

# WILD PLANT GATHERING IN A GREEK VILLAGE: MİSTİ IN CAPPADOCIA

Füsun Ertuğ\*

This paper is dedicated to dear “Güven Abi”, from whom I not only learnt about archaeology but in whom I also found a model of sincerity, frankness, and precision. I also feel indebted to him for his support for my own way of doing research.

## Introduction

Anatolia is not only a pathway for plant domesticates. Its great floral richness provides food and shelter to diverse groups and several civilizations flourished here. Recent studies have indicated that Anatolia played an important role during the “Neolithic Revolution” and several basic food plants were first domesticated in this area. However, the domestication of plants and cultivation of many useful species never decreased the appeal of wild plant gathering.

Gathering was probably one of the oldest traditions in Anatolia. Even its very earliest inhabitants used plants for many of their necessities such as food, fuel and medicine, created a vast body of knowledge and passed this heritage on from one generation to the next and from one area to another.

Yet, many people in Turkey seem to believe that plant gathering is a tradition of the Aegean and that this tradition spread among local inhabitants of the Aegean, especially after the migration of the Cretan Turks to Anatolia in the nineteenth century. Lyle-Kalças, the author of *Food from the Fields* (1974:vii), even argues that plant gathering for food is limited to an area “from the Dardanelles south along the Aegean coast to the Mediterranean”

and that it cannot be found more than a hundred kilometres inland. Our research, as demonstrated in this study, indicates that there is no evidence for this commonly held belief and that wild plant gathering for food and for other needs is a well-known tradition that is widely practised throughout Anatolia.



In this paper Kostakis’ monograph (1977) on the daily life of Misti of Cappadocia will be briefly presented and the plant knowledge of a Greek population will be compared to that of their contemporary Turkish neighbours. Kostakis’ unique documentation gives us the opportunity to see that many local plants were used in similar ways by both Greek and Turkish inhabitants of Cappadocia. They sometimes used the same plant names and similar recipes, traded some plants and used wild plants in social rituals and games.

## Brief summary of the literature about useful plants in Anatolia

Although there are many references to the various uses of plants in the old Hittite texts (Ertem 1987), *Materia Medica* or *Kitab al-Hasayis*, the famous book of Dioscorides (20-79 AD)<sup>1</sup> is

---

\* Rıdvan Paşa Sok. Refik Bey Apt. 13/14 Göztepe 81080 İstanbul. e-mail: fertug@attglobal.net

<sup>1</sup> Dioscorides is known in the literature as Dioscorides of Anazarbus. This Greek pharmacist, born in Adana, Anazarva (Dilekkaya village), was taught by Areius of Tarsus and travelled in Anatolia as well as in Greece, Egypt, Syria, and other Near Eastern countries. He wrote his seminal *Materia medica* sometime around AD 65. Riddle (1985:xiii) informs us that the first century of the new era of Roman peace was a time of increased trade with distant places in the East. At that time, Greco-Roman pharmacologists began to find out about new species and drugs as sailors from Roman Egypt used their knowledge of monsoons to reach India. The home town of Dioscorides, Anazarbus, was located along two trade routes leading to Syria and Cappadocia (ibid.1). *Materia medica* was translated into Turkish in 1770 but remained unpublished (Baytop 1997:17). The copy in the Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, was written in 1224 in Arabic (see also Konyalı 1977).

considered to be the earliest source for the medicinal plants of Anatolia (Baytop 1997, 1999; Riddle 1985). It is written in Greek (*Peri Hyles Iatrikes, Knowledge of Medicine*) and translated into Latin and many other languages and has been used for about 1500 years throughout Europe and the Near East.

Although recent ethnobotanical studies about the medicinal uses of plants are relatively high in number (e.g., Baytop 1999, Fujita 1995, Yeşilada *et al.* 1999), wild plant gathering for food and for other purposes has been insufficiently studied by botanists, archaeologists, agronomists, dietitians and others. A few researchers have studied the useful plants of Anatolia (Baytop 1994, Öztürk – Özçelik 1991), some others have focussed on recipes of some locally gathered edibles (Kırtunç – Kırtunç 1990, Lyle-Kalças 1974, Üçer 1990, Ünver 1990) and traces of this tradition can be found in popular literature (Makal 1954; Sulaoğlu – Kırsaç 1993). They all indicate a rich plant gathering tradition in various areas of Anatolia. However, only limited number of ethnobotanical studies is available on the variety of plants used in one specific area<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Ertuğ 2000b; Sadıkoğlu-Alpınar 2001).

Kostakis'<sup>3</sup> study is a monograph about a village in Cappadocia, compiled through interviews with Greek inhabitants of Misti who migrated to Greece in 1924. Although it was prepared in the 1970s, the information in this monograph is based on the memories of his informants prior to 1924. In the chapter on useful plants he complains about the lack of comparable information relating to the useful plants of Turkey. He had to refer often to the book of Dioscorides when discussing a number of plants.

## Misti of Cappadocia

In the early years of the 20th century a missionary-traveller, R.M. Dawkins, visited Cappadocia and while he was recording Turkish-speaking Christian villages (*Karamanlıdes*), he found twenty villages, mostly between Kayseri and Niğde, where Greek was the sole or principal language spoken (Browning 1985:21). Misti was one of these villages and its inhabitants were subject to the Bishop at Niğde. Hasaköy, Tırhan, Gölcük and Enehil nearby were also Christian settlements (Ioavidis 1896:102). They paid no taxes to the Ottoman government and never married outsiders (Kostof 1989:31). The village was previously known as Misli in Turkish (Konaklı today) and was located between Niğde and Derinkuyu, 35 km north of Niğde and about 80 km southwest of Kayseri (Kesaria or Caesarea) (Fig. 1). Misti was situated at an altitude of 1380 m and its Greek Orthodox inhabitants once lived in the typical carved dwellings of Cappadocia, like the rest of the villagers in the area. Two storey stone buildings with arches were a relatively new development which can be dated to the beginning of the last century. Although various sources described Misti as a poor village, a large church, named Saint Vlasıs, was built in 1844 with 12 domes. It is still the most impressive building in contemporary Konaklı (Fig. 2-3).

