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Graeco-Aramaica. The Syrian Plant Names in Pseudo-Dioscorides

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Abstract

The collection of synonymous plant names added to Dioscorides' *De materia medica* between the 2nd and the 5th centuries CE contains many glosses in different languages. Among them are seven plant names attributed to the Syrians. The main aim of the paper is to re-examine whether they are of Aramaic origin. Consideration is also given to the possible occurrence of these plant names in other Greek sources and to the botanical identification of individual names. As a result, the paper shows that five plant names can be treated as Aramaic: ἀρμαλά 'rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.)' (Jewish Aramaic *ħrmlt* 'wild rue', Mandaic *harmal* 'rue', Arabic *ħarmal* 'wild rue'), βησσασά 'rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.)' (Jewish Aramaic *baššāš*, *baššāšā* 'wild rue'; Syriac *baššāšā*, *bšwš* 'id.'), λαλλαβιάρια 'white bryony (*Bryonia dioica* Jacq.)' (Syriac 'āleḫšrā 'white bryony'), λοῦφαν 'a kind of arum (especially *Arum maculatum* L. and *Arum palaestinum* Boiss.)' (Aramaic **lūpā* 'Solomon's lily', reconstructed on the basis of the Mishnaic Hebrew *lōp* or *lūp* 'id.'; cf. Syriac *lāwpā* [or *lūpā*?] 'perh. pellitory, parietary; dragon arum; peeled barley'; Arabic *lūf* 'sponge gourd; dragon arum'), and σασά 'white lily (*Lilium candidum* L.)' (Jewish Aramaic *sōsa* 'n, *šwšnh* 'lily', Syriac *swn* 'id.'). The etymology of the Syrian glosses ἄδοριού 'sea carrot (*Daucus carota* var. *drepanensis* [Arcang.] Heywood) or sekakul (*Malabaila secacul* [Mill.] Boiss.)' and μεούδα 'sea beet (*Beta vulgaris* var. *maritima* [L.] Arcang.)' is unknown.

Keywords

etymology; Aramaic plant names; Semitic words in Greek; Pedanius Dioscorides; ancient medicine

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In the famous pharmacopoeia *De materia medica* by Pedanius Dioscorides of Anazarbus (1st century CE), we also find a Pseudo-Dioscoridean collection of synonymous plant names transmitted in the codices of the so-called *Recensio Vindobonensis* (especially *Constantinopolitanus Vindobonensis med. gr.* 1 (C) from the 6th century and *Neapolitanus Vindobonensis suppl. gr.* 28 (N) from the 7th century). The synonyms, incorporated into Dioscorides' work between the 2nd and the 5th centuries CE, are placed in Wellmann's (1907–1914) edition beneath the main text (labeled as RV or, in one case, as C and N).¹

An interesting part of this collection is the glosses from other languages, marked by appropriate ethnonyms: Αἰγύπτιοι 'Egyptians', Ἄφροι '(North) Africans', Γάλλοι 'Gauls', Δάκοι 'Dacians', Θεῦσκοι 'Etruscans', Σπάνιοι 'Hispanians', Σύριοι 'Syrians', and some others. It should be noted that no convincing etymologies have yet been found for most of the foreign plant names, but there are cases where the origin of a word mentioned by Pseudo-Dioscorides is clear; for example, the Egyptian gloss μίθ 'celery (*Apium graveolens* L.)' (3.64 RV) corresponds to Egyptian *m3t.t* 'id.' and Coptic ΜΙΤ (Sahidic, Bohairic), ΕΜΙΤ (Bohairic) 'parsley, celery'.²

Among many foreign glosses, Pseudo-Dioscorides provides seven plant names attributed to the Syrians. The aim of this article is to examine whether the Aramaic etymologies proposed in the 19th and early 20th centuries (especially by Löw 1881 and 1924–1934) are still valid and whether there are new opportunities for interpretation. Another important issue is how accurately the glosses reflect the phonetic sound of original words. Consideration is also given to the possible occurrence of these plant names in Greek sources other than the appendix in *De materia medica*, and to the botanical identification of individual names.

Two glosses marked as Syrian, ἀρμαλά and βησσασά, have the same meaning. They are counterparts of πήγανον κηπαῖον 'rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.)' (3.45 RV):

πήγανον κηπαῖον· Ῥωμαῖοι ῥοῦτα ὀρτήνσις, Αἰγύπτιοι ἐπνουβού, Σύριοι ἀρμαλά, οἱ δὲ βησσασά, Ἄφροι χουρμά.

