taken to a village on top of a hill, with a view of the mountains. The place boasted cool winds, the shadows of the trees and a cold spring; Palamas remarks that “the most powerful of the barbarians” spent his summer there. The “barbarian” in question is Orhan Bey and the location described by Palamas is clearly a *yayla*<sup>34</sup>. Indeed, the association of *yayla* and the early Ottoman rulers is also found in several travellers’ accounts, as well as in the early Ottoman chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade<sup>35</sup>. Here, Palamas’ narrative does not only reflect the nomadic customs of the early Ottomans, but also underlines their differences from the “urbane” Byzantines who remained in cities throughout the year. Palamas then recounts his conversations with Orhan’s grandson Ismail in the *yayla*, where the Ottoman prince invited him to share a meal. Once more, the differing customs of the Ottomans are highlighted; the men sit on the grass to share a meal. While Palamas, an ascetic man of Christian religion was served fruits -presumably on his request- Ismail enjoyed his meat<sup>36</sup>. The actual contents of these two platters are not stated. But, given that they are outdoors and in a *yayla*, one may presume that İsmail consumed some form of roast meat or *kebap*, as these were the dishes that were often prepared while outdoors<sup>37</sup>. The early Ottomans and other Turkish Muslims of Anatolia are indeed always associated with roast meat and dairy products such as cheese, yoghurt and cream in the travel accounts of the period. Similarly, the narrative of Aşıkpaşazade concerning the reign of Osman refers to sheep, cheese and *kaymak* as presents for the governor (*tekfür*) of Bilecik<sup>38</sup>. As well as mentioning meat and dairy as the staple foods of the Turks, on one occasion,

33 Kaldellis, *Ethnography After Antiquity*, pp. 154-156; Gregoras III, p. 227-229.

34 Philippidis-Braat, “La captivité de Palamas...”, pp. 146-147.

35 Aşıkpaşazade. *Aşıkpaşazâde Tarihi (1285-1502)*, ed. Necdet Öztürk, Bilge Kültür Sanat, İstanbul 2013, p. 10, speaks of the Ottomans’ travels from the *kışlak* to the *yayla* in the summers. Several traveler accounts also refer to the nomadic customs of the early Ottomans, for instance *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger*, 1396-1427 ed. and trans. John B. Telfer, Hakluyt Society, London, 1879, pp. 127-129 and Bertrand de la Broquière, p. 164.

36 Philippides-Braat, “La captivité de Palamas...”, p. 146-147.

37 Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life...*, p.74, for the association between outdoor cooking and *kebaps*.

38 Aşıkpaşazade, *ibid*, p.10 and 19.

the traveller Bertrandon de la Broquière was served with roast meat that was being sliced while it was cooked on a spit, as well as with *kaymak*, (clotted cream). The Spanish traveller Clavijo also frequently refers to the meat and dairy products offered to him by various Turkic groups<sup>39</sup>.

In contrast, many travellers note Byzantines' preference for fish and vegetables, especially stressing their great love for seafood<sup>40</sup>. Particularly in Constantinople, seafood such as fish, shellfish and shells were very popular due to the sea-borne location of the city— a fondness that can be observed throughout centuries. Yet, a strong reason for the widespread consumption of seafood was the Orthodox Christianity of the Byzantines; they were required to observe a diet of seafood and vegetables during their numerous fasting periods. Thus, across centuries, on many occasions in travellers' accounts, seafood almost becomes a marker of Byzantine identity and their Orthodox faith<sup>41</sup>. Likewise, the travellers narrate the diet of the Turks not only to liven their accounts, but also as they are markers of the “otherness” of the Turks. Their food, tasty though it may be, is that of nomads: roasted meat, dairy and variations of flatbreads. As such, Palamas does not provide the details about the meal in the *yayla* merely to enrich his narrative, but to showcase the cultural differences between himself and the Ottoman prince, the “other”. While Ismail's consumption of roasted meat does indeed reflect the culinary preferences of the early Ottomans, it also hints at his nomadic ways and lack of sophistication in Palamas' eyes<sup>42</sup>. Finally, Palamas' vignette of his

39 Bertrandon de la Broquière, p. 204 for the *kebab* and the *kaymak*, pp. 164-165, p. 172 and p. 286; Priscilla M. Işın, *Avçılıktan Gurmeliğe Yemeğin Kültürel Tarihi*, Kitap Yayınevi, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul 2019, p. 225, proposes that the meat dish that de la Broquière ate may be an early form of *çevirme kebabı*. Ruy González de Clavijo, *Embassy to Tamerlane*, trans. Guy Le Strange, Routledge London, 1928, pp. 68-69, pp. 121-124.