In the 1920s Misti had a population of 4400 in about 700-800 houses and composed of fifty families. Although there were no Turks residing in the village, their relationship with neighbouring Turkish villages was harmonious. The main sources of income were agriculture, sheep and cattle breeding and in particular the craft of making felt

<sup>2</sup> This kind of study needs to include all trees, shrubs, and reeds used in an area for building, furniture and tool making, thatching, matting, basket and broom making. All edible plants and plant parts, such as flowers, stems, roots, fruit; fuel, tinder and fodder plants, glues, resins, dyes, medicinal and magical plants have to be taken into account.

<sup>3</sup> Kostakis' book is in Greek, with an English summary. I believe that this study should be translated and published in Turkish as it is a very important source of information about the history and ethnography of Anatolia.

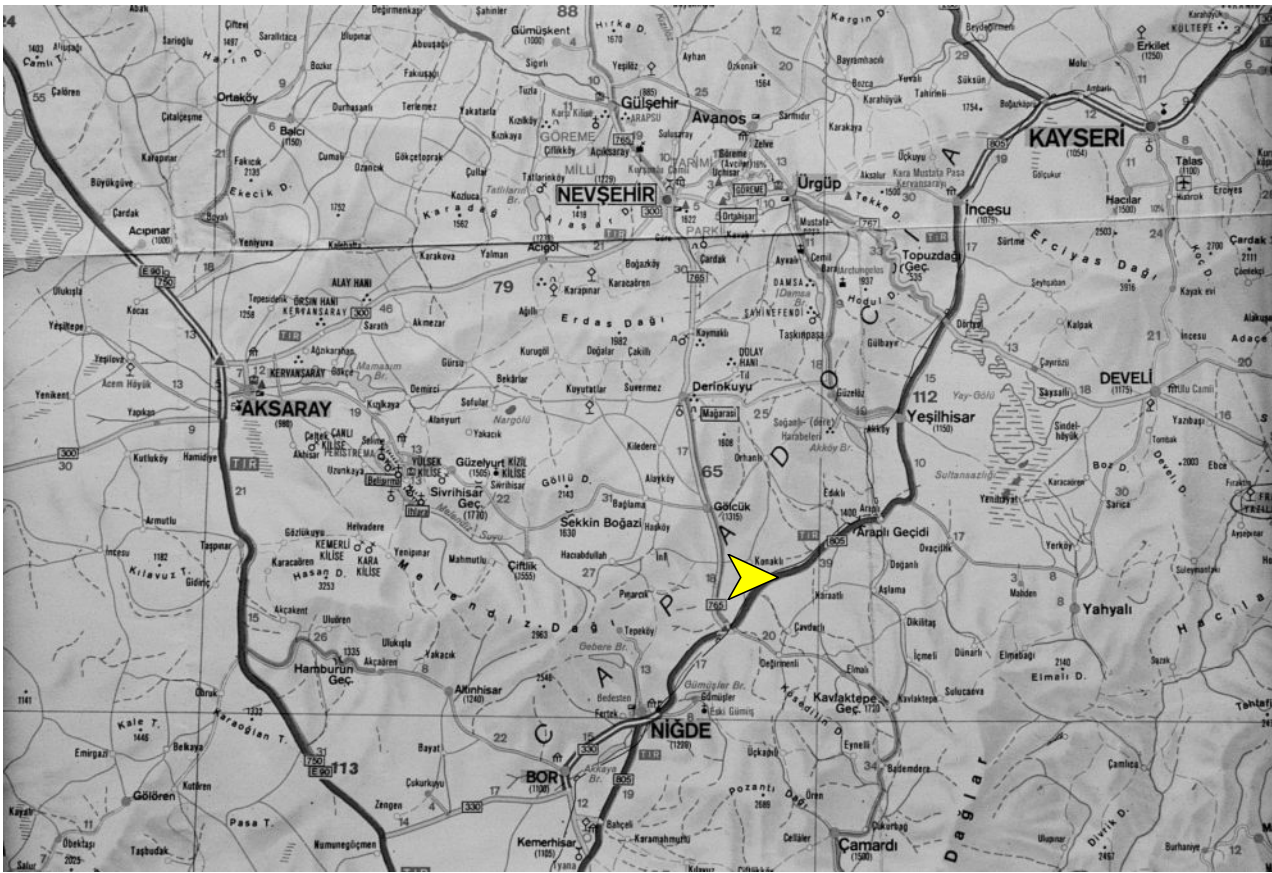


Figure 1 Map of the Misti area.



Figure 2 Church of Saint Vlassis in Misti/Konaklı,1998.



Figure 3 A floral design from the front facade of the Church.

and mattresses. As the poor soils of Misti could not feed the entire population, about eighty percent of the men of Misti would leave their villages twice a year, in March and at the end of July. They worked in the villages or towns of southern Turkey and southern Russia, or travelled to the Aegean islands to make felt and mattresses. Other Greek men in Cappadocia would find jobs during the winter in oil mills (*Bezirhane*: Ertuğ 2000c:181, see also endnote 5). According to Kostakis, the poverty of the village was reflected in the furniture of the houses and the people's clothing. Just a few copper, but mostly clay articles comprised the most essential items, all transported from nearby centres and villages. Large

utensils made of ox-manure were used to store the cereals<sup>4</sup>. Water was supplied from wells by means of leather buckets, later replaced by metal ones. The grinding of the wheat and the rye was done by watermills situated in the adjacent villages. The villagers of Floita came to Misti to produce their oil in Misti's three mills<sup>5</sup>.

Their main food staples were rye bread, legumes, vegetables and milk products<sup>6</sup>. Some people imported grapes from Neapoli (Nevşehir?) to make their own wine. The women would weave their own cloth with wool from their livestock and with the cotton transported from Adana and the men would make felt, for floor

<sup>4</sup> Similar dung containers (*Petek*), used for keeping eggs, ashes etc., were also found in the village of Kızılkaya (Ertuğ-Yaraş 1997:365; Pl. 92b and 93a). Makal (1954:12) also mentioned their use in the town of Demirci, Aksaray.

