

On women's diseases. Metrodora



Codex laurentianus Plutei 75.3

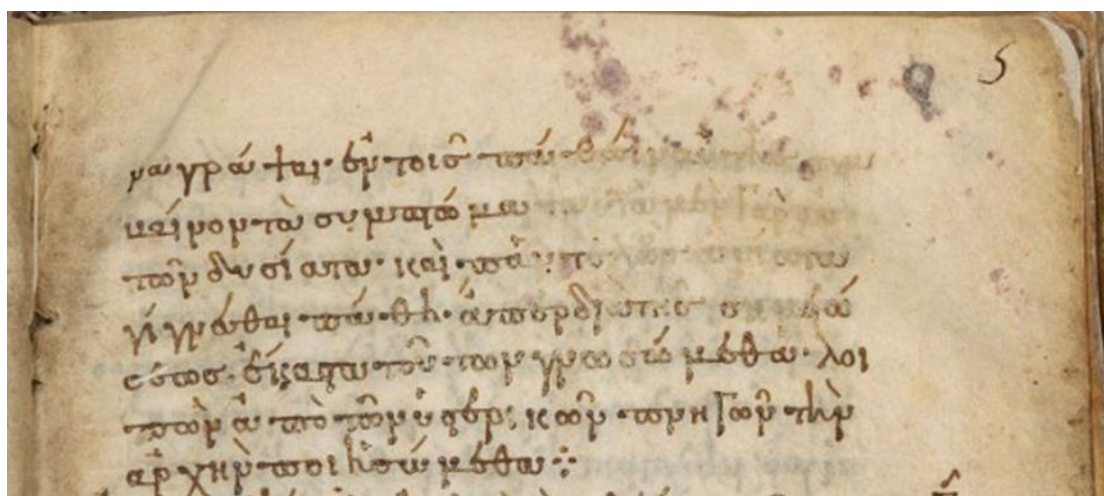
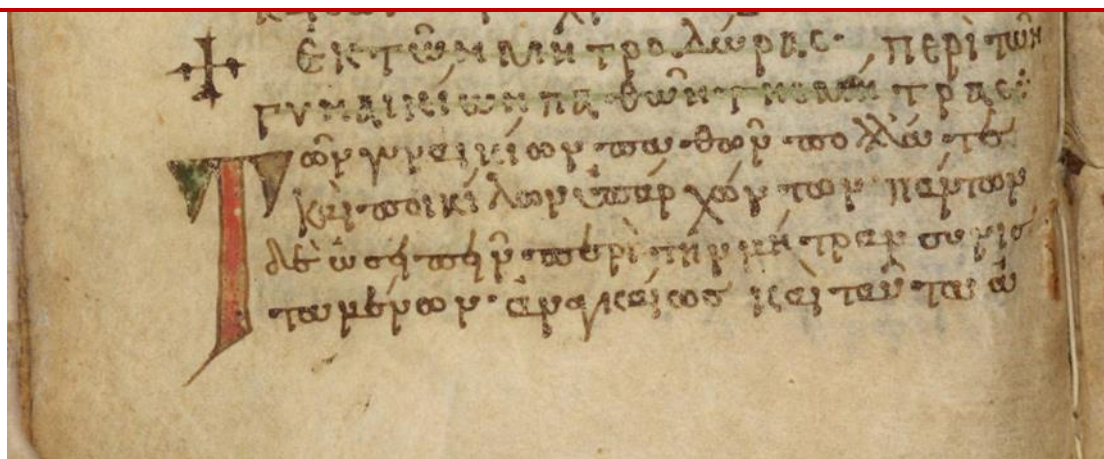
Libri medicinales varii. Biblia iatrika poikila. Nec non Hippocratis Praenotiorum liber

Lourdes Muñoz Montagud

Women's Legacy Project

Subject: Classical Culture and Latin

- ❖ Selection of excerpts and translation into Spanish: Lourdes Muñoz Montagud (Chapters 1, 8, 9, 27, 31, 31, 38, 51, 53, 65, 73, 85 and 125).
- ❖ Transcribed Greek text: De Guerra, Giorgio (1953). *Il Libro di Metrodora*. Milan: Editore Ceschina.
- ❖ Greek manuscript text: *Codex laurentianus Plutei* 75.3, ff. 4v-33v, (1101-1200). Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, (03-05-2024),
<<https://teca.bml.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/plutei/id/1108400/rec/1>>