40 For some examples see Tafur, pp. 145-147, pp. 151-153 and Schiltberger, p. 82; Clavijo, p. 63.

41 For the association between Christianity and seafood, especially crustaceans in Islamic texts, and the Muslims with meat and pastries, also see Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, “Taam, Şölen, Oruç ve Bizanslı Öteki (13.-15. Yüzyıllar)”, *Türkiye'de Bizans Çalışmaları. Yeni Araştırmalar, Farklı Eğilimler*, eds. Koray Durak, Nevra Necipoğlu, Tolga Uyar, İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2022, pp. 517-528, pp. 521-522 and p. 52; Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, *Warriors and Dervishes...*, pp. 57-87. These studies focus especially on the Turkish epics *Battalname* and *Danışmendname*.

Even after the conquest of Constantinople, despite also being consumed by the Muslims, caviar would continue to be associated with Orthodox fasting. Likewise, the majority of the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire remained cool towards items like oysters and shrimps despite their presence in the Ottoman palace, Priscilla M. Işın, *Osmanlı Mutfağ İmparatorluğu*, Kitap Yayınevi, İstanbul 2014, pp. 167-170.

42 Indeed, a preference for roasted meat was sometimes attributed to those the Byzantines

Ottoman meal serves to point out the different religious practices of the ascetic Christian ecclesiastic and the Muslim prince. While Palamas shuns meat as an ascetic Christian, Ismail consumes it freely. Palamas underlines that they opt for different meals not only as they have different culinary preferences, but also different religious practices. Indeed, their different choices of food also function as the starting point of their religious debate; Ismail immediately inquires about the reasons for Palamas' abstinence and the two men start to converse about Christianity and Islam. The conversation and the meal then end abruptly due to an outpouring of rain. When the two men separate, tellingly Ismail goes away while Palamas returns to join other captives under the rain. Both go back to their own groups and the Ottoman prince is represented as having no qualms about leaving the captive Christian to soak under the rain. Palamas thus further accentuates his portrayal of Ismail as the "other"; he is depicted as a rude and unthoughtful man despite his earlier courtesies. Palamas, on the other hand, emerges as a morally superior Christian suffering during his captivity at the hands of the Ottomans.

While narrating his religious debates with the Ottomans, Palamas usually portrays them as being tolerant and generally respectful— save for the one incident when a man attempts to punch him at the end of the debate and is quickly restrained by the other Ottomans<sup>43</sup>. Similarly, from time to time, Palamas points out the common ground between Christianity and Islam, such as the importance attached to almsgiving and charity<sup>44</sup>. Still, he also misses no occasion to highlight the "barbarian nature" of the Ottomans, putting special emphasis on their non-Christian faith. In Palamas' narrative, the Ottomans are compared always unfavourably to the local Christian population; they appear as ignorant, less skilled and more prone to unkind behaviour. In contrast, the local Christian population is

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considered "barbarians" or less sophisticated than themselves. Anna Komnene, the twelfth-century Byzantine historian, narrates how the Crusader leader Bohemond avoided the seafood offered to him by the Byzantines as he suspected them of being poisoned, instead ordering the cooks to prepare meat in his custom, quoted in Andrew Dalby, *Tastes of Byzantium. The Cuisine of a Legendary Empire*, I.B Tauris, London, 2010, p. 120. Here, too, being "Byzantine" is associated with seafood. Likewise, the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus emphasizes the Huns' fondness for meat and dairy; Paul Tuffin and Meghan McEvoy, "Steak à la Hun: food, drink and dietary habits in Ammianus Marcellinus", *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium*, eds. Wendy Mayer and Silke Trzcionka, Routledge, Farnham 2005, pp. 69-84.