<sup>5</sup> In the sections about agriculture and food, Kostakis (1977:122-126, 480) stated that the oil used in the local cuisine was linseed oil [αγκοζομιοβλάι : *agozomi yağı*; given as *bezir yağı* (μπεζίρ γκιαγοβί) in Turkish]. Until recently this oil was also used in all the other Central Anatolian villages and it was produced not only from flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) but also from rocket (*Eruca sativa*; αγκιζόμ or ρόκα in Greek, and *Izgin* in the local dialect of Central Anatolia, *roka* in general Turkish). In Misti very few people were growing rocket. They were harvesting and cleaning the seeds but not producing their own oil. The people from the village of Floita rented their oil mills (μολγαουα) and produced the oil in Misti during the winter. The pulp from the oil production was given to animals.

<sup>6</sup> Kostakis mentioned that the residents of Misti did not know how to make cheese despite the fact that they had sufficient milk (1977:547).

covers and blankets (*ketsedes*). Although there were no substantial differences in terms of the processing of these woven materials from the methods used in other regions, the weaving terms used were generally Turkish. Their main fuel was the dung cakes the women had prepared during the summer, in addition to wild plants collected and used as tinder.

The Greek population of Misti (*Mistiotes*) left Anatolia in the summer of 1924 under the terms of the Lausanne Treaty of Population Exchange and most of them have settled in the villages of Mandra and Amygdalea of Larisa, New Ayoneri of Thessaloniki (Selanik) and Krinites of Kavala.

Today Konaklı district has a Turkish Sunni population of just over 3000 (*Niğde* 1997:287) with an economy still based on rain-fed agriculture and animal husbandry. The area belongs to the Irano-Turanian floristic region, and has about 350 mm rainfall like the rest of the Central Anatolia and is completely treeless.

## Plants used by the *Mistiotes*

Although Kostakis' study was conducted 40 years after the migration, his informants' descriptions of the plants were so vivid that many of them could be identified even when there were no clues as to the name of the plant, whilst other plants had common Turkish names.

Among the 64 plants mentioned in the useful plants chapter, the Greek, Turkish and Latin names of six trees<sup>7</sup>, 25 edible plants, and 30 fuel and fodder plants in addition to a few other useful plants were listed in Tables 1-3<sup>8</sup>.

In general, all edible greens were called *lahana* by the villagers of Misti as *lahanika* generally means 'vegetable' in Greek. These wild greens played an important role in the diet of the *Mistiotes*. Most of the wild greens were eaten raw with salt and bread and a few of them were cooked with *bulgur* (cracked wheat). While some plants were gathered intentionally for food and taken home, people gathered others when they were working

**Tables: Useful plants known to Misti villagers, as given by Kostakis (1977)**

**Table 1: Trees**

No	Greek names	Transcription of Greek names	Possible Turkish names	Possible Latin names
1.	Αλύχι	Aliçi *	Alıç	<i>Crataegus sp.</i>
2.	Κουρκουβάτσι	Kurkuváci *	Böğürtlen	<i>Rubus sanctus</i>
3.	Αφτιλί	Aftilí	Karaağaç	<i>Ulmus minor</i>
4.	Γιδεϊοχάλουδι	Yideiou çaludi	İğde çalısı	<i>Eleagnus angustifolia var angustifolia</i> or <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>
5.	Τζιτζιφιά	Cicifiá	Has ıgde	<i>Eleagnus angustifolia var. orientalis</i>
6.	Γααήσι	Gaváhi *	Kavak	<i>Populus sp.</i>

\* These names are given as local Turkish idiom in the text.

<sup>7</sup> The people of Misti tried to plant fruit trees and vines but these failed to survive because of the low soil cover of Cappadocia (the main rock was very close to the surface) and the effects of their animals' grazing.

<sup>8</sup> All suggested Turkish names in the Tables are based on descriptions given in the book. However, these might not match with actual species as no sample or picture was provided. Thus these names should be used with caution.

**Table 2: Edibles**

No	Greek names	Transcription of Greek names	Possible Turkish names	Possible Latin names	Use as given in Kostakis
1.	Αγρέτσα/Αγρέτσι	Ağrétsa/Ağrétsi	Marul otu	<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	shoots are eaten
2.	Αρτσές	Artsés *	İnnelik	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	eaten raw by both animals & humans
3.	Βάρσαμο	Vársamo	Boduk kulağı	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	also used as medicinal for echzama
4.	Βοϊούγλωσσα	Voiú glósa	Boduk kulağı	<i>Plantago sp.</i>	fresh shoots eaten
5.	Βυζί χτηνίου	Vizí htiniú	Sığır biciği	<i>Silene alba</i>	its sweet leaves eaten cooked, also eaten raw
6.	Γαλγάρι	Galğáni	Kangal	<i>Echinops sp.</i>	its stem and seeds are eaten raw when fresh
7.	Γαλίνα	Galina *		<i>Lysimachia sp. or Androsace villosa ?</i>	eaten raw
8.	Κεγκέρια	Kengeria *	Kenger* 1	<i>Gundelia tournefortii</i>	leaves cooked; juice of stem used as gum (mastika) & medicinal for ear ache
9.	Κουία	Konia	İstifnos ?		
10.	Κερνικώσσα/ Κορνικώσσα	Kernikótsa/ kornikótsa *	Domalan mantarı	<i>Terfesia sp. or Rhizopogon obtectus</i>	sweet potato -like bulb
11.	Κουρλοπίστρα	Kurlopistra	Ebegümeçi	<i>Malva sp.</i>	leaves edible
12.	Λάχανο	Láhano	Karaavlık	<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>	eaten fresh with salt and bread, bitter; juice used as gum
13.	Λίκου τουμαζι	Líku tu máçi			cooked with bulgur
14.	Μαντάρι	Mantári *	Mantar	<i>Agaricus or Coprinus</i>	edible mushrooms selected
15.	Μπουρζαλούκα	Burçalika *	Birçalık	<i>Scorzonera mollis ssp.szowitzii</i>	its bulb and leaves eaten, collected in higher altitudes
16.	Οξιτίτσα/ Γιαϊλαϊού οξιτίτσα	Oksinítsa yaylayú	Labada **/ Kara lahana	<i>Rumex sp.</i>	eaten raw
17.	Ψιλίστρα	Psilísttra	Püren/ Paryavşanı 2	<i>Helichrysum italicum</i>	eaten raw or boiled
18.	Ροφανίστρα	Rofanistra	Turp otu	<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	eaten raw
19.	Σαραζίνι	Saraçini	Kohum otu	<i>Crepis foetida</i>	leaves eaten raw; the first green of winter
20.	Şemάντριά/ Şemάντερ	Şemándria/ Şemánder	Yazı ispanağı	<i>Spinacia tetrandia</i>	cooked or boiled, eaten with yogurt
21.	Σκόρδου	Skórdou	Yabani sarmısak	<i>Allium scrodoprasum</i>	wild garlic, eaten raw with salt and bread
22.	Ταμίσοτου	Tamisotu *	Temizlik otu/ Semizotu	<i>Portulaca oleraceae ssp oleraceae</i>	pickled
23.	Τερέε	Teree *	Su teresi/ Götlez Götü	<i>Nasturtium officinale</i>	leaves eaten raw, collected from Lake Limna (Gölcük)
24.	Τουματσι	Tumaçi *			leaves eaten raw or boiled
25.	Çιχόρι/Çιγόρι	Çihóri/Çigóri	Hindiba/Çıtlık	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	eaten raw with salt
26.	Çιδέμι	Çidem *	Çiğdem	<i>Crocus af. ancyrensis</i>	bulbs eaten, brought from Üçkapılı mountain

