

When more than a century later the historian Ammianus Marcellinus discussed the issue of the origin of the Nile at 22.15.4—something he interestingly called *latentem notitiam* ('undisclosed knowledge')—he was convinced that it would never be resolved.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it was not until modern times that European explorers would eventually 'discover' the river's sources.<sup>11</sup> Should the proposed emendation of line 68 be correct, the long-concealed adjective of the Nile's source in Nemesianus may now be considered 'discovered' too.<sup>12</sup>

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### ORIBASIOS ON CABBAGE: *LIBRI AD EVNAPIVM* 3.13.4\*

#### ABSTRACT

*This article suggests a new reading for Oribasius' Libri ad Eunapium 3.13.4. Based on evidence from both Greek and Syriac sources, it argues that the variant contained in Oribasius' Synopsis ad Eustathium should be adopted as the correct reading of the original.*

**Keywords:** Oribasius; *Libri ad Eunapium*; *Synopsis ad Eustathium*; Paulus Aegineta; Dioscorides; Syriac pharmacopeia

In the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* edition of Oribasius' *Libri ad Eunapium* by J. Raeder, the text of 3.13.4 (= *CMG* 6.3.406.33–7) reads as follows:

(4) ὑγρῶν μὲν οὖν κάλλιστόν ἐστιν οἶνος· ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ ὀξύκρατον καὶ μελίκρατον· τῶν δ' ἄλλων κολλᾷ τραύματα δρυὸς φύλλα καταπλασσόμενα καὶ ἰτέας καὶ κράμβης τε ὁ καρπὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ ὁ χυλὸς καὶ ὁ φλοιὸς τῆς αὐστηροτέρας καὶ ὀξυτέρας, ἄρνόγλωσσον, πάπυρος (5) ὀξύκρατῶ ἢ οἴνω βραχεῖσα καὶ ἐν κύκλῳ περιειλουμένη.

*post* κράμβης *add.* μηλέας *Syn.*

And truly among the wet drugs, wine is very good, and both sour wine mixed with water and honey water work; and among other things which join the wounds: oak leaves applied as a plaster, willow leaves, and the fruit, leaves, juice, and bark of the more bitter and sharper cabbage, plantain, and papyrus, steeping in sour wine mixed with water or wine, and wrapped round in a circular manner.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See also Claud. *Nilus* 11–12 on the Nile's secluded source (*secreto ... fonte*) 'that will forever remain hidden' (*qui semper ... latet*).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. R.O. Collins, *The Nile* (New Haven and London, 2002), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Since a scribal error hardly accounts for the textual corruption, a deliberate manipulation of the original wording seems more likely. Perhaps a semi-learned reader who was unfamiliar with the Nilotic question, and thus could make no sense of the fact that somebody would be drinking from a source said to be hidden, decided to substitute the 'odd' adjective with the metrically apposite *bibunt* from the line before.

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<sup>1</sup> If not otherwise indicated, the English translations are my own.

Although witnesses of the direct tradition agree in reading κράμβης,<sup>2</sup> the indirect tradition provides a variant reading which puts μηλέας after κράμβης, as we see in the apparatus. Thus in the parallel text of Oribasius' *Synopsis ad Eustathium* (7.1.4 = *CMG* 6.3.211.17–20), the sentence underlined above reads as follows:

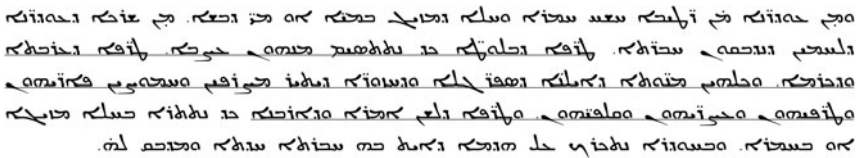
... δρυὸς φύλλα καταπλασσόμενα καὶ ἰτέας καὶ κράμβης μηλέας τε ὁ καρπὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ ὁ χυλὸς καὶ ὁ φλοιὸς τῆς αὐστηροτέρας καὶ ὀξύτερας ἀρνόγλωσσον, πάπυρος ...

... oak leaves applied as a plaster, willow leaves, cabbage leaves, and the fruit, leaves, juice and bark of the more bitter and sharper apple tree, plantain, and papyrus ...

The two versions disagree over the plant which τε ὁ καρπὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ ὁ χυλὸς καὶ ὁ φλοιὸς τῆς αὐστηροτέρας καὶ ὀξύτερας should refer to: according to the *Libri ad Eunarium* the plant should be cabbage (κράμβης), while the *Synopsis ad Eustathium* suggests instead the apple tree (μηλέας). The latter reading is correct and finds support in at least two parallel texts. The first can be found in Paulus Aegineta's *Epitomae medicae* 4.37.1 (= *CMG* 9.1.358.1–3), in which μηλέας also appears after κράμβης:

δρυὸς φύλλα καταπλασσόμενα καὶ ἰτέας καὶ κράμβης μηλέας τε ὁ καρπὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ ὁ χυλὸς καὶ ὁ φλοιὸς τῆς αὐστηροτέρας, ἀρνόγλωσσον, πάπυρος ...

The second can now be found in a Syriac pharmacopeia, preserved in three Syriac manuscripts (BNF syr. 423, Ming. syr. 594, BJI 00013) and newly edited by Gignoux<sup>3</sup>:



And truly among the wet drugs, wine, and vinegar mixed with water, or honey water is useful. Among the rest of the drugs which are suitable to join the wounds together: oak leaves while they should be made into a bandage, willow and vine (cabbage?) leaves, and all the parts of quince and apple trees which are more cleansing and acidifying, both their fruits, their leaves, their juice, and their barks, leaves of plantain and of papyrus reed, soaked in mixed vinegar or wine, and it should be wrapped in a circle around the limb on which there is a new bandage, and join it together.

