



*CITRO OR CEDRO REFICIT?* ON AN EMENDATION  
TO A FRAGMENT OF VARRO'S *DE BIBLIOTHECIS*  
(FR. 54 GRF FUNAIOLI)\*

ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses an earlier emendation to fr. 54 GRF Funaioli from Varro's De bibliothecis and argues that, while the text et citro refers to cedar oil, it should not be emended to et cedro. A comparison with a passage from Pliny the Elder (HN 13.86) is used to support the view presented in the article.*

**Keywords:** Varro; Pliny the Elder; *Naturalis historia*; book history; textual criticism; libraries

The passage examined in this contribution (GRF Funaioli fr. 54 page 208 *apud* Charisius in *Gramm. Lat.* 1.87.22–88.4 Keil = 110.11–19 Barwick) has previously been the object of close analysis by T. Hendrickson who presented highly convincing evidence for an emendation of the fragment.<sup>1</sup> In a previous contribution I tried to reconstruct the *De bibliothecis* using Varronian material found in other authors, such as Pliny the Elder, and comparing it with chapters 3, 5 and 9–14 of the sixth book of Isidore of Seville's *Origines*, in order to present what can be said about this work.<sup>2</sup>

GRF Funaioli fr. 54 reads: *qua declinatione usus est et Varro De bibliothecis dicens 'glutine et citro reficit'* (Charisius in *Gramm. Lat.* 1.87.22–88.4 Keil = 110.12 Barwick).<sup>3</sup> The emendation proposed by Hendrickson modified the quotation to *glutine et cedro reficit*.<sup>4</sup> He showed that a reference to citron wood, used to produce bookcases, with parallels in Seneca the Younger and other authors, would be unexplainable and inappropriate in this passage. He argues instead that the presence of *gluten* would suggest a 'book-roll production and repair' context,<sup>5</sup> since the oil used in this

\* I wish to thank Alessandro Garcea (Sorbonne Université) and Katharina Volk (Columbia University) for their helpful comments and suggestions, as well as William Edwards and Emma Ianni for discussing earlier drafts of this work. Many thanks to Bruce Gibson and the anonymous reader of *The Classical Quarterly* for improving the quality of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> T. Hendrickson, 'An emendation to a fragment of Varro's *De bibliothecis* (fr. 54 GRF Funaioli)', *CQ* 65 (2015), 395–7.

<sup>2</sup> U. Verdura, 'Note sul *De bibliothecis* di Varrone', *BStudLat* 52 (2022), 89–115.

<sup>3</sup> The quotation occurs again in fr. 80 GRF Funaioli = *Gramm. Lat.* 1.131.23–4 Keil = 167.23–4 Barwick: *glutine Varro De bibliothecis, 'glutine' inquit 'et citro refecit', quasi semine stamine*. The text given by the manuscripts, and printed in modern editions, is *citro*; only the *editio princeps* emended it to *cinere*, as stated in Keil's apparatus criticus.

<sup>4</sup> Hendrickson (n. 1), 397.

<sup>5</sup> Hendrickson (n. 1), 396. His parallels include, among others: Sen. *Tranq.* 9.6 *quid habes cur ignoscas homini armaria <e> citro atque ebori captanti?*; Cato, fr. 185 Malcovati *expolitae maximo opera citro atque ebone*; Varro, *Rust.* 3.2.4 *nuncubi hic uides citrum aut aurum?*; Petron. *Sat.* 119.28–9 *citrea mensa ... imitator utilius aurum*; and Plin. *HN* 5.12 *luxuriae, cuius efficacissima uis sentitur atque maxima, cum ebori, citro siluae exquirantur*; thus, he aims at showing that citron wood was used alongside other precious materials to condemn an excess of luxury.

manufacture was cedar oil. This hypothesis seems extremely likely.<sup>6</sup> Hendrickson, however, goes on to say: ‘In his *TLL* entry for *citrum* (*TLL* 3.1207), faced with the fragment of Varro in question, Stadler suggested that in this case *citrum* perhaps referred to cedar, yet such a usage would be entirely unparalleled. Rather, this is a mistake that should be corrected.’<sup>7</sup>

Some parallels from other authors on papyrus-related matters could, however, suggest that the ancients could mistake *citrus* for *cedrus* and therefore that the text, even if—as Hendrickson correctly showed—it refers to cedar oil, should not be emended from *citrus* to *cedro* and that the *lectio* of the manuscripts should be preserved.

In a passage from the *Natural History* that mentions Varro’s and L. Cassius Hemina’s opinions on the discovery of the lost Books of Numa,<sup>8</sup> Pliny the Elder describes the exceptional state of conservation of these books which can be explained by the fact that they were soaked with cedar oil. Pliny (*HN* 13.86) writes, quoting Hemina:<sup>9</sup> *et libros citratos fuisse; propterea arbitrarier tineas non tetigisse*; thus, he uses the surprising *citratos*, given by all the manuscripts, instead of the expected *cedratos*.<sup>10</sup> If one looks at *TLL* 3.1205.80–1 s.v. *citratus*, one reads the following: ‘HEMINA *hist.* 37 (Plin. *nat.* 13, 86) libros 1205.81 -os *codd. pro* cedratos, v. p. 734, 59 sqq.’ and *TLL* 3.734.59–65 s.v. *cedratus* ‘PLIN. *nat.* 13, 86 et libros -os (citratos *codd., correxi, nisi confusionis auctor iam* PLIN. *ipse fuit*) fuisse, propterea arbitrarier tineas non tetigisse’. One can easily notice that there is some confusion between one form and the other in this passage.<sup>11</sup> Augustine (*De ciu. D.* 7.34) also says that the discovery of the Books of Numa was narrated by Varro in his *Antiquitates rerum humanarum*. If Pliny mistakes the name of the cedar with that of citron wood, as suggested in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, he could have done so because of Varro’s influence. Varro wrote, according to Charisius, *glutine et citro reficit*, where, as Hendrickson showed, we would have expected *cedro*; Pliny writes *et libros citratos fuisse*, where we would have expected *cedratos*, and he does so not far from a passage he ascribes to Varro: *ipse Varro humanarum antiquitatum vii ...* (Plin. *HN* 13.87).