43 Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", pp. 182-183.

44 For instance, see Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", pp. 146-149.

portrayed as being kind, wise and patient, silently enduring their Ottoman rulers<sup>45</sup>. Even when discussing Orhan Bey's liver disease and his consultations with his Christian physician, Palamas underlines the Christianity of Taronites, saying that he was a good and capable Christian physician, was God-loving and a beloved of God among physicians<sup>46</sup>. His narrative thus not only reflects the multicultural nature of Orhan Bey's court, but also serves to highlight the dependence of the Ottomans on the medical knowledge of the "wise" Christians.

Palamas' observations on a Muslim funeral he witnessed fulfil a similar literary function. While it adds liveliness and authenticity to his account, it also contributes to the portrayal of the Ottomans as the "other" with strange customs: *I saw a cube fashioned out of marble... a group of the barbarians, carrying the dead, walked up to that cube...they placed the coffin on the cube. They gathered thus, having in their middle one of their tasimanes— this is the name given to those who act as priests among them. Extending out his hands, he cried out; the others repeated the cry after him. This happened three times*<sup>47</sup>. Palamas here clearly describes the *musalla*, a marble table on which the deceased would be placed during the funeral prayers. Interestingly, he calls the Muslim man of religion leading the funeral *tasimanes* (τασιμάνης), often interpreted by scholars as a distortion of the title *danişmend*<sup>48</sup>. It has been argued that the words that Palamas heard repeated three times correspond probably to the *takbîr*<sup>49</sup>. Finally, as in the case of his meal with Ismail, this scene has the literary function of serving as the basis for another debate on Islam and Christianity— in which Palamas again emerges as the superior discussant.

The third and final work to be examined is the *Dialogue with a Persian* of Manuel II Palaiologos (r.1391-1425), emperor and a noteworthy author of the late Byzantine

45 Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", p. 140-145, for some examples; also see "La memoire de 'Je Souffrant'...", pp. 107-146, especially pp. 120-121.

46 Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", pp. 148-149.

47 Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", pp. 152-153 ; '...ὄρω κύβον ἐπὶ πεδιάδος ἐκ μαρμάρων ἐσκευασμένον... εἶδομεν βαρβάρων σόνταγμα νεκρὸν ἐκφερόντων καὶ βαδιζόντων εὐθὺς τοῦ κύβου... τὸ κιβώτιον... ἐπὶ τοῦ κύβου κοσμίως ἔθεντο.' Ἐἶτα περιστάντες αὐτοὶ μέσον εἶχον τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς τασιμανῶν —ἐνα —καλεῖν δὲ εἰώθασιν οὕτω τοὺς ἀνακειμένους τῷ κατ' αὐτοὺς ἱερῷ. Τὰς χεῖρας οὖν οὕτως ἀνατείνας ἐβόησεν. οἱ δὲ ἐπεβόησαν. Καὶ τοῦτο πεποίηται τοῦτοις τρίς.'

48 Philippidis-Braat, "La captivité de Palamas...", pp. 152-153 ; Russell, *Gregory Palamas...*, p. 159, 382, 294 ; Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine...*, p. 166.

49 Balivet, *Romanie Byzantine...*, p. 166.



era<sup>50</sup>. Both before and after his succession to the throne, Manuel II had intense interactions with the Ottomans and adorned many of his work with portrayals of them, especially that of Bayezid I<sup>51</sup>. His *Dialogue with a Persian* is a significant work among his sizable oeuvre not only on account of its theological content, but for its literary features such as its abundant vignettes of daily life, lively dialogue and complex character portrayal<sup>52</sup>. From June 1391 to January 1392, Manuel II had been obliged to serve alongside Bayezid I in his campaign in Asia Minor, directed against various Turkish emirates<sup>53</sup>. When the Ottoman army retreated to Ankara to spend the winter there, Manuel was hosted by a *müdderris*, a scholar of Islamic theology. According to Manuel, the two enjoyed long discussions on Islam and Christianity, often accompanied by an enthusiastic audience<sup>54</sup>. It was based on these conversations that Manuel penned the *Dialogue with a Persian* after his return to Constantinople, between 1392 and 1399.