When there wasn't enough descriptions of plants in the text, no Turkish equivalent name could be given. As some characters in old Greek has no equals in modern Greek alphabet, equivalents were given by A. Karra, such as Ç and Ş.

\* These names are given as local Turkish idiom in the text.

<sup>1</sup> Baytop 1994:170: Kenger (*Gundelia tournefortii*) was given as an edible, though in contemporary villages of Aksaray area this plant was not known as an edible. It was also not common in the area, and found in higher altitudes, but still known as a source of gum.

<sup>2</sup> According to the footnote in Kostakis text this plant named as *Helichrysum italicum* (Gennadiou, *Phytologikon Lexicon* p. 1048 and 301, Ψυλλίθρα, Ψυλλίνα or Ψυλλίστρα). Only *Helichrysum arenarium* recorded in the Aksaray area and it was mainly used as a medicinal for stomach pains, and it was favored by bees.

**Table 3: Fuel & Fodder & Other Useful Plants**

No	Greek names	Transcription of Greek names	Possible Turkish names	Possible Latin names	Use as given in Kostakis
1.	Αγρός	Ağrós	Ayrık otu/ Domuz ayrığı	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	fodder; deep roots taken out by plow, and given animals
2.	Αιρίχ	Ayríh *	Ayrık otu	<i>Elymus repens</i> or <i>Agropyron</i>	fodder
3.	Ατζιμουχ/Αζιμουχ	Acimúh/Azimúh *	Acımık	<i>Centaurea virgata</i>	fodder & fuel
4.	Αφαç'	Afáç'	1	<i>Lathyrus aphaca</i>	similar to vetch with narrow leaves
5.	Αφτιλιά	Aftiliá	Borcak Çalı	<i>Genista sessifolia</i>	a bushy plant used as fuel, tinder
6.	Βλαστικό	Vlastikó	Fesleğen	<i>Ocimum basilicum</i>	fragrant
7.	Γαλαγαστρα	Galağástra	Keteğen	<i>Salsola ruthenica</i>	thorny plant; only donkeys grazed, used as fuel
8.	Κατεφέ	Katefé *	Kadife		flower, decorative
9.	Κεκούτ	Kekút	Kekik	<i>Thymus sp.</i>	fodder
10.	Κέμπε	Kembé	2	<i>Carduus</i> or <i>Onopordum sp.</i>	a thorny plant, possible fodder
11.	Κερδουβένια	Kerduvénia	Kavotu	<i>Jurinea pontica</i>	thorny, only donkeys grazed & fuel & tinder plant
12.	Κολοκα	Kolóka	Kuluçka	<i>Hypocoum sp.</i>	fodder, children plays with seeds
13.	Κοράκα	Koráka	Papatya	<i>Matricaria</i> or <i>Anthemis sp.</i>	
14.	Λυκούκρομμύ	Lyku kromi	İt dirseği	<i>Muscari sp.</i>	bulbs taken out from the soil by moles
15.	Μαυράια	Mavráya	Üçgül	<i>Trigonella aurantiaca</i>	fragrant but bitter, only sheep eats
16.	Μουλίτσα	Mulitsa		<i>Bryonia sp.</i>	shoots put the axis of the wooden wheeled carts to prevent the friction
17.	Πισίκας νενέ	Pisikas nené	Pisi otu		smells like dill
18.	Şáπλα/şáμπλα	Şapla/Şambla *	3	<i>Salvia cryptantha</i>	leaves are animal fodder & roots and branches for fuel
19.	Σαρκουλάχ	Sarkuláh *	Serkele	<i>Plumbago europea</i>	its root used for dyeing the pants to brown
20.	Şígria	Şígria	Geven/Keven	<i>Astragalus microcephalus</i>	thorny plants processed and given to oxen in need; and juice of stems used for gum;
21.	Τυφλάσιγρια	Tiflá Şígria	Çoban yastığı	<i>Acantholimon sp.</i>	shepherds used to sleep on it, & used for fuel, grows in higher altitude, e.g. at Üçkapılı

No	Greek names	Transcription of Greek names	Possible Turkish names	Possible Latin names	Use as given in Kostakis
22.	Σορ	Sor *	Kayışkırın	<i>Ononis spinosa</i>	
23.	Σουγγαρίτρα	Sungarístra	Çanak çatlatan	<i>Adonis sp.</i>	with red flowers, possibly fodder
24.	Σουνάρι	Sunári*			with yellow flowers, hairy, fodder
25.	Καδιργάνια	Cadırğánia	Cızlağan/ Isırgan	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	
26.	Çαίριο ἀγκάλα	Çairiú agáya	Deve dikenı	<i>Alhagi camelorum</i>	only camels eat; villagers believe that it grows only where camels piss
27.	Çέτελε	Çétele*	Çedene/ Hint Keneviri	<i>Cannabis sativa</i>	hashish produced & seeds are eaten after roasted; rarely cultivated?
28.	Çιραχπαίτσα	Çirahpaítsa *	Sarı ot	<i>Boreava orientalis</i>	fodder; very common in fields, common fodder
29.	Τσουτσούρι	Tsutsúr *	Sıgırkuyruğu	<i>Verbascum sp.</i>	make the skin swelled up when touched
30.	Çοχάν	Çohán *	Çöven	<i>Gypsophila sp.</i>	used to whiten laundry, Turkish villagers sell it to Misti; has bad affects on hands
31.	Φκάλια	Fkália	Süpürge otu		used for brooms, grow nearby river
32.	Φούγιες	Fúyies	Kav otu		Tinder plant, grows in wet places

\* These names are given as local Turkish idiom in the text.