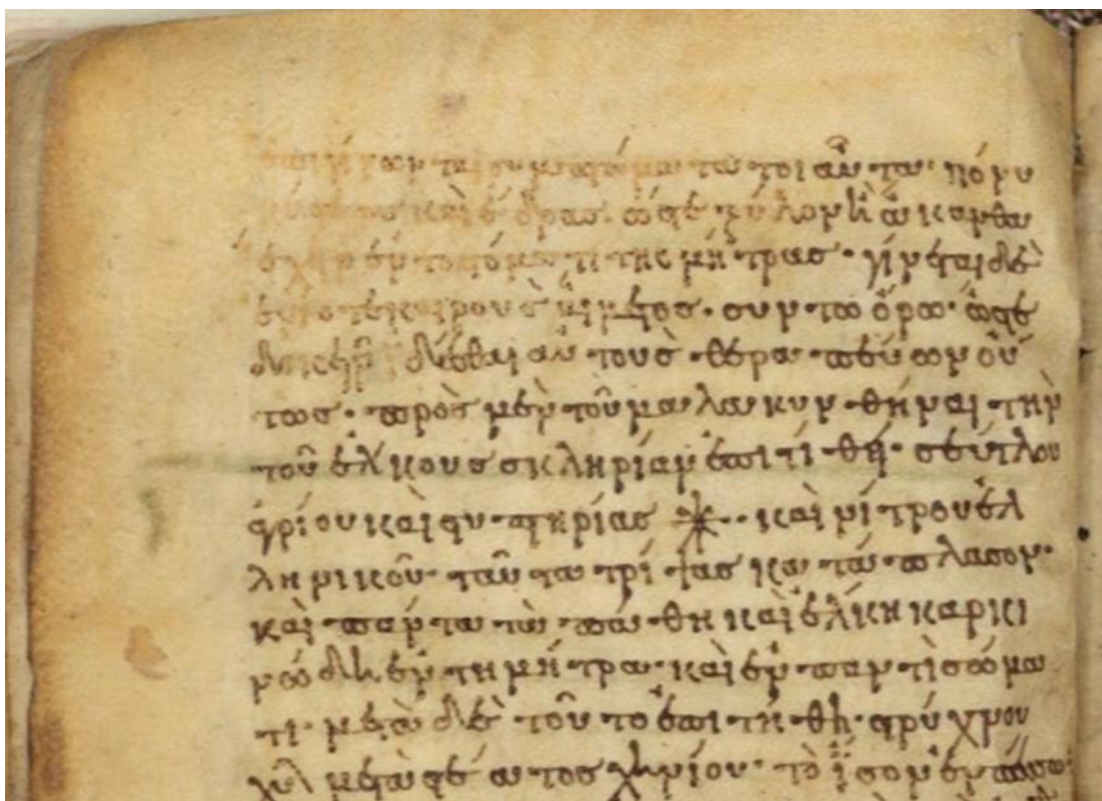
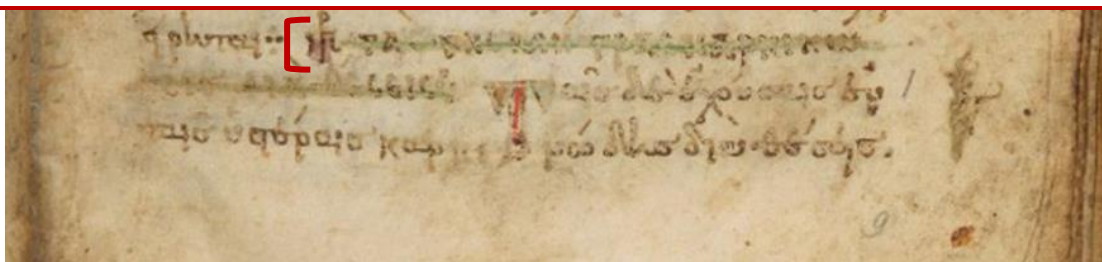
ff. 4v, 5r

ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΜΗΤΡΟΔΟΡΑΣ ΠΕΡΙ ΤΩΝ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙΩΝ
ΠΑΘΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΗΤΡΑΣ

1. ΤΩΝ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙΩΝ ΠΑΘΩΝ ΠΟΛΛΩΝ τε καὶ ποικίλων ὑπαρχόντων, πάντων δε ὡς εἰπεῖν περὶ τὴν μήτραν συνιστομένων. ἀναγκαίως καὶ ταῦτα ἀναγράψαι ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν αὐτῆς συμβαίνοντα συμπτώματα· τὰ μὲν πὰρ αὐτῶν δυσίατα καὶ παντελῶς ἀνίατα γίνεσθαι πάθη, ἅπερ διὰ τῆς σημειώσεως ἕκαστον τούτων γνωσώμεθα· λοιπὸν ἀπὸ τῶν ὑστερικῶν πνιγῶν τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιησώμεθα.
p. 39

From the works of Metrodora. On female diseases of the womb.

1. Because the diseases of women are many and varied, and all, so to speak, are associated with the womb, it is necessary, also for this reason, to describe the symptoms which coincide with their diseases. Certainly, some of these diseases are difficult to cure, even totally incurable, and it is precisely for the sake of observation that we will get to know each of them. So, let us begin with uterine suffocations.



ff. 9r, 9v

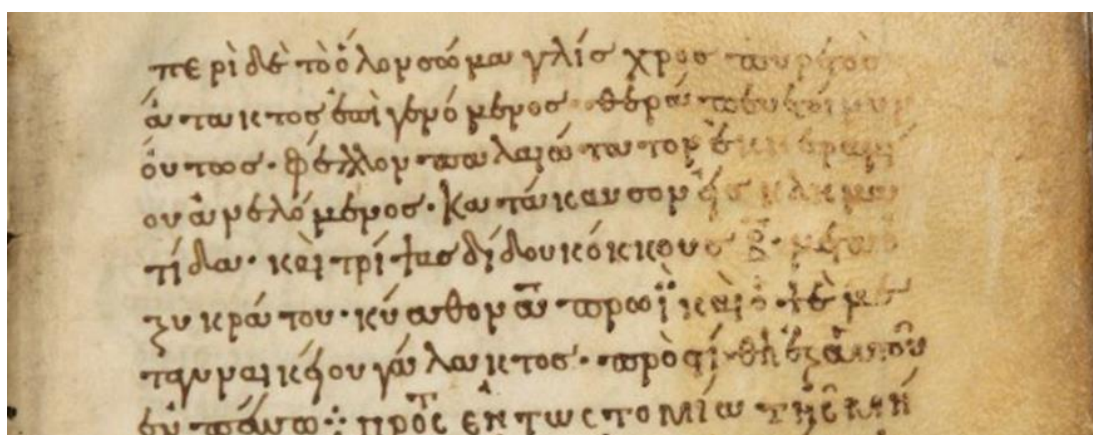
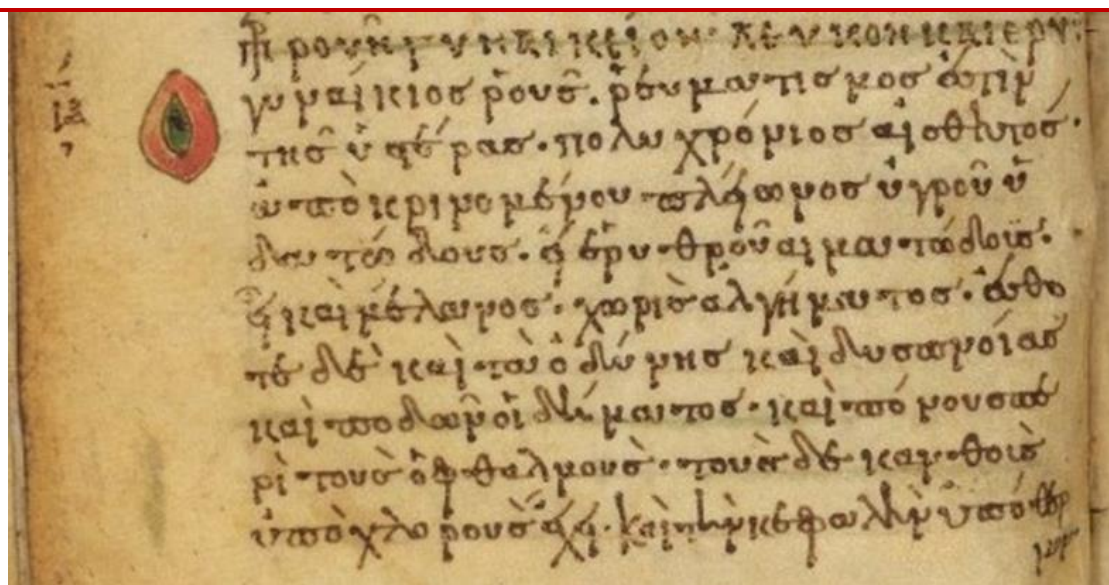
8. ΠΡΟΣ ΤΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΜΗΤΡΑΣ ΚΑΡΚΙΝΟΔΕΙΣ ΔΙΑΘΕΣΕΙΣ.