Rue (lit. garden rue): the Romans (call it) *ruta hortensis*, the Egyptians (call it) *epnubu*, the Syrians (call it) *harmala* or *bēssasa*, the Africans (call it) *churma*.³

Both names also appear in other sources in different variants: βήσασα, βησασᾶ, βήσασα f. and n. (indecl.), as well as ἄρμαλα and ἄρμολα f. and n. (indecl.), but with the meaning of 'wild rue (*Peganum harmala* L.)'. Dioscorides quotes them in the main text as synonyms for πήγανον ἄγριον, but he does not treat ἀρμαλά as Syrian (3.46):

καλοῦσι δὲ τινες αὐτὸ (scil. πήγανον ἄγριον) ἀρμαλά, Σύριοι δὲ βήσασαν, Καππάδοκες δὲ μῶλυ [...].

1 For some discussions and views on the collection, see Wellmann (1898); Váczy (1969: pp. 115–120); Riddle (1985: p. 28); Popa (2010); Hardy and Totelin (2016: p. 102); Pommerening (2016: pp. 98–100); Dalby (2018).

2 On μίθ, see Manniche (1989: pp. 76, 163); Takács (1999–2008: III, p. 111); Pommerening (2016: pp. 97, 99).

3 Translation: R. R.

Some call this plant (scil. wild rue) *harmala*, the Syrians *bessasa*, and the Cappadocians *mōly* [...].⁴

Galen writes almost identically in his treatise *De simplicium medicamentorum facultatibus* (XII, p. 82.13–15):

Μῶλυ. τινὲς τοῦτο πήγανον ἄγριον ὀνομάζουσιν, ἔνιοι δὲ ἄρμολαν, Σύροι δὲ βήσασαν, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ οἱ Καππαδόκων μῶλυ [...].

Mōly (wild rue). Some call it *pēganon agrion*, some others (call it) *harmola*, the Syrians (call it) *bēsasa*, whereas the Cappadocians (call it) *mōly* [...].⁵

Later in this work, the author again confirms the meaning of βήσασα as ‘wild rue’ (XII, p. 101,7–8). In another treatise entitled *De compositione medicamentorum secundum locos*, Galen mentions both names together (XII, p. 938.10–11):

[...] βήσασα (gen. sg.), ὃ τινες ἄρμαλα καλοῦσι [...]
 [...] *bēsasa* that some call *harmala* [...].⁶

He also defines βήσασα as the seed of the wild rue (XIII, p. 257.8–10):

Βήσασα, σπέρμα δὲ ἐστὶν ἐν Συρίᾳ γεννώμενον τοῦ ἀγρίου πηγάνου, ὃ δὴ οἱ ἐντόπιοι ἄρμαλα καλοῦσιν.

Bēsasa: this is the wild rue seed found in Syria. The locals call this plant *harmala*.⁷

In the same treatise, βήσασα appears more than ten times,⁸ including in a sentence taken from Andromachus the Elder.⁹ Moreover, the name is attested in the work *De curatione acutorum morborum* of Aretaeus (I 7.6). In turn, ἄρμαλα also occurs in Pseudo-Galen’s *De succedaneis* (XIX, p. 725.8). Incidentally, it is doubtful that ἄρμαρα (indecl. or pl. n.?) ‘a kind of aromatic resin’, attested in the so-called Great Magical Papyrus of Paris (4th century CE),¹⁰ is a variant of ἄρμαλα.¹¹

The forms ἄρμαλά, ἄρμαλα, ἄρμολα are attributed in some places to the Syrians, and elsewhere to unspecified people (marked only as τινες or ἔνιοι). Nevertheless, etymology confirms that this plant name is of Aramaic origin.¹² Indeed, it is linked to Jewish

4 Translation: Beck (2005: p. 201).

5 Translation: R. R.

6 Translation: R. R.

7 Translation: R. R.

8 Gal. XII, p. 938.8, XII, p. 940.1, etc.

9 Gal. XII, p. 938.5; cf. XII, p. 942.10.

10 PGM IV 1294 and 1990.

11 Cf. Beekes (2010: p. 134); Frisk (1960–1972: I, p. 143); Chantraine (1999: p. 111).

12 Carnoy (1959: p. 137); Frisk (1960–1972: I, p. 143). Cf. Löw (1881: p. 371 and 1924–1934: III, pp. 509f.); Chantraine (1999: p. 111); Beekes (2010: p. 134): “Is ἄρμαλά from Semitic, or the other way round?”

Babylonian Aramaic *ħrmlt* ‘wild rue (*Peganum harmala* L.)’ (-t’ /-tā/ is an emphatic feminine ending),¹³ Mandaic *harmal* ‘rue’,¹⁴ and Arabic *ħarmal* ‘wild rue (*Peganum harmala* L.)’.¹⁵ The Greek word was probably taken from Aramaic **ħarmalā*. The form ἄρμολα with the vowel o /o/ is certainly secondary (due to a graphic distortion rather than a phonetic change). It is also worth noting that the Greek plant name became the source of Syriac *’armlā* ‘wild rue (*Peganum harmala* L.)’¹⁶ and Coptic (Sahidic) ἀρμαρα ‘id.’.¹⁷