<sup>1</sup> Lyle-Kalças 1974:51: A Turkish name as Fink bakla was given for *L. aphaca* or wild pea.

<sup>2</sup> Baytop 1994:90 and 102: *Some Carduus* species are edible and given names such as Deve Dikenı and Deve Kangalı, as well as some *Onopordum* species given names such as Eşek Dikenı. No recordings from Aksaray area available.

<sup>3</sup> Baytop 1994:255: The name Şapla or Şalba is given for some of the *Salvia* and *Pholomis* species. In some areas these species are used as tea, and leaves of some (e.g. *Salvia forskahlei*) are used as food in Anatolia. In the contemporary villages of Cappadocia we could not find a similar name.

in their fields and ate them on the spot as snacks. Some plant parts such as seeds, stems and bulbs were also considered edible. They had to go further away from their villages to collect some greens such as *Teree* (*Nasturtium officinale*/*Su teresi* or *Götlez götü*) that could only be found in water, near Gölcük (Limni), which is about 8 kilometers from Misti.

The people of Misti were not only dependent on wild greens, bulbs and mushrooms for food; they

also had to collect large quantities of grasses for feeding their animals, plants for fuel and tinder for their long and hard winters. It was impossible to graze their animals in winter, so they would collect together piles of fodder in front of their stables so that when the weather was clear they could take their animals out to walk and feed from the grass piles. These piles were placed on top of a few stones and wooden planks and all collected grasses were stacked on them during the spring and summer. The roots and branches of



some spiny plants were also used as fuel or tinder. For example *Galagastria* and *Kerduvenia*, found in the fields after August, could only be grazed by donkeys when fresh, as they were very spiny. The villagers collected these in large amounts and brought them back by cart so that the plants when dry could be eaten by the cattle and sheep and the roots and branches could be used as fuel. *Kerduvenia* was also pounded in a cloth when it was fresh until the cloth absorbed all the juice from the plant and turned green. This cloth was then used with flint and iron strikers as tinder to light fires. Some other grasses such as *Çirahpaitsa* were very common in the spring and the village crier (*tellal* in Turkish) would announce when they were ready to be collected from the plains to be given to their animals.

Some rounded pillow like *Astragalus* or *Acantholimon* were used as bedding by shepherds who put their sleeping felts on it. These were also used as fuel plants (Fig. 5).

The women washed their laundry using *Çohan* which was collected and sold or traded with other goods by the nearby Turkish villagers. While the other villagers would use clay as soap, the Misti women would use *Çohan*. The Misti women also cleaned their houses using brooms made from a plant that they had collected in a nearby stream. Another plant, called *Sarkulah*, was used to dye the women's pants (*şalvar*) brown.

Only two plants were mentioned as medicinal, *Varsamo/Plantago*, used against eczema and another, *Kengeria/Gundelia tournefortii*. Probably the number of plants used for healing was far greater. Kostakis observed that magic was also used to facilitate child birth, to protect women in labour and babies from the influence of demon forces. Unfortunately there was no mention of the plants possibly used during these rituals.

Wild plants were also incorporated into social life and into their language, from the children's



Figure 4 A view from the old section of Konaklı,1998.



Figure 5 Collection of *Astragalus* (*Geven*) for fodder in Gelveri (Güzelyurt), Aksaray in 1999.

games to daily idioms and expressions. For example, *Koloka* seeds were used in the games of Misti children and the elders would intimidate the children by telling them: “I am going to roast you with *Galagastra*” which is a thorny fuel plant (*Keteğen/Salsola ruthenica*) with a high heating capacity<sup>9</sup>. The same plant is also used in an expression: “like *Galagastra*” for peoples who are thin and in a poor condition. Another plant also used to intimidate the children was *Tsutsur*, a *Verbascum* species, which creates swelling when it touches the skin: mothers used to threaten their mischievous sons that they would put this plant in their pants.

### Comparisons with contemporary plant use in Cappadocia

An ethnobotanical study in and around Kızılkaya, a Turkish - Sunni village at the Melendiz River Valley in Cappadocia (an area about 50 km northwest of Misti and 25 km southwest of Aksaray), pointed out that over 100 species of wild plants are considered edible by local people (Ertuğ-Yaraş 1997, Ertuğ 1998, 2000 b). All these edibles are also grazed by animals and a total of 250 plants are used for fuel, fodder, medicinal or other purposes. Some of the edibles are considered famine food and others are believed to improve health and can therefore be considered as medicinal foods.

<sup>9</sup> *Salsola ruthenica* was also used, in addition to vine cuttings, as the basic fuel in the seed-roasting process in the *Bezirhanes*’ of Cappadocia.

Most of the wild greens in the contemporary villages of Aksaray are eaten raw with salt between folds of the local flat bread, *yufka*. Some greens require cooking. They are chopped and cooked together with onions and *bulgur*. These dishes are called *cacık* and usually eaten with yogurt. In Misti, most of the wild greens were also eaten raw with salt and bread and, a few plants were also cooked with *bulgur* and some, such as wild spinach, were eaten with yogurt.

In Aksaray a few greens are gathered and dried for winter meals, such as *Mercimelek/Polygonum cognatum* and *Temizlik otu/Portulaca oleracea*. *Tamis otu* is a name given to *Portulaca oleracea* (commonly known as *Semizotu*) in Misti and this plant was brought by Turkish villagers from the villages close to Niğde and pickled by the Misti women. There is no record of pickling wild greens in modern villages.