From this comparison, one could draw three possible conclusions, the first of which is incompatible with the other two. 1) The text given by the manuscripts is corrupted in

<sup>6</sup> Hendrickson (n. 1), 397 nn. 11–12 provides quotations from ancient authors on the usage of cedar oil in papyrus-related contexts; cf. also W.E.H. Cockle, ‘Restoring and conserving papyri’, *BICS* 30 (1983), 147–65, at 156–7.

<sup>7</sup> Hendrickson (n. 1), 397.

<sup>8</sup> On the Books of Numa, their discovery and the *testimonia*, cf. E. Peruzzi, ‘I libri di Numa’, in E. Peruzzi, *Le origini di Roma* (Bologna, 1973), 2.107–43.

<sup>9</sup> Hemina, *hist.* fr. 35 *FRH* = fr. 37 Peter = fr. 40 Chassignet.

<sup>10</sup> Modern editors, following the manuscripts, also print *citratos*; cf. K. Mayhoff (ed.), *Gaii Plini Secundi Naturalis historiae libri XXXVII* (Leipzig, 1875), 2.333 for Pliny; for Hemina, see T. Cornell (ed.), *The Fragments of the Roman Historians* (Oxford, 2013), 3 vols., 2.266–7, who also adds: ‘*citratos*: MSS’. In his edition, A. Ernout (ed.), *Pline l’Ancien. Histoire Naturelle Livre XIII* (Paris, 1956), 97 writes: ‘*citratos*: c’est la leçon de tous les mss., et Pl. songe sans doute au pouvoir insecticide que possèdent les feuilles du “pommier d’Assyrie” ou cédratier. ... Les anciens éditeurs, avant Hardouin, lisaient *cedratos* ... La correction est ingénieuse, mais inutile, quoique la confusion entre *cedrus* et *citrus* ne soit pas inconnue.’

<sup>11</sup> On the general confusion between the two words, *citrus* and *cedrus*, cf. E. Forcellini and V. De-Vit, *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon* 2.217 s.v. *citrus*: ‘Nomen duarum arborum, quae specie inter se distinctae et a *cedro* diversae sunt, quamquam non desunt qui *citrum* et *cedrum* unam arborem esse putant’, which suggests that the Ancients mistook the two trees; and also A.C. Andrews, ‘Acclimatization of citrus fruits in the Mediterranean region’, *Agricultural History* 35 (1961), 35–46, at 42, who highlights the confusion that existed between the two names.

both occurrences, and we should therefore emend it to *cedro* and *cedratos*, which the editors of Pliny did not do. 2) If *citratos* is genuine, this passage seems to prove that the confusion between the two words—and not between the trees, as shown by Hendrickson—is already attested in antiquity, which weakens the need for an emendation, since we do not know whether the confusion is due to Varro or to a copyist. 3) One could argue that, if *citratos* is genuine, the mistake one finds in Pliny is due to the Varronian *usus* that influenced Pliny. Indeed, he uses it near a passage from the *Antiquitates*, and since Varro mistook *citrus* and *cedrus*, as shown by the fragment of the *De bibliothecis*, neither of the two texts should, therefore, be emended.

If one accepts proposition 2) or 3), the text of the fragment should remain *glutine et citro reficit*. Moreover, hypothesis 3) suggests that Pliny could have read the *De bibliothecis*. The *usus* of naming the cedar *citrus*, found in the *De bibliothecis*—we do not know if this form was used also in the *Antiquitates* Pliny quotes—could be described as Varronian. If so, the entire passage on the history of papyrus (Plin. *HN* 13.68–70), where Varro, explicitly quoted at the beginning and at the end of the digression,<sup>12</sup> likely mentioned cedar oil as related to roll-making, could be ascribed to the *De bibliothecis*.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, maintaining, for both Charisius and Pliny, the text transmitted by the manuscripts could be not only a matter of textual criticism but also a way of proving that Pliny had read the *De bibliothecis*, thus giving modern scholars some means to develop a better understanding of this lost treatise.

Columbia University

UMBERTO VERDURA

[uv2116@columbia.edu](mailto:uv2116@columbia.edu)

doi:10.1017/S0009838824000247

<sup>12</sup> On this effect of *Ringkomposition* in Pliny's account on the history of papyrus (*HN* 13.68–70), see Verdura (n. 2), 99.

<sup>13</sup> I explored this possibility in Verdura (n. 2), 96–9; *contra*, Hendrickson (n. 1), 395 writes about Pliny's passage on the history of writing materials that 'such a history of papyrus could easily have fit in the *De bibliothecis*, but it could just as well have fit in some of Varro's voluminous other writings.'