The work has many Ottoman characters in it, the most notable two being the *müdderris* and Bayezid I. While Bayezid I, against whom Manuel seems to have held great hatred, is depicted as a bloodthirsty and violent tyrant, the *müdderris* is portrayed as a kind, well-learned and amiable man. Yet, from time to time, Manuel highlights his lesser status as the ‘other, depicting him as the lesser discussant, defeated easily by Christian arguments and lacking the learning of a well-educated Byzantine. As in the case of the work of Palamas, the *Dialogue with a Persian* is fiction in many aspects, a modified and embellished version of the

- 50 John W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1969 and more recently Siren Çelik, *Manuel II Palaiologos (1350-1425): A Byzantine Emperor in a Time of Tumult*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2021, studying Manuel as a ruler, author and personality.
- 51 Çelik, *Manuel II...* discusses at length Manuel’s literary representations of the Ottomans, especially pp. 130-156, 247-249 and 308-310.
- 52 The work has been edited twice in full, Manuel II Palaiologos, *Dialoge mit einem “Perser”*, ed. Erich Trapp, Böhlau, Vienna 1966 and Karl Förstel, *Dialoge mit einem Muslim*, 3 vols, Oros-Verlag, Würzburg-Altenberg 1993-1996, with some minor emendations to the Trapp edition and with a German translation. This study will cite the Trapp version. For a detailed discussion of the work see Çelik, “The emperor, sultan and scholar...” and Çelik, *Manuel II...*, pp. 138-57.
- 53 Çelik, *Manuel II...*, pp. 130-138 and Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Manuel II Palaeologus on the strife between Bayezid I and Kadi Burhan al-Din Ahmad”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 43/No. 3, 1980, pp. 471-481.
- 54 The identity of the *müdderris* remains unclear; but two notable suggestions are Hacı Bayram Veli and Şemsettin Fenari; Michel Balivet, “Le soufi et le basileus: Hacı Bayram Veli et Manuel II Paléologue”, *Medioevo-Greco*, Vol. 4, 2004, pp. 19-31.

actual conversations. This is also evident from Manuel's representation of himself and Christianity as the utterly prevailing side, as well as from the lengthy and meticulous arguments of the emperor. But there is also no doubt that at least some of the dialogue and the everyday life scenes dispersed throughout the work originated from Manuel's actual experiences<sup>55</sup>. It is now to some of these scenes in Ottoman Ankara that this paper will turn, especially those concerning food and dining:

...Someone from among his people came in carrying wood to light a great fire. He also brought a considerable amount of nuts and honey to us — such was the hospitality of the Persians. The old man (the *müderis*), who pointed at these with his finger, started joking as on previous occasions: 'I have come to you bringing arms, with which we shall scare away the present storm.' And since I was pleased with those words, I said: 'This is well thought of, we shall not be bothered by the snow while eating.' I sat down and partook in the offering so that I did not dishonour the host and distributed all remainders to those standing nearby...<sup>56</sup>

Manuel thus describes a morning gathering he shared on a snowy Ankara morning, with the *müderis*. The serving of nuts, fruits and honey to guests was indeed a custom in Asia Minor, one that travellers such as Clavijo and Ibn Battuta also experienced<sup>57</sup>. As mentioned above, food functioned as one of the main conveyors of hospitality in medieval Anatolia, while sharing food further emphasized the bond between the guest and the host. Furthermore, hospitality could confer prestige on the hosting party<sup>58</sup>. Manuel's narrative here also mirrors

55 Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar...", p. 215, pp. 217-218 and Çelik, *Manuel II...*, pp. 138-157. On the religious figures of the era of Bayezid I, Şahin, *Dervişler...*, pp. 119-127, 149-150, 205-209.