As for the name βήσσασά, βήσσασα, etc., a valid etymology has already been given by Löw (1881: pp. 371f., 413, and 1924–1934: III, p. 509). The word comes from Aramaic and is related to Jewish Aramaic *baššāš*, *baššāšā* ‘wild rue (*Peganum harmala* L.)’¹⁸ and Syriac *baššāšā*, *bšwš* ‘id.’.¹⁹ Interestingly, the Semitic plant name was also borrowed into Egyptian: Demotic *bšwš* ‘wild rue (*Peganum harmala* L.)’,²⁰ Coptic (Sahidic, Bohairic) βαυρογυ ‘rue (*Ruta graveolens* L. or *Ruta montana* (L.) L.)’.²¹ The testimony of Pseudo-Dioscorides may be evidence that the Aramaic names **ħarmalā* and *baššāšā* (with their variants) were used not only for wild rue, but also for rue. However, it cannot be ruled out that the author erroneously gave βήσσασά and ἀρμαλά as synonyms of πήγανον κηπαῖον instead of πήγανον ἄγριον.

Among the Syrian glosses mentioned by Pseudo-Dioscorides, the name λούφαν (v.l. σουφαν) presents some semantic difficulties. It is synonymous with δρακοντία μικρά and ἄρον ‘a kind of arum’ (2.167 RV):

δρακοντία μικρά· οἱ δὲ ἄρον, οἱ δὲ ἄρις, οἱ δὲ ἔπαρσις, οἱ δὲ παρνοπόγονον, οἱ δὲ κυνόζολον, οἱ δὲ φοινίκεον, οἱ δὲ ὄνοκεφάλιον, οἱ δὲ ἐφιάλιον, Αἰγύπτιοι ἐβρών, οἱ δὲ ἐρυθμόν, Ῥωμαῖοι βήτα λεπορίνα, Θεοῦσκοι γιγάρομ, Ἴστριανοὶ λάγμα, Δάκοι κουριοννηκούμ, Ἄφροι ἀτειρνοιχλάμ, Σύροι λούφαν.

Small dragonwort (a kind of arum): others (call it) *aron* or *aris* or *eparsis* (raising) or *parnopogonon* or *kynozolon* or *phoinikeon* or *onokephalion* (donkey’s head) or *ephialtion*, the Egyptians (call it) *ebrown* or *erythmon*, the Romans (call it) *beta leporina*, the Etruscans (call it) *gigarum*, the Istrians (call it) *lagma*, the Dacians (call it) *kurionnēkum*, the Africans (call it) *ateirnoichlam*, the Syrians (call it) *luphan*.²²

13 Sokoloff (2002: p. 484); *CAL* s.v. *ħrmlh*.

14 Drower and Macuch (1963: p. 127); cf. *CAL* s.v. *ħrmlh*.

15 Wehr (1979: p. 202).

16 This form appears only once in a Syriac translation of the treatise *De simplicium medicamentorum facultatibus* of Galen (Syriac: Merx 1885: p. 282.32; Greek: XII, p. 82.14, quoted above), and seems to be a transliteration of the Greek plant name; for more, see Löw (1924–1934: III, p. 509); Brockelmann (1928: p. 735); Sokoloff (2009: p. 102); *CAL* s.v. *’rml’*.

17 *CDO* s.v. ἀρμαρα.

18 Dalman (1922: p. 67); Sokoloff (2002: p. 251); *CAL* s.v. *bšš*.

19 Sokoloff (2009: pp. 194f.); *CAL* s.v. *bšš*.

20 *CDD* s.v. *bšwš*; Erichsen (1954: p. 123); Charpentier (1981: p. 268).

21 Crum (1939: p. 47); Westendorf (1965–1977: p. 29); *CDO* s.v. βαυρογυ.

22 Translation: R. R.

This name is also attested in the main text of the pharmacopoeia of Dioscorides in the form λουφα. In view of the detailed description which allows the plant to be identified, it is worth quoting the entire passage (2.167):

ἄρον τὸ καλούμενον παρὰ Σύροις λουφα. φύλλα ἀνίησιν (scil. ἄρον) ὅμοια τοῖς τοῦ δρακοντίου, μικρότερα δὲ καὶ ἀσπίλωτα, καυλὸν σπιθαμιαῖον, ὑποπόρφυρον, ὑπεροειδῆ, ἐφ' οὗ ὁ καρπὸς κροκίζων· ῥίζα λευκὴ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ δρακοντίου, ἤτις καὶ ἐσθίεται ἐψομένη ἤττον οὔσα δριμεῖα. ταριχεύεται δὲ τὰ φύλλα εἰς βρῶσιν, καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ξηρανθέντα ἐψομένα ἐσθίεται. δύναμιν δὲ ἔχει τὸ σπέρμα καὶ τὰ φύλλα καὶ ἡ ῥίζα τὴν αὐτὴν τῷ δρακοντίῳ. ποιεῖ δὲ ἡ ῥίζα καταπλασσομένη σὺν βολβίτῳ ἐπὶ ποδαγρικῶν. ἀποτίθεται δὲ ὡς ἡ τοῦ δρακοντίου, καὶ καθ' ὅλου ἐστὶν ἐδώδιμος διὰ τὸ μὴ λίαν δριμύ. The *arum*, which the Syrians call *lupha*. It sends out leaves similar to those of dragon arum, but smaller and without spots, a stem one span tall, purplish and pestle-shaped, upon which the saffron-colored fruit grows; the root is white tending toward the root of dragon arum; it, too, is eaten boiled, being less pungent. Its leaves are cured for eating and, after they have dried by themselves, they are eaten boiled. The seed, leaves, and root have the same properties as dragon arum. The root, plastered on with cow dung, is efficacious for the gouty. It is stored the same way as the root of dragon arum and in general it is edible because it is not very pungent.²³

