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**NAMES OF PLANTS
AND THEIR HEALING
EFFECTS IN MEDICINAE
EX HOLERIBUS ET POMIS
BY GARGILIUS MARTIALIS**

**НАЗВИ РОСЛИН ТА ЇХ
ЛІКАРСЬКІ ЕФЕКТИ
В МЕДИЦИНІ ЕХ
HOLERIBUS ET POMIS
ГАРГІЛІУСА МАРТІАЛІУСА**

ABSTRACT

Introduction. *The present text is analyzing parts of the Latin treaty dedicated to the healing nature of plants. The text *Medicinae ex Holeribus et Pomis* by Gargillius Martialis is a compilation of names of plants and their effects on human body. We could try to identify a relation between the plant's name and its use regarding the disease in relation with its qualities. The treaty occupies an important place in the medial ancient literature as it gives a picture for the knowledge of herbs and their classification as mediations.*

Purpose. *The text aims to discuss some plants names used in the treaty for depicting their characteristics and qualities and how they could serve for healing a certain disease.*

Materials and methodology. *The descriptive method is used in comparison with translation of the names in modern English. Citations from the original text are inserted in Latin to illustrate the what characteristics are typical for to each plant and what are the effects provoked in the body.*

Results. *Latin names of plants refer to modern names that predominantly originate of Latin or Greek. The fact is that these plants are still popular and the relation of their medical use in the past and modern studies about them reveals the historical developments of classification and use.*

Conclusions. *The text of Gargilius Martialis is witnessing some very important things about names of plants, theirs cultivation and use. Nevertheless, medial methods and treatments rely on experience and observation, we are likely to admit that*

a scientific approach is present, because this work is an analytical study of pharmaceutical properties.

Key words: *names of herbs, and plants, medicine, curative effect, names of fruits and vegetables.*

INTRODUCTION

The medical treaty attributed to Gargilius Martialis called *Medicinae ex Holeribus et Pomis* (Medicines from fruits and vegetables) is a well-ordered text with descriptions of sixty plants and herbs, their effects on human body, curative effects on illnesses and the nature of plants as sources of qualities that might exercise certain impact on humans' feelings and senses.

The lifetime of Gargilius is presumed between 210 and 260 A. D. though the certainty to the year of his death is more reliable than the year of his birth. Brigitte Mairie (Mairie: 2002, xiii-xiv) in her introduction to *Medicinae ex Holeribus et Pomis* (*Medicinae...*) supposes the year 210 for his approximate year of birth, because she relates him as hypothetic author of the biography of Alexander Severus part of *Historia Augusta*. Gargilius was born in north Africa on the territory of modern Algeria in a province of the Roman empire known as *Mauretania Caesariensis* (Cesarean Mauretania) in a town called *Auzia*. He was a roman citizen and his occupation was not only in medicine but he also served as a military commander in the roman army.

In the text of *Medicinae* Gargilius talks about the curative powers and therapeutic effects of plants and mixtures of herbal preparations like seeds, grains, roots, leaves, fruits with some liquids like wine, honey, hot water, milk and others. We can affirm doubtless that Gargilius describes medical prescriptions for sudden or chronic aches and illnesses occurred in the human body. He often mentions in his treaty names of the well-known ancient medics like Galenus, Hippocrates, Dioscurides and Celsus; some Greek terms, mentioned as names of plants, herbs or diseases, appear in the text. He often uses phrases '*Graeci vocaverunt*' or '*a Graecis nominatum*' which suggests he was influenced with the works of his predecessors in medicine and also, he was fluent in Greek language which is not a surprising fact for the educated men in the Late Antiquity.

The treaty develops some good pieces of advice about the practical use of plants as remedies and the way they relief long lasting suffering. When Gargilius talks about the characteristics or qualities of plants — *virtutes* (vir-

tus, -utis,f.-) he always outlines the relation with the effects they produce within the body. Illnesses could be reduced and eliminated with stimulations produced of plant preparations or direct the consumption in some forms — heated, boiled, and so on. Warm producing effects on the body are primary discovered as inner characteristics of the plants. For example, the horse-radish produces internal heat, because it acquires hot natural characteristics.

Raphano calidam inesse virtutem...est (I, *Medicinae...*)

But in the description of the effects given from the coriander he has no doubt that the coriander is given cooling power (non dibanter coriandro refrigeratrix potestas datur, IV, *Medicinae...*) and some statements after, he gives the details that this power could not eliminate the diseases (called *vitia* in this context) entirely if we only rely on this cooling effect.