Although the Syriac text is not identical to the Greek original, an affinity can still be recognized.<sup>4</sup> Two main differences deserve attention: 1. the plant that comes after willow is 'vine' (ܩܘܝܢܐ), not cabbage; 2. the plant that comes after cabbage/vine is

<sup>2</sup> Although our passage in Raeder's edition is based on a single manuscript *Marc. gr.* 294 (late thirteenth century), the other surviving witnesses dating mostly in the sixteenth century seem to depend on the Venice manuscript and share the omission of μηλέας (e.g. *Monac. gr.* 72, f. 57<sup>r</sup> and *Par. gr.* 2177, f. 37<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> P. Gignoux, *Un livre de pharmacopée en syriaque* (Leuven, 2019), 61–2, with a few corrections. The anonymous pharmacopeia contains parallels from pharmacological works of both Galen and Dioscorides: L. Lin, 'Dioscorides and Galen in the Syriac tradition: a reconsideration of three passages about herbs in an anonymous Syriac pharmacological book', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 68 (2023), 473–99.

<sup>4</sup> For the dependence of the Syriac pharmacology on the Greek tradition, see G. Kessel, 'Syriac medicine', in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (London, 2019), 438–59, at 449–51.

‘quince and apple trees’ (𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓 𐤌𐤊 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓 𐤌𐤊𐤓), not merely apple trees.<sup>5</sup> The differences can be explained if we consider 1. that the reading ‘vine’ probably results from a scribal error which confuses 𐤌𐤊 (cabbage) and 𐤌𐤊 (vine);<sup>6</sup> and 2. that *μηλέα* refers to apple trees which includes quince trees, as can be found in Dioscorides’ *De materia medica* 1.115.1 (= 1.107.5–6 Wellmann): *μηλέας πάσης τὰ φύλλα καὶ τὰ ἄνθη καὶ οἱ βλαστοὶ στύφουσι, μάλιστα δὲ τῆς Κυδωνίας* ‘The leaves, flowers, and shoots of all apple trees are astringent but especially those of the quince tree’.<sup>7</sup> In the same entry Dioscorides further explains that besides the leaves, flowers, and shoots of apple trees, their fruits are also astringent when unripe (καὶ ὁ καρπὸς ἔνωμος μὲν στυπτικὸς καθέστηκε, πεπανθεὶς δὲ οὐχ ὁμοίως, 1.107.6–7 Wellmann). This confirms that ὁ καρπὸς καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ ὁ χυλὸς καὶ ὁ φλοιὸς in our text should indeed be ascribed to *μηλέας*. Further evidence is found in the entry *Περὶ μηλέας* in Galen’s pharmacological treatise *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* (7.12.16 = 12.75.3–76.6 K.). In this entry, after an analysis of different fruits including the bitter ones (ἀύστηρό), Galen further comments on the medical effect of the leaves, the juice and the bark of the apple trees, and reveals that they could help to join wounds, especially those which are more bitter and sharper (οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ οἱ χυλοὶ καὶ οἱ φλοιοὶ τῶν δένδρων ἀλλήλων διαφέρουσιν, ὥστ’ ἔχοις αὐτοῖς μὲν ἀύστηροτέροις τε καὶ ὀξύτεροις τραύματά τε κολλῶν ..., 12.75.10–13 K.). As for the cabbage, in the entry on *κράμβη ἄγρια* ‘wild cabbage’ (2.121 = 1.194.12–17 Wellmann) Dioscorides explains the medical effect of its leaves as follows: *δύναμιν δὲ ἔχει τὰ φύλλα καταπλασσόμενα κολλητικὴν τραυμάτων καὶ διαφορητικὴν οἰδημάτων καὶ φλεγμονῶν* ‘Its leaves, applied as a plaster, have the ability to close wounds and to disperse swellings and inflammations’ (1.194.16–17 Wellmann).<sup>8</sup> This indicates that *κράμβης* in our text should be read as a genitive related to the earlier *φύλλα καταπλασσόμενα*, as is the case with the preceding *δρυὸς* and *ἰτέας*.

In short, both the parallel texts in Paulus, the Syriac pharmacopeia, and the medical analysis in Dioscorides and Galen provide good evidence for the reading in *Synopsis*. The reading in *Synopsis* should therefore be adopted as that of the original text.

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<sup>5</sup> The standard translation of *μηλέα* in Syriac is 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓, as we can find in both Sergius of Rēš‘ainā and Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq’s translations; see respectively A. Merx, ‘Proben der syrischen Übersetzung von Galenus’ Schrift *Über die einfachen Heilmittel*’, *ZDMG* 39 (1885), 237–305, at 281 and R. Duval, *Lexicon syriacum auctore Hassano bar Bahlule: voces syriacas graecasque cum glossis syriacis et arabicis complectens*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1888–1901), 1071.12. See also P. Gignoux, *Lexique des termes de la pharmacopée syriaque* (Paris, 2011), 41; U. Seidel, ‘Studien zum Vokabular der Landwirtschaft im Syrischen II’, *Altorientalistische Forschungen* 16 (1989), 89–139, at 121; R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1879–1901), 1238. For 𐤌𐤊 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓 and its variant 𐤌𐤊 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓, see Gignoux (this n.), 24, 66; Seidel (this n.), 122.

<sup>6</sup> Scribal errors occur often in the manuscripts of this Syriac pharmacopeia: Lin (n. 3).

<sup>7</sup> Translated by L.Y. Beck (transl.), *Pedanius Dioscorides of Anazarbus. De materia medica* (Hildesheim, 2005), 84.

<sup>8</sup> Beck (n. 7), 144.