The plant described by Dioscorides is often identified either as spotted arum (*Arum dioscoridis* Sibth. et Sm.) or as taro (*Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott, including its subspecies *Colocasia esculenta* var. *antiquorum* (Schott) F.T.Hubb. et Rehder, earlier known as *Colocasia antiquorum* Schott²⁴).²⁵ However, the above description of ἄρον does not fit the characteristics of these species. In fact, the details given by Dioscorides correspond well to the cuckoo pint (*Arum maculatum* L.), as observed over a century ago.²⁶ This view is now supported by Grimaldi and Muthukumaran et al. (2018), who write as follows:

The description of fruit colour, and height of the fruiting stem (one span, ca. 20 cm) match the traits of *Arum maculatum*, which is widespread in Europe and West Asia and known as a source of edible starch after acidity has been removed. Nevertheless, the arum ‘which the Syrians called loufa’ is almost certainly the Solomon’s lily (*Arum palaestinum* Boiss.).

The two species of *Arum* are so similar that we can assume with a high degree of probability that the names ἄρον and λουφα(ν) denote both *Arum maculatum* and *Arum palaestinum*.

23 Translation: Beck (2005: p. 164; with modifications).

24 For the taxonomy of this variety, see Hill (1939); Erhardt and Götz et al. (2002: p. 314).

25 See Liddell, Scott and Jones (1996: p. 245): *Arum dioscoridis*; André (2010: p. 26): *Colocasia antiquorum*; Beck (2005: p. 164): *Colocasia antiquorum*; Montanari (2015: p. 301): *Arum dioscoridis*; Witeczak (2016: pp. 18–20): *Colocasia esculenta*; Adrados (1989–2009: p. 520): *Arum dioscoridis* or perhaps *Colocasia esculenta*; García Valdés (1998: I, p. 344, n. 206): *Arum dioscoridis* or *Colocasia esculenta*, (II, p. 270, n. 3): *Arum dracunculus* L. = *Dracunculus vulgaris* Schott. Some scholars discussing ἄρον do not state how this plant should be identified in Dioscorides; cf. Carnoy (1959: p. 38); Dalby (1996: p. 28f.); Hünemörder (2003).

26 See Olck (1895: p. 1214); Berendes (1902: p. 245). The latter scholar also considers the very similar eastern arum (*Arum orientale* M.Bieb.).

It would seem, therefore, that a dictionary definition of λουφα(ν) would have to include more than one species: ‘a kind of arum, especially cuckoo pint (*Arum maculatum* L.) and Solomon’s lily (*Arum palaestinum* Boiss.)’.

The plant name λουφα(ν) probably comes from Aramaic **lūḫā* ‘Solomon’s lily (*Arum palaestinum* Boiss.)’.²⁷ We can reconstruct such a form on the basis of Mishnaic Hebrew *lōḫ* or *lūḫ* ‘id.’ (attested, for example, in the tractates *Kil’ayim* and *Shevi’it*).²⁸ Also related to the Hebrew word are Syriac *lāwḫā* (or *lūḫā*?) ‘perh. pellitory, parietary; dragon arum (*Dracunculus vulgaris* Schott); peeled barley’²⁹ and Arabic *lūf* ‘sponge gourd (*Luffa aegyptiaca* Mill.); dragon arum (*Dracunculus vulgaris* Schott)’.³⁰ The Semitic words indicate that the form λουφα is primary; the final -ν in λουφαν was probably added under the influence of the accusative singular ending of the 1st declension. Regarding the meaning of the Syriac and Arabic names, it is worth noting that the dragon arum and the cuckoo pint or Solomon’s lily are very similar and have comparable properties. Of particular note is Dioscorides’ own testimony quoted above; in his description of ἄρον he repeatedly compares this plant to δρακόντιον ‘dragon arum’. Interestingly, in Pseudo-Dioscorides, ἄρον is also called δρακοντία μικρά lit. ‘small dragonwort’, while δρακοντία μεγάλη lit. ‘large dragonwort’ is a synonym of δρακόντιον (2.166 RV). In addition, it is significant that Ibn al-Bayṭār, in his 13th-century commentary on Dioscorides (2.149),³¹ gives the Arabic plant name *al-lūf as-sabṭ* (cf. *sabṭ* ‘lank’) as the equivalent of ἄρον.