Si sola virtute frigida niteretur (IV, *Medicinae...*)

The characteristic (*virtus*) and the healing power (*potestas*) are used as synonyms in this medical language because they refer to the direct effect exercised to the illness. Some scholars like Mazzini accept that by *potestas* Gargilius means the Greek *dunamis* and it is not impossible, because some of his statements are citations from other medical works that he has acquired and supplemented.

In the same talk about the coriander is said that its mixture with honey removes all tumors and formations with filling: *tumores collectionesque*. The term *collectio* is quite unusual among the technical terms like tumors, haematomas or any tumor-like formations full of liquids (*humores*).

When talking about the characteristics, again *virtutes*, of cucurbita (cucumbers or summer squash) humidifying and cooling effects are outlined and the proof of this active agents are illustrated with the fact that after being consumed the plant provokes relaxing effect on the stomach without feeling of thirst:... **stomachum relaxat, bibendi desideria non excitat (VI, *Medicinae...*)**. We can assume that most of the proposed curative methods with plants involved in mixtures and preparations along with other substances are based on observations and experience, but also to the knowledge of the elders. Obviously in these times the fight against gastrointestinal disorders was a frequent symptom issue, because Gargilius points out for most of the plants he describes the positive effects they have in solving gastric problems like abdominal bloating and intestinal failure. Similar are the features of sour dock: (*lapathium*):

Lapathium calidae et austerae virtutis est (VI, Medicinae...)

Sour (acid) and hot characteristics of lapathium are essential because consumed with the meal it has releasing effect to the abdomen, stomach and facilitates urination.

... ventrem reprimat, stomachum confirmat ...confundit urinam (VI, Medicinae...)

We can add that in relation to this the similar digestive effects Gargilius describes the stimulation when using rocket (*Eruca sativa*) with its predominantly warming characteristic and facilitating urination:

...digestiones adiuvat et urinam movet (XVIII, Medicinae...)

Another aspect of warm producing plants in the body besides pure consumption is the sexual desire and stimulation. We might suggest that the relation between the warmth and *venus* (venus, veneris, f.-) — the physical arousal, are implicitly connected because desire heats the body so suppose the other way round is logical allusion.

... venerem maxime stimulat in cibo (XVIII, Medicinae...)

The conclusion about the plants provoking heat within the body is that they easily produce the secondary effect of sexual predisposition. They are the horse-radish, mallow (*malva*, -ae, f.-), rocket, leeks, fennel and asparagus.

horse-radish (*raphanus*, -i, m.-)...venerem stimulat, urinam citat...

Mallow (*malva*, -ae, f.-): Eodem femori alligata stimulat venerem (V)

Leeks (*porrum*, -i, n.-) ...vocem purgat, venerem stimulat, somnos adducit (XXI,)

Fennel (*feniculum*, -i, n.-) ...semen ex mero sumiturvenerem stimulat, urinam ciet...(XXV, Medicinae...)

Asparagus (*asparagus*, -i, m.-) ...venerem stimulat, sollicitat urinam ...(XXXI)

We are likely to notice that the stimulation of desire is often mentioned along with easiness in urination and this observation is general reference to the urogenital system because it involves both functions.

In the passage dedicated to the savory (*satureia*, -ae, f.-) Gargilius mentions its power to make people willing for physical love and considering this effect as absolutely forbidden for consumption of pregnant women. A part of the parts previously discussed *satureia* is having very strong power *vis* that makes its nature fiery:

Satureiae calida vis et prope ignita est. (XX, Medicinae)

And the next sentence explains the name of the herb regarding its effect. The work of Jaque André *Le noms des plants dans la Rome Antique* gives

the definition of “*satyrion*” as a Greek term that generally signifies plants or substances that are aphrodisiacs, so following this derivation of the name, we can truly believe that Gargilius relates the name and the result it causes.

Unde illi et nomen inditum credunt quod pronos faciat in venerem (XX, Medicinae...)

Nature of plants

When talking about the nature of the plants he uses the word nature with quite the same intention after using *virtus* and *potestas*. For example, the nature of mallow (*malva*) is laxative and emolliating.

Malvam molliendi dissolvendique naturam esse (V, Medicinae...)

Also, the nature of lettuce is described as cold but this coldness is not that harmful to make it useless. While helpful to carry off high temperatures due to the climate, it brings about improving appetite, this, however, *cooling nature* provides high quantities of blood and milk for nursing.

...sanguinem adquirunt. Lacte plurimo nutrientes feminas implent. (XI, Medicinae...)

To accept the nature of a plant as healing, for Gargilius it means to incline to warm and well temperate substances or at least to provoke warming effects in the body. So, the case for lettuce must have been quite contradictable to him as it is cold but results in good effects within the body. That's why he uses words meaning *cold* by nature but the plant affects and provokes healthy reaction in human organism because its cold is not that harmful.

