

Workshop *Studies on Ancient Plants: Multidisciplinary Approaches and New Perspectives*  
Bologna, Aula Mondolfo, February 13-14, 2023

**Pascal Luccioni (Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3)**

***Plant-lists and poetry in the Hellenistic Period***

Anthropologists often meet lists, lists of animals, of plants, of gods, of heroes. People who study plants are particularly fond of lists, it seems (a "Flora" is, in more than a way, a list). Poets also like lists (let us think of the Catalogue of the ships, for example, or of the Great Ehoiai). But do poets produce lists of plants? Well, at least two hellenistic poets do, Meleagros, as is well known (though the liminary piece of the Garland is often thought of as a list of poets, which it also is), and Nicander (particularly in the Georgics). Is this the mark of a particular moment in the history of plant-knowledge? (or in the history of literature?). Maybe there is no satisfactory answer to this question, but it is nonetheless important to ask it, because coping with it might help us to cope with other plant-lists (found in medical treatises, in agronomy, etc.) as well as putting the works of the aforementioned poets in a wider perspective.

**Heike Wilde, Martin Pehal, Diana Míčková, Sean Coughlin (Prague)**

***The antu-list reconsidered: a synoptic reading of Edfu and Athribis ingredients***

Heike Wilde, Martin Pehal, Diana Míčková, Sean Coughlin

The Temple of Edfu, dedicated to Horus, is the best-preserved temple of that period with a laboratory that records ingredient lists, instructions, and recipe texts relating to perfume making for ritual purposes. In that laboratory, on the west-wall in the first register and opposite to the entrance, is inscribed a list of aromatic substances used for anointing divine bodies (statuary) in the temple cult. It includes 14 varieties of tree exudates referred to as *antu* and conventionally translated as "myrrh." Our paper focuses on multidisciplinary and complementary methods of producing an edition of this rare text using a parallel found at the Temple of Athribis and of our prospects for identifying the resins named in the list. We will present some preliminary results based on approaches from several disciplines: philology, Egyptology, Greco-Roman studies, archaeology, botany, and experimental recreation.

**Marie Cronier (Paris)**

***La tradition illustrative du traité Sur la matière médicale de Dioscoride (grec, arabe, latin) : unité et pluralité***

Même si le traité Sur la matière médicale de Dioscoride (composé en grec dans la seconde moitié du 1er s. de notre ère) n'était vraisemblablement pas illustré dans sa forme originelle, une proportion importante des manuscrits où il est conservé comportent des illustrations (très majoritairement des figures botaniques), y compris dans les traductions latines et arabes médiévales. La question de savoir si l'ajout des illustrations au texte dioscoridéen s'est fait à un seul moment ou bien en plusieurs opérations indépendantes. Je tenterai d'apporter des éléments de réponse en présentant et en analysant plusieurs exemples de la façon dont un chapitre de Dioscoride consacré à telle ou telle plante est illustré dans différents manuscrits, selon les langues, les époques et les familles textuelles.

**Maddalena Rumor (Cleveland)**

***The Study of Plants in Mesopotamian Scholarship***

Although plants are ubiquitous in our records from antiquity, our understanding of them is often limited by uncertainty. This is especially true in the case of Assyro-Babylonian plants, and consequently, of all the fields of study that heavily depend on their correct interpretation. This paper will present an overview of the research on plants in ancient Mesopotamia. Beginning with a brief history of the discipline, it will explain how the study of ancient Mesopotamian plants has been approached from the

early days of Assyriology until today. By means of examples, it will then present the principal sources of information available to scholars, it will examine the major problems involved in the work, explain their implications, and offer some potential new questions or perhaps even solutions.

**Maximilian Haars (Marburg)**

***Seven Years in Greece – the Bavarian Botanist Carl Fraas (1810–1875) and His Interpretations of Dioscuridean Plant Names***

Between 1835 and 1842 Carl Fraas lived in Athens and was appointed professor of botany at the newly founded university. He used this time for extensive botanical excursions, which also had the purpose of interpreting ancient plant names. The results of his research were published as *Synopsis plantarum florum classicae* (München 1845) – a work that Sir Arthur Hort dismissed as "ambitious but uncritical" in his Theophrast Loeb edition (1926). Nevertheless, some of Fraas' suggestions have prevailed over the interpretations of John Sibthorp (1758–1796) and Kurt Sprengel (1766–1833) and have found their way into the Little-Scott-Jones Lexicon. In my paper I will analyze some of his merits and demerits and place it in the ongoing debate on Dioscuridean plant names.