Two other Syrian glosses handed down by Pseudo-Dioscorides seem to have been distorted quite considerably. The first is σασά (v.l. σαλα), which occurs as a synonym of the Greek κρίνον βασιλικόν ‘white lily (*Lilium candidum* L.)’ (3.102 RV):

κρίνον βασιλικόν· οἱ δὲ κρινάνθεμον, οἱ δὲ καλλεῖριον, οἱ δὲ λείριον, οἱ δὲ σούσινον, προφήται αἶμα Ἄρεως, Ὀσθάνης αὔρα κροκοδείλου, Αἰγύπτιοι σμφαιφού, οἱ δὲ ὄμβρισεδώ, οἱ δὲ τίαλος, οἱ δὲ λαρσάορα, Ῥωμαῖοι λίλιουμ, οἱ δὲ ῥόσα Ἰουνώνις, οἱ δὲ λίλιουμ ἄλβουμ, Σύροι σασά, Ἄφροι ἀβοῖβλαβον.

White lily (lit. royal lily): others (call it) *krinanthemon* or *kalleirion* or *leirion* or *susinon*, the prophets (call it) *haima Areōs* (blood of Ares), Osthanes (calls it) *aura krokodeilu* (blow/blast of crocodile), the Egyptians (call it) *somphaiḫphu* or *ombrisedō* or *tialos* or *larsaora*, the Romans

27 Cf. Löw (1881: p. 413, cf. p. 239); Witczak (2016: p. 19, n. 8); Grimaldi, Muthukumaran et al. (2018).

28 Older works do not give an exact species identification for this plant name; cf. Jastrow (1903: p. 700): ‘a plant similar to colocasia, with edible leaves and root, and bearing beans (it is classified with onions and garlic)’; Dalman (1922: p. 215): ‘ein Zwiebelgewächs’. Today there is no doubt that the Hebrew name means *Arum palaestinum*; see Feliks (2007: p. 488); Mayer-Chissick and Lev (2014: pp. 18–20); Grimaldi, Muthukumaran et al. (2018).

29 Brockelmann (1928: p. 352); Sokoloff (2009: p. 680); *CAL* s.v. *lwp*. The Syriac word appears, for example, as the equivalent of Greek δρακόντιον ‘dragon arum’ in the translation of Galen’s treatise *De simplicium medicamentorum facultatibus* (Syriac: Merx 1885: p. 256.9; Greek: XI, p. 864.7). Regarding the meaning, Witczak (2016: p. 19, n. 8) incorrectly states that the Syriac name means *Colocasia esculenta*.

30 Freytag (1830–1837: III, p. 136): ‘planta serpentaria sive dracunculus; momordica (luffa)’; Steingass (1884: p. 932): ‘a plant, dragon’s wort’; Wehr (1979: p. 1036): ‘luffa, dishcloth gourd (*Luffa cylindrica* Roem)’.

31 See Dietrich (1991: pp. 70 and 141).

(call it) *lilium* or *rosa Iunonis* or *lilium album*, the Syrians (call it) *sasa*, the Africans (call it) *aboiblabon*.³²

We can infer the Aramaic origin of σασά³³ from a comparison with Jewish Aramaic *sōsa`n*, *šwšnh* ‘lily’³⁴ and Syriac *swsn* ‘id.’³⁵ Similar words for lily are widespread in other Oriental languages: Biblical Hebrew *šūšan*, *šōšān* ‘lily; lily-shaped decoration, ornament’,³⁶ Middle Persian *sōsan* ‘id.’,³⁷ Modern Persian *sūsana* ‘id.’,³⁸ Armenian *šowšan* ‘id.’,³⁹ Coptic (Bohairic) *ⲱⲱⲱⲎ* ‘id.’,⁴⁰ etc. (note that the Greek plant name σοῦσον n. ‘lily (*Lilium* L.), especially white lily (*Lilium candidum* L.)’ comes from the same group of words).⁴¹ Based on the Semitic words, we would expect in Pseudo-Dioscorides a form like *σωσαν or *σουσαν. The first syllable has been altered under the influence of the second, and the final -v has been dropped, probably because of its reinterpretation as an accusative ending. These transformations appear to have been made in the process of textual transmission.

