



Food and climate in Greece. Their relationship from the antiquity to the 20th century

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During the 1960s tourists from the West started to discover the Greek “couleur locale” including the triptych Sun, Sea and Souvlaki on the islands of the Aegean Archipelago. From these three famous S the first two have been present in the region since the antiquity and the third was a food invention of the twentieth century, the Greek version of what it is called fast (and cheap) food.

The climatic studies, by foreign and Greek scientists, which started in a professional level since the mid-19th century have proved, beyond any question, that the prevailing weather in the Southern Balkan Peninsula has not changed significantly for about forty centuries, despite the fluctuations which have been appeared in certain periods.

In our paper we aim to discuss the connection between food and weather in the Greek speaking lands during three distinctive periods: the antiquity, the Byzantium and the period of contemporary Hellenism until the 1970s. Since this decade, other cultural, political and social parameters have altered significantly the dietary habits of the Greeks, though in some extent, especially in the countryside and the lower social classes, these changes are not so marked as in the urban centres and the middle and upper classes.

Our presentation will be based on visual and textual data, like representations in pottery and paintings and narratives in prose or poems. It is our scope to examine whether or not under relatively stable weather conditions, which undoubtedly are a very important factor for the formation of a general national identity, food could be used as a tracer to investigate the so called “fine structure phenomena” like the identities of certain social groups and certain local populations. Finally, having used Greece as a case study we may propose a theoretical scheme for the use of food as a climate indicator.