56 *Dialogue with a Persian*, p. 50. "Ταῦτα τοῦτου μεθ' ἡδονῆς εἰρηκότος εἰσήει τις τῶν αὐτοῦ ζῦλα τε μεγίστην ἀνάφαι πυρὰν ἰκανὰ καὶ κάρυα καὶ μέλι κομίζων ἡμῖν (τοιαῦτα γὰρ τὰ ξενία τῶν Περσῶν). Ταῦτα τοῖνον τῷ δακτύλῳ μοι δείξας ἔφη πάλιν ὁ γέρων τοῖς προτέροις παραπλήσια παίζων. Ἔκω σοι κομίζων ὄπλα, οἷς τὸν ἐπιόντα χειμῶνα ἀποσοβήσομεν. Καὶ ἡσθεῖς τῷ τῶν ῥημάτων ἀστείρῳ, τοιγαροῦν καταφρακτέον ἔφηγν, καλῶς, ὅπως ἐν τῷ ἀριστᾶν μὴ ταῖς νιφάσι διανογλώμεθα. Καθίσας δὲ καὶ τῶν ξενίων ἀψάμενος, ὅσον ἐκείνους μὴ ἀτιμάσαι, ἔπειτα τοῖς περιεστηκόσι πάντα διένειμα." Translation from Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar...", p. 222.

57 Ibn Battuta, p. 411, 428 and 432. Yet, one must note that the food offered to Ibn Battuta by ruler of Aydnogulları in Birgi is quite different; sweets, nuts and fruits are not mentioned and instead, the dishes contain rice, spices, oil and vegetables, pp. 421-422. Clavijo, p. 121-123.

58 Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life...*, p. 92.

a similar experience. He is aware that declining the nuts and the honey would be tantamount to refusing the hospitality of his host. As such, not wanting to dishonour and upset the *müderriş*, towards whom he is sympathetic throughout the narrative, the emperor partakes in the offerings. He also portrays the *müderriş* as a gracious and witty host, not as a stereotypical barbarian. However, neither wishing to appear too eager and pleased with his status as a guest in this Ottoman household, Manuel also underlines that he only takes a little of the offerings. Instead, he distributes the rest of the food to those standing nearby, thus attempting to maintain a more aloof and dignified stance.

The exact time of this morning meal cannot be discerned with certainty. Here, I would like to expand my previous discussions of Manuel's depictions of the Ottomans' morning meals in the *Dialogue*. Was this meal consumed early in the morning, soon after waking up, or towards noon? As the text indicates that it was the first encounter of the two men for that day and that the hunt for the day had just been cancelled, it seems that it still was early morning. The fact that the *müderriş* comes into the room where the emperor slept and that someone lights a fire also suggests earlier hours. In the fourteenth century, both the Byzantines and the Ottomans had two meals in the day. The Byzantines would have one in late morning/early noon, and the other before sunset, a similar practice was also observed by the Ottomans. The distinction between breakfast and lunch in the sense we have today, did not exist. Manuel uses the verb *aristan* in this passage, which is reasonable as *ariston* was the name usually given to the morning meal. Yet, it also seems that this meal was partaken more towards earlier morning than noon. Indeed, on several more occasions in the dialogue, Manuel makes it clear that the household of the *müderriş* ate as soon as they woke up, at dawn<sup>59</sup>. The emperor remarks twice that this was their custom (*ethos*), clearly indicating that he found the practice foreign. He also seems to have found this habit peculiar as in one passage, he underlines that the *müderriş* and his sons came to him at dawn, even without having eaten anything. Thus, Manuel here seems to be describing a meal closer to 'breakfast' in the sense we understand today, which he was unaccustomed to in Constantinople. While this custom of eating a light meal soon after waking up cannot be observed in the Ottoman palace until the reign of Bayezid II, it can be traced in fourteenth and fifteenth-century *zawiyas* and *madrassa* circles. Several

59 *Dialogue with a Persian*, p. 50, 120, 134. On *ariston* see *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan, 3 vols. (Oxford 1991) 1, 170.

translations of the *Qabusname* into Turkish from these circles point out that the first meal was to be eaten at dawn— a specification not found in the original Persian text<sup>60</sup>. Manuel's *müderri*s could be observing this practice, making the *Dialogue* one of the rare instances where we can observe a more 'breakfast-like' morning meal for the Ottomans.