Even greater changes to a Semitic word are observed in the case of the gloss λαλλαβίαρια, an equivalent of βρυωνία λευκή ‘white bryony (*Bryonia dioica* Jacq.)’ (4.182 RV):

βρυωνία λευκή· οἱ δὲ μάδον, οἱ δὲ ἄμπελος λευκή, οἱ δὲ ψιλῶθρον, οἱ δὲ μήλωθρον, οἱ δὲ ὄφις σταφυλή, οἱ δὲ ἀρχέζωστιν, οἱ δὲ κέδρωστιν, Αἰγύπτιοι χαλαλαμόν, Ῥωμαῖοι νότιαμ, οἱ δὲ ἔρβα κοριάρια, οἱ δὲ κουκούρβιτα ἡρράτικα, Δάκοι κινούβοιλα, Σύροι λαλλαβίαρια.

White bryony: others (call it) *madon* or *ampelos leukē* (white vine) or *psilōthron* (depilatory) or *mēlōthron* or *ophios staphylē* (snake’s grapes) or *archezōstis* or *kedrōstis*, the Egyptians (call it) *chalalamon*, the Romans (call it) *notia* or *herba coriaria* or *cucurbita erratica*, the Dacians (call it) *kinuboila*, the Syrians (call it) *lallabiaria*.⁴²

Wellmann (1907–1914: II, p. 329)⁴³ considers whether the gloss λαλλαβίαρια has some connection with the plant name *galiadiana* ‘white bryony’ attributed to the Cilicians in

32 Translation: R. R.

33 Cf. Löw (1881: p. 414).

34 Sokoloff (1990: p. 543); Sokoloff (2002: p. 794); *CAL* s.v. *šwšnh*.

35 Sokoloff (2009: p. 986); *CAL* s.v. *swsn*; cf. Ciancaglini (2008: p. 20).

36 Clines (1993–2011: VIII, pp. 314f.); Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm (1994–2000: pp. 1454f.)

37 MacKenzie (1986: p. 75).

38 Steingass (1892: p. 709).

39 Bedrossian (1875–1879: p. 553).

40 Crum (1939: p. 608); Westendorf (1965–1977: p. 338). Cf. Egyptian *sššn*, *sšn* ‘lotus, especially white Egyptian lotus (*Nymphaea lotus* L.)’, Demotic *sšn* ‘lotus’; see Erman and Grapow (1926–1931: III, pp. 485–487); Erichsen (1954: p. 464); Wilson (1997: pp. 929f.); Hannig (2009: pp. 831, 834); *CDD* s.v. *sšn*.

41 It is not clear from which language the Greeks borrowed the word σοῦσον; see Frisk (1960–1972: II, p. 753); Masson (1967: pp. 58f.); Hemmerdinger (1968: p. 245 and 1970: p. 55); Chantraine (1999: p. 1030); Torallas Tovar (2004: p. 194); Brust (2008: pp. 631f.); Beekes (2010: p. 1373); Rosól (2013: p. 135).

42 Translation: R. R.

43 Similarly, Löw (1924–1934: I, p. 554); Pradel-Baquerre (2018: p. 327, n. 684).

the *Herbarius* of Pseudo-Apuleius.⁴⁴ Of course, we cannot exclude this possibility, but it is uncertain, because of both the different attributions⁴⁵ and the large phonetic discrepancies between the two forms.⁴⁶

In publications to date, only one etymology of the gloss λαλλαβίαρια has been proposed. This is from Löw (1924–1934: I, p. 554),⁴⁷ who suggests that λαλλαβίαρια comes from Syriac *sattā hewwārtā* ‘white bryony’ (*sattā* ‘vine’ and *hewwārā*, det. *hewwārtā* ‘white’).⁴⁸ While this hypothesis is convincing on semantic grounds, the phonetic differences argue against it. In particular, it is difficult to accept that λαλλα- could be derived from Syriac *sattā* (or even *sattā he-*). Of course, it is reasonable to assume that the foreign plant name might not have been faithfully rendered in the Greek text, or that it might have been distorted, but in the case under consideration such changes would have had to be extremely significant. Löw does not explain how such a severe deformation of the source expression would have occurred.⁴⁹

Interestingly, the Syriac language has a plant name that is more similar to λαλλαβίαρια. This is *ʾāleḫšrā* ‘white bryony’⁵⁰ of unknown etymology.⁵¹ As we can see, the Syriac phytonym denotes the same species as the gloss in Pseudo-Dioscorides. However, these words are not phonetically identical. Compared with *ʾāleḫšrā*, the form λαλλαβίαρια has an unexpected λ- at the beginning and an altered final part of the word. Concerning the initial λ-, we can assume that it was added by mistake because of a sequence of similar letters in the majuscule: ΑΛΛΑ → ΛΑΛΛΑ.⁵² The -ίαρια, on the other hand, was most

44 Pseudo-Apuleius (*Herb.* 67) quotes the following synonyms for *herba brionia*: *A Graecis dicitur brionia, alii ampelos leuce, Romani oua taminia, Itali uitis alba, alii coriaria, alii apiastellum, Daci aurumetti, Cilices galiana* (vv.ll. *gadiana, gardiadiana*), *Bessi dinupula, alii discopela* (edited by Howald – Sigerist 1927); cf. the edition of Pradel-Baquerre (2018), based on only one manuscript from the 14th or 15th century: *A Graecis dicitur ampelos leuce. Romani dicunt abutarniam. Sed Itali uitis alba dicunt. Alii nomen carinbarde. Daci dicunt aurumethy. Cylicii dicunt galia Diana. Bessi nomen dicunt dinupulla. Sed alii discopella uocant.*