While the women of the Melendiz area still collect about 40 greens between October and May, the women of Misti would gather at least 20 greens. It was not possible even to suggest which plants were collected by the Mistiodes as the descriptions given were not sufficient to identify them. For example, we learn from the text that *Cadırgania* was a name given to *Urtica* (*Cızlağan* in Kızılkaya, *Isırgan* in common Turkish) but no explanation was given as to whether or not the Misti women collected the nettle as food. Though the plant was well known, it was not a very appreciated green vegetable in the modern villages of the Melendiz area. Some plants which were collected in Misti as food were not recorded in the Melendiz area, such as wild garlic (*Allium* sp.) and *Silene alba* (*Vizi htiniú/Sığır biciği*), the latter being known only as a fodder in Melendiz. However, in both cultures the plant derived its name from its flowers' similarity to a cow's udder. The differences regarding the use of particular edible species do not necessarily reflect a cultural divergence: different practices can also be found between contemporary villages lying in close proximity to one another or even within the same settlement.

One of the most commonly collected and consumed plants of modern Cappadocia, *Çıtlık/Cichorium intybus* (Fig.6), was known by its Latin name by the Misti villagers. They used to call it *Çihori* or *Çiğori* and liked to eat it raw, like almost all the villagers of modern Central Anatolia. The roots as well as fresh shoots of this plant were gathered from October to June. Other common wild edible greens are: *Chondrilla juncea*, *Crepis foetida*, *Erodium cicutarium*, *Lactuca serriola*, *Malva*, *Nasturtium officinale*, *Portulaca oleracea*, *Raphanum raphanistrum*, *Rumex*, and *Spinacia tetrandia* (see Table 2 for Greek and Turkish names).

*Çiğdem* or *Kırmızı Çiğdem*, *Crocus ancyrensis* (Fig. 7) was and is the most commonly gathered bulb in Central Anatolia, probably from at least the Hittite period onwards (Ertuğ 2000a). The bright yellow flowers of this endemic plant, bloom from mid February till the end of March. The bulbs are considered a delicacy and eaten by everyone in villages even today and some people also eat their flowers. The young boys are skilled in gathering crocuses using a *karlanguç*, a long handled pointed iron tool. In April, after the green leaves have dried, the upper parts of the bulbs become bigger and sweeter. The villagers call the bulbs *kıvrma* at this stage and mix them with milk to make a special dessert (locally called *düğ*, similar to *sütlaç*). Kostakis (1977:523) noted that the *Crocus* was known by the Turkish name of *Çiğdem* at Misti and that each bride groom there had to collect and give 60-70 of them as in a bundle to his fiancée. As they were found in high altitudes and were not common around the village, a young man would climb the Üçkapulu Mountain and stay there a few days until he had gathered the necessary quantity. To dig the crocuses the young men used a long stick, probably a similar tool to *karlanguç*, which they pushed into the earth with the help of their stomachs. Kostakis noted that the youngsters "loose face" if they failed to provide enough crocuses together with two ornamented spindles (*klouhara* in Greek, *kirman* in Turkish) for their fiancées.



Figure 6

Çatlık (*Cichorium*) is the most appreciated wild green of the Cappadocia.

Another bulbous plant was commonly called *Burçaluk* or *Bırçalık* (Fig. 8). Kostakis (1977:512) said that as it could be found in higher altitudes the villagers should climb up the Üçkapulu mountain. It is also found on hills at altitudes of between 900-1200m. in the Aksaray area where the villagers call it *Kepez*. The bulbous roots of this plant are gathered in May and June and eaten raw. It was also common to eat the stems of *Echinops* species, commonly known as *Kangal* or *Galgani*.

In modern Turkish villages, six different edible mushrooms have been recorded. We do not know which of these were consumed by the villagers of Misti. Kostakis said that the common names given to mushrooms were Turkish (*mantarı*) and that the villagers could identify the edible ones and would eat them. Only one special mushroom



Figure 7 Çiğdem (*Crocus ancycensis*) bulbs are well known edibles of Cappadocia.

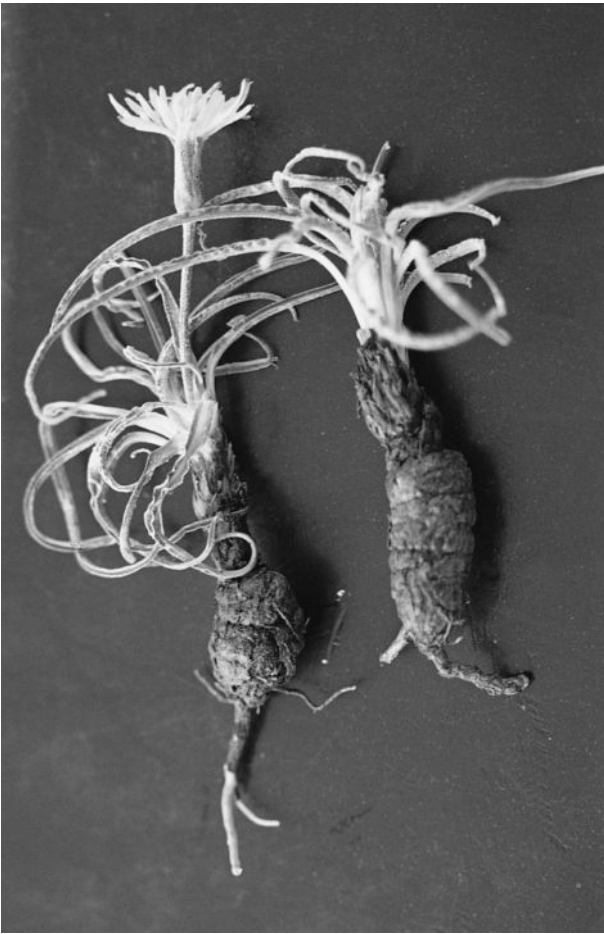


Figure 8 Birçalık (*Scorzonera mollis*) also known with the same name both by Greeks, and the Turkish inhabitants of Cappadocia.

was named, *Kernikotsa* or *Kornikotsa*, described as having a sweet potato-like bulb. This may be the same as a rarely found *Domalan mantar*, *Rhizopogon obtectus* or a *Terfesia* species of modern Cappadocia.