On another occasion, the emperor describes a dinner, narrating how the *müderri*s had graciously greeted him at the door of the house upon his return from a hunt and led him inside a room, showing hospitality according to his customs<sup>61</sup>. Manuel remarks that near a fire was a sizeable bronze platter that was full of winter fruits. He is probably referring to a *sini* that could function as a low table around which the Ottomans would sit on the floor to eat<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, besides the fruits, on this bronze platter were also some badly baked and paper-like (χαρτοειδεῖς) bread loaves. Manuel remarks that his brother Theodore, the addressee of the work, would recognize these loaves—undoubtedly thanks to the time he spent among the Ottomans<sup>63</sup>. His unflattering description of the Ottoman flatbread, probably a form of *yufka*,<sup>64</sup> conveys Manuel's dislike for it. Bertrandon de la Broquière also refers to this type of Turkish bread as being badly baked<sup>65</sup>. In 1403, The Spanish traveller Clavijo also describes the flatbread in Erzincan in a similar manner: ... *Their bread in these villages was indeed of very bad quality, being made in a strange fashion. They take a little flour, knead it and make pancakes of the same. Then they take a frying pan set it on the fire and when it has got hot throw the thin cake of dough into it, which as soon as it is heated and baked through, they remove*<sup>66</sup>. As such, it is quite possible that all

60 Priscilla M. Işın, "Fatih dönemi Osmanlı mutfağı", *Entelektüel Bir Osmanlı Padişahu. Fatih Sultan Mehmed*, ed. Haşım Şahin, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2022, pp. 444-477, p. 454; Trépanier, *Foodways and Daily Life...*, p. 77-78.

61 *Dialogue with a Persian*, p. 190. '... εὐθὺς τοῦ ἵππου καὶ τῆς χειρὸς με λαβόμενος ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἦγεν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον ἐπιχωρίως ζενίσων. Δίδες οὖν ἦσαν ἡμέραι καὶ πῶρ ἰκανὸν χειμῶνος ἐλέγχειν δριμύτητα καὶ πρὸς αὐτῶ τι σκεδὸς χαλκοῦν οὐ μικρὸν, γέμον μὲν ὀπωρῶν τούτων δι τῶν χειμερίων, ἔχον δὲ καὶ ἄρτους, οὓς οἶσθα, τοὺς χαρτοειδεῖς ἐκείνους καὶ κακῶς ὠπτημένους...'

62 It is not certain how widespread was the use of *sinis* for dining during the reign of Bayezid I. Mehmed II is known to have used a *sini* for eating, but it was also very common eat directly on a *sofra*, either of cloth or leather, see Işın, "Fatih dönemi Osmanlı mutfağı", p. 454.

63 Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar...", pp. 223-224.

64 Işın, *Avçılıktan Gurmeliğe Yemeğin Kültürel Tarihi*, pp. 229-230 and eadem, *Osmanlı Mutfak İmparatorluğu*, pp. 11-12 for the types of bread consumed by the Ottomans in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

65 Bertrandon de la Broquière, pp. 216-217.

66 Clavijo, p. 66.

three indeed disliked this bread, perhaps comparing it negatively with the fluffy white bread of finely grounded flour praised in both Byzantine and European cuisines<sup>67</sup>. In Manuel's case, his depiction of the Ottoman flatbread also serves the literary function of indicating a culinary, hence cultural inferiority on behalf of the Ottomans, whose "barbarian" qualities Manuel often highlights despite his positive depiction of the *müdderris*<sup>68</sup>.

The final cultural encounter between Manuel and the Ottomans we will discuss, concerns game meat brought by the emperor after a day's hunting. Upon greeting Manuel, who is still on horseback, the *müdderris* asks whether he and the others would be able to share the spoils of the hunt for dinner. The emperor answers as follows:

"Of course", I replied to him, "it is possible, if they wish to taste from all, since we cannot divide the game; this is not the custom for hunters." I said this in jest, and I will now explain the joke. Someone from our party had hunted a big and fat boar with his spear and unknown to anyone had concealed it in the grass, while bringing it on horseback, so that he would not be subjected to many curses and abuses, and perhaps also blows, of those who could not bear even to see pigs...<sup>69</sup>

Here, the emperor is referring to the Islamic dietary regulations concerning pork, which was a forbidden food for Muslims. Indeed, especially in many Muslim texts from the period, pork emerges almost as a marker of Christian identity<sup>70</sup>. One poignant example is Ibn Battuta's narration of the journey of an illegitimate daughter of Emperor Andronikos III and the wife of the Mongol ruler on a visit to her parents in Constantinople. The traveller disapprovingly notes how the princess sheds her newly forged Muslim identity as she gets closer to Constantinople, no

67 See Dalby, *Tastes of Byzantium*, p. 77-78, 180.

68 Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar...", p. 223-224.