45 Perhaps an original source referred to the name as used by the inhabitants of a town or a region on the border between Syria and Cilicia? It is worth noting that there are no other glosses attributed to the Cilicians in either Pseudo-Dioscorides or Pseudo-Apuleius. Incidentally, the latter has only one plant name attributed to the Syrians, namely *clargia* ‘Greek cyclamen (*Cyclamen graecum* L.)’ (*Herb.* 17) of unknown etymology. Its counterpart is missing in the expected place in Pseudo-Dioscorides (2.164 RV). Moreover, note that in the case of white bryony, Pseudo-Dioscorides and Pseudo-Apuleius give different attributions for κινούβουλα (Δάκοι) and *dinupula* (Bessi), which are certainly the same plant name, distorted in one or both texts.

46 It is not easy to provide a strict explanation of the initial λ vs. *g* and the middle β vs. *d*. On the other hand, it seems quite likely, especially in the minuscule, that *-li-* might come from *-ll-* and *-ana* from *-aria*.

47 In his earlier work, Löw (1881: p. 26) does not give an etymology for this gloss.

48 For *sattā hewwārtā*, see Sokoloff (2009: p. 1051).

49 He probably assumed that the initial fricative *s-* was lateral and could be redereed as λ /*l*/ in Greek.

50 Löw (1924–1934: I, p. 553): ‘weibliche bryonia, weißer ampelos’; Brockelmann (1928: p. 22): ‘vitis alba bryonia’; Sokoloff (2009: p. 51): ‘bryony, white vine’; *CAL* s.v. *ḫšr*: ‘bryony, name of a vine’.

51 Cf. de Lagarde (1866: p. 38), who believes that the word should be split into **ʾālpā šrā*, where *ʾālpā* ‘thousand’ would correspond to Modern Persian *hazār* ‘thousand’ in *hazār-afšān* ‘bryony’ and *hazār-jašān* ‘bryony, white vine’; however, it is not clear how he actually understands **šrā*; cf. Löw (1881: p. 90).

52 Cf. the suggestion of an anonymous reviewer that the initial λ- could be explained as the Aramaic preposition *l-*, expressing the construction ‘belonging to’.

likely distorted under the influence of the Latin synonym ἔρβα κοριάρια (*herba coriaria*) found slightly earlier in the same passage of Pseudo-Dioscorides.

Finally, there remain two Syrian glosses the etymology of which is unknown. These are ἄδοριού, a synonym of γιγγίδιον, identified as ‘sea carrot (*Daucus carota* var. *drepanensis* (Arcang.) Heywood)’ or ‘sekakul (*Malabaila secacul* (Mill.) Boiss.)’⁵³ (2.137 RV) and μεούδα, a counterpart of Greek λειμώνιον ‘sea beet (*Beta vulgaris* var. *maritima* (L.) Arcang.)’ (4.16 RV):

γιγγίδιον· οἱ δὲ λεπίδιον, Ῥωμαῖοι βίς ἀκούτουμ, Αἰγύπτιοι δωρισάστρου, Σύροι ἄδοριού, Ἄφροι τιρινταί.

Gingidion (prob. sea carrot or sekakul): others (call it) *lepidion*, the Romans (call it) *bis acutum*, the Egyptians (call it) *dōrisastru*, the Syrians (call it) *adoriu*, the Africans (call it) *tirintai*.⁵⁴

λειμώνιον· οἱ δὲ νευροειδές, οἱ δὲ λογχίτις, οἱ δὲ νάπειον ὄνου, Μάρσοι μενδρουτά, Σύροι μεούδα, οἱ δὲ λυκοσέφαλον, οἱ δὲ ἔλλεβοροσήματα, οἱ δὲ σκύλλιον, προφήται λύκου καρδία, Ῥωμαῖοι οὐηράτρουμ· νίγρουμ, οἱ δὲ τιντιν·νάβουλουμ τέρραι, Γάλλοι ιουρβαρούμ, Δάκοι δάκινα.⁵⁵

Sea beet: others (call it) *neuroeides* or *lonchitis* or *napeion onu* (donkey’s mustard), the Marsi (call it) *مندرۇتا*, the Syrians (call it) *meuda*, others (call it) *lykosemphalon* or *elleborosēmata* or *skyllion*, the prophets (call it) *lyku kardia* (wolf’s heart), the Romans (call it) *veratrum nigrum* or *tintinnabulum terrae*, the Gauls (call it) *iurbarum*, the Dacians (call it) *dakina*.⁵⁶