The inhabitants of Misti would use the juice of the roots of both *Goundelia tournefortii* and *Condrilla juncea* for gum (*mastika*). The latter was also used similarly in the Melendiz area.

Gathering plants for fodder and fuel is still important today but it was more critical in the past to the survival of the people and their animals throughout the long and cold winters of Cappadocia. Among 170 fodder and 15 tinder plants recorded in the Melendiz area, some share

common Turkish names with those of Misti, such as *Ayrık/Elymus repens* and *Acımık/Centaurea virgata* and many others were probably used in similar ways such as *Astragalus*, *Acantholimon*, *Ononis*, and *Alhagi* species.

An interesting example of plant use was recorded in Misti concerning a plant called *Mulitsa* whose shoots were put on the axles of wooden carts (*kağrı* in Turkish) to prevent friction. The description of this plant was similar to that of the *Bryonia* species. As no *Kağrı* remained in the 1990s it was impossible to observe this kind of use in Melendiz.

Some plants were gathered for dyeing woven material, just as the women of Misti had used *Sarkulah* to dye their pants brown. Kostakis (1977: 515) said that this was a Turkish name and his description fits that of a local dye plant, called *Serkele*, *Plumbago europaea* from the Aksaray area. A few women in Kızılkaya remembered this plant as a source of yellow dye but it was no longer used and no recipes of its use could be recorded. While many plants were collected for making mats for floors and ceilings, as well as for making containers and baskets of every size in the Melendiz area, no plant was mentioned in Misti as being used for these handicrafts. These crafts were perhaps not practised in Misti and the necessary items obtained from other villages or towns.

Among the 44 medicinal plants recorded in the Melendiz area in 1994-95, *Plantago*, known as *Valsamo* (meaning medicine in Greek) in Misti and *Plantago lanceolata* or *P. major*, both called *Boduk kulağı* in Turkish, seems to be the only common medicinal plant. In Melendiz it was known as being good for wounds, boils and rheumatism and pounded leaves of both species were applied on the wounded area. Another plant whose medicinal use was reported from Misti is *Kengeria*, *Gundelia tournefortii* (its juice was used for earache) but no similar use was reported in the Melendiz area. Magical plants were also used in Kızılkaya in addition to medicinal ones. For example, *Peganum harmala* (*Üzerlik*) seeds were

used against the 'evil eye' in amulets hung inside houses or in the form of incense thrown onto the fire (Ertuğ 1999) whilst the person affected by black magic was washed in the water in which the branches of *Daphne oleoides*, *Yaygıç* had been boiled. Various plants were also recorded in the Melendiz area as cures for sterility, a complaint that was probably as common a problem for many women in the past as it is today. Kostakis said that sterility was regarded as a great misfortune and to obtain a cure people used a number of both practical and magical aids. However, he gave no example of the plants used by the Misti women.

In addition to all these wild plants, a rare cultivar was also mentioned in Misti. Although it was noted that it was seldom planted, *Cannabis sativa* (*Çetele* in Misti, and *Çedene* in Aksaray where it is commonly known as *Hint Kenevir*) was an important cultivar for Cappadocia until the 1970s. Kostakis reported that the Mistiodes produced hashish and also ate its sweet seeds after roasting. In the Aksaray area its cultivation was banned in the 1970s but the villagers still bought its seeds as it was one of their favorite snacks. Its use as a drug was not reported in Aksaray but its fibre was commonly used in the past for weaving sacks. Another cultivar mentioned in the Misti text was rocket (see endnote 5) and this plant was also commonly grown throughout Cappadocia until the 1970s. Its cultivation and use for oil production ended when other oils and margarines became more easily and cheaply available.

## Conclusion

Although we know that the majority of Anatolia's inhabitants have through the ages gathered wild plants for a variety of purposes, information about their use is so scattered across time and geographical area that there are still many gaps in our knowledge. The Misti village monograph provides new information concerning the use of wild plants in Cappadocia in the early twentieth century and shows that Greek villagers were

managing the wild plants in their local environment in a way similar to that of modern Turkish villagers.

This study indicates that wild plants played an important role in the local culinary tradition and in the diet of the Misti villagers and this remains true of their modern Turkish neighbours. This tradition may also have helped the people of Cappadocia to survive in times of drought or food shortage, as was noted by Makal when referring to the villages in the Aksaray area in the early 1950's.

The Greek villagers of Cappadocia also fed their animals, heated themselves, washed their laundry, dyed their cloths, and cleaned their houses using various plants. Scarce trees were also used for house building and some farming implements. When particular wild species, such as *Çohan* and *Tamis otu*, were not available in one area, they were traded with other villages where they were found in larger quantities. Some wild plants such as *Çiğdem* also played an important role in the rituals of both ethnic groups. Its appearance in early spring was highly appreciated and this delicious food was also regarded as a symbol of spring rituals. Thus the young men of Misti had to collect large numbers of these plants as presents for their fiancées to show their affection. Although not recorded in Kızılkaya, crocuses were collected by children in many parts of Anatolia, a parade was organised and a special *pilav* was cooked for them using these *Crocus* bulbs. Unfortunately we do not have enough information about the Misti people's medicinal use of plants but it was likely that they were commonly used to treat both human and animals.

Kostakis' study also points out a similar male/female division of labour in wild plant gathering as well as in other activities. Women of Misti seem to have been responsible for collecting wild greens, some fuel, fodder plants, and plants used to make things such as brooms. In addition they cared for the children, did the house work and prepared the dung. Agriculture and animal herding were considered to be men's work, with the exception of harvesting and processing which

needed the help of the whole family. The collection of bulbous plants was undertaken by young men and probably young children, as is still a common practice in modern Turkish villages.

Though not complete, this study provides new insights into the common heritage of Anatolia. We do not have sufficient information about how Greek villagers' knowledge differed from that of their Turkish neighbours and we probably cannot find answers to all the questions we would like to ask. However, if we collect more information about continuing plant collection in Anatolia, it may help future generations. Kostakis complained of being unable to find a source with which to compare the edible and other useful plants of Cappadocia. This paper may be considered as a small contribution towards enlarging our common knowledge and cultural heritage.