...natura frigida, non tamen noxii frigoris,...verum medium temperatumque sortitae rigorem praestant...(XI, Medicinae...)

In comparison to this, the cold nature of the watermelon makes it difficult to digest and needs some additives to avoid the harmful effect that this cold power could produce.

...quo nocitura vis frigoris temperetur (XV, Medicinae...)

Generally, this understanding is based on the ancient thinking that the interaction of the human body with other bodies, fluids and objects results in common changes or at least the substances always affect the body in any quantities and measures. So, the nature of plants could not leave our body indifferent to reaction weather positive or negative but at any rate the body reacts and this transformation is due to the specific nature of plants. The more aggressive nature they have, the more sensible reaction is produced in the body. For example, the nature of thistle (*carduus*, -i, m.-) is depicted as *mordent* and likely *astringent* and it gives motion to a lazy stomach or even

reduces *calvities*, given in the text with term *alopecia*. This shows that the sharp nature of plants exercises more obvious and powerful consequences to the general state of the body. Proofs for the affirmative intense power of plants are always strong smells, tastes and sensation of increased warmth in the body.

Fever

The warm nature of plants is underlined in several places in the text as being contra-indicated to fever. The celery, as having warm power (*vis calida*), could never be prescribed against fever because hot substances added to warm symptoms would increase more the temperature.

Quando res calida calorato maloaddita magis accendat ardorem (II De apio, Medicinae...)

So, on the contrary, the cold nature plants like cucumbers and cabbage are curable and effective against fever as their nature opposes to the heat.

In the whole text, effects produced after applying any plants are described in relation with disease and curative methods but the results of affecting one symptom are never unique. One plant is described as useful in many different ways and in many combinations with other substances but primary it is described in the way it leads to solving health issues that its nature could influence and be eliminated. For this reason, some side effects are mentioned as well. For example, the quince, he says, is anticoagulating or useful for holding hemorrhages but it also retains the urine in the body. So, one good effect for a certain sign of illness could bring about another less positive state in the body.

CONCLUSIONS

The treaty of Gargilius Martialis is a well structured work with rich vocabulary for plants, herbs and diseases. What we seek in this text left from the ancient medicine is not how trustworthy is their content but all reflections tend to summaries data and observations with scientific approach. The nature of plants, which are sources of drugs and human nature, are in constant interaction during the healing process which is an entire vision of treatment even nowadays. Gargilius as an author is relevant to a tradition coming some centuries before his works. We have no evidence about the medical disciplines in Antiquity and the course of education but the knowledge we observe about the body sites and principles of function suggest that some professional qualified communities existed and they were in acquaintance with the most popular medical books in the empire. Medical treaties

are not only the object of natural studies, they are philosophical works to a great extent. As in their reflections they strive to generalize principles with fundamental significance.

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НАЗВИ РОСЛИН ТА ЇХ ЛІКАРСЬКІ ЕФЕКТИ В МЕДИЦИНІ ЕХ HOLERIBUS ET POMIS ГАРГІЛІУСА МАРТІАЛІУСА

АНОТАЦІЯ

Вступ. Поданий текст аналізує частини латинського трактату, що присвячений лікарській природі рослин. Текст *Medicinae ex Holeribus et Pomis Gargiliusa Martialis* становить собою зібрання назв рослин та їх ефективності для людського тіла. В роботі ми намагаємось визначити зв'язок між назвою рослини та її використанням при хворобі, беручи до уваги й якість цієї рослини. Трактат займає важливе місце в античній медичній літературі, оскільки він надає детальний опис рослин та їх класифікацію.

Мета. Метою статті є проаналізувати деякі назви рослин в роботі для того, щоб зобразити їх характеристики та якість, і те, як вони можуть слугувати для лікування певних хвороб.

Матеріал та методи. Описовий метод було використано для порівняння перекладу назв сучасною англійською мовою. Подані цитати з першоджерела для того, щоб продемонструвати, які описові характеристики є типовими для кожної рослини і який вплив вони мають на тіло людини.

Результати. Латинські назви рослин є сучасними назвами, що переважно походять від латинської або грецької. Це зумовлено тим, що ці рослини все ще використовуються, і зв'язок з широким використанням в медицині сьогодні виявляє історичний розвиток їх класифікації та використання.

Висновки. Робота Гаргільуса Мартіаліса свідчить про важливі речі щодо назв рослин, їх культивування й використання. Проте методи лікування підлягають випробуванню та спостереженню, і ми підкреслюємо, що науковий

підход також є присутнім, тому що ця робота — аналітичне вивчення фармакологічних особливостей.

Ключові слова: *назви рослин і трав, медицина, лікарський ефект, назви фруктів і овочів.*

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