**Angelo Gismondi, Alessia D'Agostino, Gabriele Di Marco, Antonella (University of Rome Tor Vergata)**

***Back to the roots: searching for hidden plant records in archaeological contexts***

Archaeobotany is a very informative topic of research and it should be considered a valuable link between science and humanities subject. Indeed, the analysis of ancient plant records, such as carpological remains, organic residues, and microremains, contributes to the comprehension of past human-environment interaction and cultural diversity of our ancestors.

The use of plants has determined profound ideological, social, economic, and cultural impacts upon various human groups and the modern molecular technologies (e.g., Next Generation Sequencing) are contributing to favour the comprehension of such type of aspects. However, the combined application of microscopic, biochemical, and genetic methodologies, where possible, seems to be the most interesting as able to provide more significant results.

Beyond plant macrobotanicals, several archaeo-anthropological matrices (e.g., dental calculus, potteries, paintings, soil samples) can be investigated, looking for pollen, phytochemicals, ancient plant DNA, starch, etc., to obtain new insights on plant evolution, human impact, land exploitation, ethnonobotanical practices, cult activities, dietary ecology, and climate and environmental changes.

In this contribution, the various roles of plants for past human communities and the scientific approaches employed to analyse them will be described, focusing the attention on peculiar case studies.

**Valérie Schram (CNRS – ArScAn, Paris-Nanterre)**

***New approach to plants identification in Greek papyrological texts from Egypt***

The paper will present a new digital tool entitled "Ergaleion – Outil de lexicographie papyrologique de la vie matérielle" conceived as part of the Ifao research program "Realia d'Égypte de l'époque ptolémaïque aux débuts de l'Islam" (dir. P. Ballet, M. Mossakowska, V. Schram) and designed to assist the lexical study of Realia mentioned in the Greek documentation preserved on papyrus (3rd c. BCE – 8th c. CE). Among all realia considered in the scope of this collaborative project (artefacts, structures, landscapes, animals, etc.), the tool is of particular interest to the identification and study of plants as it allows for a systematic, diachronic and transdisciplinary approach cross-referencing textual and archaeobotanical data. Thus, the paper will present this tool as the kingpin for an upcoming study of ornamental and fruit trees (identification, cultivation and exploitation) in Graeco-Roman Egypt which will form the second and last part of a study already completed on timber producing trees.

**Valérie Bonet (Aix-Marseille)**

***Les utilisations des armoises (Artemisia L.) dans le monde gréco-romain à la lumière des connaissances chimico-médicales actuelles.***

Les plantes médicinales antiques constituent un univers privilégié pour des études interdisciplinaires. Le genre *Artemisia* L. en est un exemple intéressant. Plantes d'importance dans l'Antiquité, utilisées sans interruption dans la pharmacopée traditionnelle jusqu'à nos jours, les armoises sont aujourd'hui le sujet de recherches dans la lutte contre la Covid-19, et ont même fait l'objet d'un prix Nobel attribué en 2015 à la chinoise Youyou Tu pour ses travaux sur l'armoise annuelle dans le traitement du paludisme. En herborisant dans les textes médicaux grecs et latins nous tenterons de montrer comment la biologie et la médecine, au même titre que l'ethnobotanique, peuvent éclairer les utilisations des armoises antiques. Cette collaboration permet d'expliquer les données des textes médicaux antiques et de confirmer, quelques deux mille ans après, l'efficacité que les Anciens reconnaissaient à ces plantes. Ces herbes amères qui doivent leurs noms à la déesse Artémis et dont l'utilisation s'est étendue jusqu'à nous, prouvent aujourd'hui, grâce aux recherches bio-chimiques récentes, qu'elles sont de multiples façons bioactives.

**Mark Geller (London)**

***Akkadian drug names in Syriac?***

One of the important missing features in studies of the *Syriac Book of Medicine* is the possible influence of Akkadian terminology in the choice of drug names in recipes appearing in the final section of this important work. This paper will make the case for Akkadian rather than Greek influence in the Eastern Syriac of the SBM.

**Robert Hawley (Paris)**

***Semitic plant names in diachronic perspective: a few case studies***

While specific botanical identifications often remain elusive and uncertain (owing to occasional shifts in meaning over time or from one region to another), nevertheless the corpus of plant names in the Semitic languages does show a remarkable resilience and lexical conservatism over time. From their earliest attestations in 3rd millennium cuneiform traditions, passing on to the period of organized knowledge under Neo-Assyrian scholars, and on to the translation of Galen and Dioscorides into Syriac and Arabic, and the creation of technical dictionaries in Abbasid Baghdad, a good many plant names have left traces of their presence over more than three millennia. This paper will explore a few case studies of some such plant names over the *longue durée*.