## Acknowledgements

This article would never be written if an old friend Anthi Karra, wouldn't provide Kostakis' book from the Asia Minor Research Center in Athens, and helping me to find the contemporary name of Misti. I am grateful to Ms. Sultana Abacı for her translation of the plant section of Kostakis' book, to Üner Eyüboğlu for the corrections of the Greek names and their transcriptions, and to Richard Sidgwick, Serpil Arısoy and Marion Cutting for the English corrections of the manuscript. Last but not least, I am thankful to Prof. Tuna Ekim, University of Istanbul Department of Botany, and to Prof. Neriman Özhatay University of Istanbul Department of Pharmacology, for their valuable contributions in identifications of various plants from their brief descriptions.

## Bibliography

- Baytop, T.  
1994 *Türkçe Bitki Adları Sözlüğü* (A Dictionary of Vernacular names of wild plants of Turkey), Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları: 578, Türk Kültür Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Ankara.
- 1997 Anazarbalı Dioscorides, *Sandoz Dergisi* 1997/1: 10-17.
- 1999 *Türkiyede Bitkiler ile Tedavi: Geçmişte ve Bugün*. (Healing with plants in Turkey: In the past and present). 2nd ed., Nobel Tıp Kitabevleri, İstanbul.
- Browning, R.  
1985 The Historical Background, in *Sinasos in Cappadocia*: 13-22, National Trust for Greece, London.
- Ertem, H.  
1987 *Boğazköy Metinlerine Göre Hititler Devri Anadolu'sunun Florası*, 2. baskı, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara.
- Ertuğ F.  
1998 Orta Anadolu'da Bir Etnoarkeoloji ve Etnobotanik Çalışması (An Ethnoarchaeological and Ethnobotanical Study in Central Anatolia), in G. Arsebük – M.Mellink – W. Shirmer (eds.), *Light on top of the Black Hill, Studies presented to Halet Çambel*: 325-338, Ege Yayınları, İstanbul.
- 1999 Örenlerin Bitkisi Üzerlik (*Peganum harmala*). *Bilim ve Teknik Dergisi* 374:88-90.
- 2000 a Baharın Müjdecisi: Çiğdem (*Crocus*) ya da AN.TAH.SUM.SAR Hititler Devri Anadolu Florası'na Küçük bir Katkı (Harbinger of Spring: Crocus (Çiğdem) or AN.TAH.SUM.SAR: A Small Contribution to the Anatolian Flora of Hittite Period), *TÜBA-AR* 3:129-136.
- 2000 b An Ethnobotanical Study in Central Anatolia (Turkey), *Economic Botany* 54/2:155-182.
- 2000 c Linseed oil and Oil Mills in Central Turkey: Flax /*Linum* and *Eruca*, important oil plants of Anatolia, *Anatolian Studies* 50:171-185.
- Fujita, T. – E. Sezik – M. Tabata – E. Yeşilada – G. Honda – T. Tanaka – Y. Takaishi  
1995 Traditional Medicine in Turkey VII. Folk Medicine in Middle and West Black Sea Regions, *Economic Botany* 49/4:406-422.
- Ioavvidis, I.  
1896 Καϊσάρεια Μητροπολιτερί: Μααλονματη Μουτευεββια (Methropoliths of Kaiseria: Guide of Cappadocia), Aletandos Nomismatishi Publishers, İstanbul.
- Kirtunç, A. – E. Kirtunç  
1990 Wild Plant Recipes from the Aegean Region, *Turkish Folk Culture Research 1990/1, Special Vol. of Turkish Cooking*: 77-91, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara.
- Konyalı, İ.H.  
1977 Kitab-ül Haşayış (Materia Medica), *Kültür Bakanlığı Sanat Dergisi* 3 (6):19-29.
- Kostakis, T.P.  
1977 *To Μιστ, Της Καπαδοκίας I* (Misti of Cappadocia), The Academia of Athens, Athens.
- Kostof, S.  
1989 *Caves of God: Cappadocia and its Churches*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford.
- Lyle-Kalças, E.  
1974 *Food from the Fields, Edible Wild Plants of Eagean Turkey*, Birlik Matbaası, Bornova, Izmir.
- Makal, M.  
1954 *A Village in Anatolia*, translated by Wyndham Deedes, Vallentine, Mitchell & Co., London.
- Niğde  
1997 *Niğde '97*, T.C. Niğde Valiliği, Önder Matbaacılık, Ankara.
- Öztürk, M. – H. Özçelik  
1991 *Doğu Anadolunun Faydalı Bitkileri/Useful Plants of East Anatolia*, SİSKAV, Semih Yayınevi, Ankara.
- Riddle, J.M.  
1985 *Dioscorides on Pharmacy and Medicine*, University of Texas Press, Austin.
- Sadıkoğlu, N. – K. Alpınar  
2001 Etnobotanik Açından Bartın (Ethnobotany of Bartın), in E. Gürkan-E. Tuzlacı (eds.), XIII. Bitkisel İlaç Hammaddeleri Toplantısı Bildiri Kitabı: 87-100. Marmara Üniversitesi Eczacılık Fakültesi Yayınları İstanbul.
- Sulaoğlu-Kırsaç, Z.  
1993 *Benim Köyüm* (My Village), İstanbul.
- Üçer, M.  
1990 Foodways in Sivas, *Turkish Folk Culture Research 1990/1, Special Volume of Turkish Cooking*: 129-148, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara.
- Ünver, B.  
1990 Wild Greens used as Food in Ankara, Afyon, Kayseri, Bolu, Trabzon, Erzurum, and Gaziantep, *Turkish Folk Culture Research 1990/1, Special Vol. of Turkish Cooking*: 149-161, Kültür Bakanlığı, Ankara.
- Yeşilada, E. – E. Sezik – G. Honda – Y. Takaishi – Y. Takeda – T. Tanaka  
1999 Traditional Medicine in Turkey IX: Folk Medicine in north-west Anatolia, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 64:195-210.