

Food Production and Consumption in the Byzantine Empire in the Light of Archaeobotanical Finds

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A lot on food production and consumption is known from historical sources. But for the research on human daily life it is indispensable to introduce the plant macroremains from archaeobotanical investigations as plants were major contributors in human everyday life. The investigations can provide direct evidence on which species were used in food production and consumption. The results of more than 50 investigated sites capturing the entire Byzantine Period (395-1453 AD) were included into an overview on the archaeobotanical evidence of important crops in nutrition and agriculture. The focus of the investigation are the plant macroremains, seeds and fruits of cultivated cereals, pulses, oil- and fibreplants but also cultivated and imported fruits, nuts, vegetables and spices. The aim is to find out which crops were cultivated and which were economically significant in the different regions of the Empire from the Early to the Late Byzantine Periods. Especial cereals provide by far the widest database and the best results. Compared to that the non-cereal species are in general less well preserved but also provide interesting evidence on production, consumption and trade.