

## Greek through Persian eyes

The study of language contact informs us on languages in a way that the study of languages themselves does not, yielding levels of new information on phonology, syntax, morphology, etymology – all of the domains of language study, – and it also informs us on history, geography, people migration, commerce, etc. It is thus surprising and sad that the study of Greek loanwords in Persian has been completely neglected up to now. The study of Iranian words in Greek in itself is an important topic, it has been slightly (and often badly) touched upon, but the other direction remains *virgo terra*. In this talk, I will present my own work on the topic. For example, I will talk about Greek botanical terms in Persian. These show unattested dialectal variants: e.g. New Persian *sīsambarūn* ‘water mint’ supposedly from Greek σισύμβριον. While Middle Persian *sīsīambar* reflects either \*σισύμβρος or σισύμβριον, New Persian *sīsambarūn* clearly reflects a form \*σισυμβρών.<sup>1</sup> By studying these botanical terms, one could examine which ones are from known dialects and which dialects they could come from. The Greek botanic tradition, which reached the entire Near East and Arabian Peninsula through the Persians, is an exciting example of an intersection between medical science and commerce, and this study tells us much on the trajectory of botanists, physicians and plants.<sup>2</sup> These contacts took place over more than a millennium, reveal facts about Greek from pre-Alexandrian times to post-Byzantium times. One necessary conclusion of this study is that Greek dialects survived much longer than usually thought (also logically concluded from the study of Greek loanwords in Anatolian Turkish, cf. Stachowski & Woodhouse 2015).

### Reference

STACHOWSKI, Marek & Robert WOODHOUSE (2015). “The etymology of İstanbul: making optimal use of the evidence” *Studia Etymologica Cracoviensia* 20, 221-245.

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1 I developed a method to deduce the accent in the original Greek word, as stressed and unstressed Greek vowels are developed differently.

2 In Afghanistan, traditional plant-based medicine is called *Yūnānī* ‘Greek’, and a traditional physician *Yūnānī* ‘a Greek’. This cannot be a recent denomination.