With regard to the name ἄδοριού, Löw (1881: p. 414) proposes an etymology based on a connection with the Syriac ‘*dl*’ ‘perennial peppergrass (*Lepidium latifolium* L.)’.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, for semantic reasons, this etymology cannot be accepted. As for the gloss μεούδα, no hypotheses have yet been put forward as to its origin.⁵⁸

In summary, the botanical identification of the seven glosses attributed by Pseudo-Dioscorides to the inhabitants of Syria has been established as follows: ἄδοριού ‘sea carrot (*Daucus carota* var. *drepanensis* (Arcang.) Heywood) or sekakul (*Malabaila secacul* (Mill.) Boiss.)’, ἄρμαλά ‘rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.)’, βησσασά ‘id.’, λαλλαβιάρια ‘white bryony (*Bryonia dioica* Jacq.)’, λουῖφαν ‘a kind of arum (especially *Arum maculatum* L. and *Arum palaestinum* Boiss.)’, μεούδα ‘sea beet (*Beta vulgaris* var. *maritima* (L.) Arcang.)’, and σασά ‘white lily (*Lilium candidum* L.)’. Of particular note here is the plant name λουῖφαν, which

53 The plant name γιγγίδιον in Dsc. 2.137 is treated as *Daucus carota* var. *drepanensis* (earlier known as *Daucus gingidium* L.) by Berendes (1902: p. 228); Liddell, Scott and Jones (1996: p. 349); Carnoy (1959: p. 130); Beekes (2010: p. 271). The identification as *Malabaila secacul* is accepted by Adrados (1989–2009: p. 812); Beck (2005: p. 151); André (2010: p. 110). Cf. García Valdés (1998: p. 323, n. 169), who gives both identifications. Moreover, cf. Frisk (1960–1972: I, p. 306): ‘Art Mohrrübe’; Chantraine (1999: p. 221): ‘panais de Syrie’; Montanari (2015: p. 429): ‘gingidion, umbelliferous plant’.

54 Translation: R. R.

55 Surprisingly, the Greek synonyms are listed at the beginning and again after the Marsian and Syrian glosses; this is not the usual practice of Pseudo-Dioscorides.

56 Translation: R. R.

57 On Syriac ‘*dl*’, see Brockelmann (1928: p. 5); Sokoloff (2009: p. 9); *CAL* s.v. ‘*dl*’.

58 Cf. Löw (1881: pp. 273, 338, n. 1 and 1924–1934: III, p. 68).

in many publications is erroneously identified either as spotted arum (*Arum dioscoridis* Sibth. et Sm.) or as taro (*Colocasia esculenta* (L.) Schott, including its subspecies *Colocasia esculenta* var. *antiquorum* (Schott) F.T.Hubb. et Rehder, earlier known as *Colocasia antiquorum* Schott). Concerning the etymology, five glosses are of Aramaic origin. Two of them, ἀρμαλά (Jewish Aramaic *ħrmlt* 'wild rue', Mandaic *harmal* 'rue', Arabic *ħarmal* 'wild rue') and βησσασά (Jewish Aramaic *baššāš*, *baššāšā* 'wild rue', Syriac *baššāšā*, *bšwš* 'id.') are also attested in slightly different forms in other medical texts (including Dioscorides himself) in the sense of 'wild rue'. The gloss λουφαν (Aramaic **lūpā* 'Solomon's lily', reconstructed on the basis of Mishnaic Hebrew *lōp* or *lūp* 'id.'; cf. Syriac *lāwpā* (or *lūpā?*) 'perh. pellitory, parietary; dragon arum; peeled barley', Arabic *lūf* 'sponge gourd; dragon arum') is slightly distorted by the addition of -v, but the correct form, i.e. λούφα, is found in the main text of Dioscorides. The plant names λαλλαβιάρια (Syriac *ālēpšrā* 'white bryony') and σασά (Jewish Aramaic *sōsa* 'n', *šwšnh* 'lily', Syriac *swsn* 'id.') have undergone much greater transformations from their original Semitic forms, although these are not changes of a phonetic nature, but distortions in the course of textual transmission. The etymologies of ἀρμαλά, βησσασά, λουφαν and σασά were already known but required additional clarification and the collection of full linguistic material, while the etymology of λαλλαβιάρια is a new hypothesis. The glosses ἀδοριού and μεούδα, for which no equivalents have been found in Aramaic or any other Oriental language, need further study.

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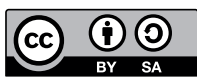
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Abbreviations of botanists' names

Arcang. = Giovanni Arcangeli; Boiss. = Pierre Edmond Boissier; F.T.Hubb. = Frederic Tracy Hubbard; Heywood = Vernon Hilton Heywood; Jacq. = Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin; L. = Carl Linnaeus; Mill. = Philip Miller; Rehder = Alfred Rehder; Schott = Heinrich Wilhelm Schott; Sibth. = John Sibthorp; Sm. = James Edward Smith.

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