

COOLLECTIVE MEAL TABLES

The collective table tradition, obviously an offspring of our way of social life, was widespread at the garrisons, shrines, templets, caravanserais, schools and inns. Costs of the meals there were met generally by foundations.

The meal time was announced by the kitchenmaster from an elevated podium outside the building from which he used to intone aloud the phrase of "Come ye, to the meal". Everybody would then immediately abandon work, wash their hands and proceed immediately to where the food was distributed. Everyone knew their places in the hierarchy, sit on their habitual cushions, cover their knees with the huge handwoven floorspread and respectfully await the trepolithany to be recited by the tablemaster.

Then all spoons dipped immediately into the huge tureen and so began the meal ritual. Rules of the family table were also valid here.

Talk, laughters, refusing food, biting into the bread slices and reaching for what belonged to others were all disapproved.

At the end of the meal, the tablemaster or a person that he selects for this purpose read the prayer and everybody took a grain of salt into their mouths.

The collective meal tables were as a rule male domains, and the women were not allowed there.