69 *Dialogue with a Persian*, p. 190. 'Κάγω ταῦτὸν ἐκείνω ποιῶν καί, μάλ' ἔξεστιν, εἶπον, εἰ πάντων ἐθελήσαιεν ἀπογεύσασθαι, οὐδὲ γάρ τὰ μὲν μερίζειν, τὰ δὲ μὴ θεμιτὸν θηραταῖς. Τοῦτο δὲ εἶπον παιζῶν, τὴν δὲ παιδιὰν ἤδη λέξω. Κάπρον τις τῶν ἡμετέρων μέγαν τε καὶ πύονα σφόδρα δόρατι που κατενεγκῶν μηδενός τινος συνειδότης συρφετῶδει χόρτω ἐλίξας, ὡς ἂν μὴ ὑπὸ τῶν μηδὲ βλέπειν χοίρους ἀνεχομένων συχνὰς ἀράς καὶ προπηλακισμοὺς, τυχόν δὲ καὶ πληγὰς δέξαιτο, ἐκόμιζεν ἐφ' ἵππου.' Translation from Çelik, "The emperor, sultan and scholar...", p. 223.

70 For instance, pork has the same function also in *Danışmendname* and many other Islamic texts, see Kitapçı Bayrı, "Taam, Şölen, Oruç", p. 525, eadem. *Warriors and Dervishes*, p. 57-87, especially p. 79-80. A similar attitude towards pork is reported by Pachymeres in his history, when the Seljuk Sultan Kaykavus proposes to consume pork to prove his sincerity about his conversion to Christianity, see Shukurov, *The Byzantine Turks 1204-1461*, p. 62-63 for the reference and analysis of this passage.

longer performing the Muslim prayers, and accepting gifts of wine and pork, which Ibn Battuta emphasizes, she would *eat*<sup>71</sup>. In Ibn Battuta's account, the consumption of pork plays a pivotal role in showcasing her transformation into her former Christian and Byzantine identity. In the *Dialogue with a Persian*, Manuel approaches the symbolic value of pork from a slightly different angle; it is abstinence and not consumption that serves as an identity marker. The *müderris* merely laughs at the emperor's joke about the boar and takes no offence since, Manuel points out, he was a witty and urbane man. Ultimately, the emperor employs this exchange not only to showcase the wittiness and tolerance of the *müderris*, but also to highlight the culinary, thus cultural and religious differences between the Ottomans and the Byzantines. The two men then go inside the house, where the previously mentioned dinner scene unfolds.

In conclusion, the writings of John VI Kantakouzenos, Gregory Palamas and Manuel II Palaiologos offer precious insights into the interactions between the Ottomans and the Byzantines in daily life. Their accounts, combined with various travellers' accounts of the era, open a new window into the daily life in Anatolia in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Not only do they provide observations on the food and daily habits of the early Ottomans, but a close reading reveals how the authors use narratives of daily life to underline the perceived cultural differences of their counterparts. By providing detailed narrations on the Ottomans' nomadic ways, their fondness for meat and flatbreads, abstinence from pork, and their customs regarding seating and tables, the Byzantine authors hone further their literary fashioning of the Ottomans as 'the other'.

71 Ibn Battuta, p. 501. David Waines. *The Odyssey of Ibn Battuta. Uncommon Tales of a Medieval Adventure*, I.B. Tauris, London 2010, p. 67-68, notes Ibn Battuta's interest in food, as well as in religious aspects of food such as taboo or forbidden foods. Some of the dining experiences and hospitality received by Ibn Battuta in Anatolia are also discussed in the work, yet this episode of the Byzantine princess and pork is omitted, p. 90-105.

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