Ταῖς δὲ ἐχούσαις ἐν ταῖς ὑστέραις καρκινώδεις διαθέσεις ἐπιγίνονται συμπτώματα τοιαῦτα· πόνοι κύστεως καὶ ἔδρας ὥστε ξύλον καὶ ἄκανθαν ἔχειν ἐν τῷ στόματι τῆς μήτρας· γίγνεται δ' ἐνίοτε καὶ ροῦς αἵματος σὺν τῷ οὐρῳ· ὥστε δοκεῖν δεῖσθαι αὐτοὺς θεραπεύειν οὕτως. Πρὸς μὲν τὸ μαλακυνθῆναι τὴν τοῦ ἔλκουσ σκληρίαν ἐπιτίθει σεύτλου ἀγρίου καὶ στυπτηρίας καὶ νίτρου ἑλληνικοῦ· ταῦτα τρίψας κατάπλασσον· καὶ πάντα τὰ πάθη καὶ ἔλκη καρκινώδη ἐν τῇ μήτρᾳ καὶ ἐν παντὶ σώματι· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἐπιτίθει στρύχνου χυλὸν μετὰ στέατος χηνείου τὸ ἴσον ἐν πεσσω.
p. 45-46

8. For cancerous affections of the womb.

For those who have cancerous affections in the uterus such symptoms are manifested: pains of the bladder and anus, as if they had at the entrance of the womb a piece of wood and a thorn; sometimes a flow of blood with the urine also originates, so that it seems necessary to cure them thus: to soften the hardness of the sore apply wild chard, alum and Greek nitre; after tritulating them, smear all the painful areas and cancerous sores of the womb and the whole body. After this, apply vomic nut juice with goose fat, in equal parts, in a pessary¹.

¹ Utensil made of fruits, stones or tissues, to introduce medicinal substances into the vagina.



ff. 9v, 10r

9. ΠΡΟΣ ΡΟΥΝ ΓΥΝΑΚΕΙΟΝ ΛΕΥΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΡΥΘΡΟΝ.

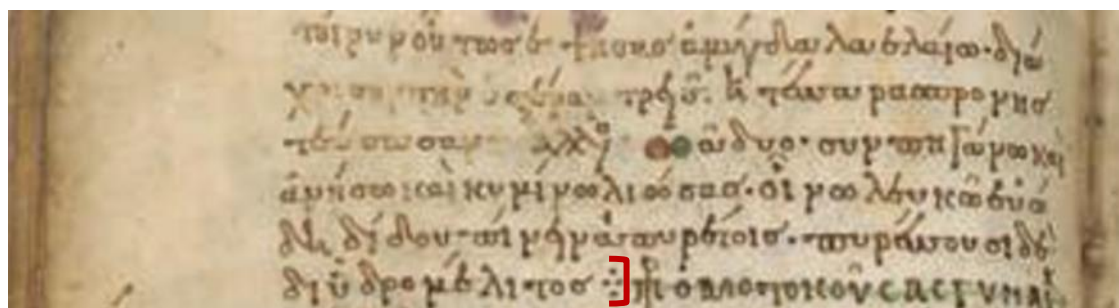
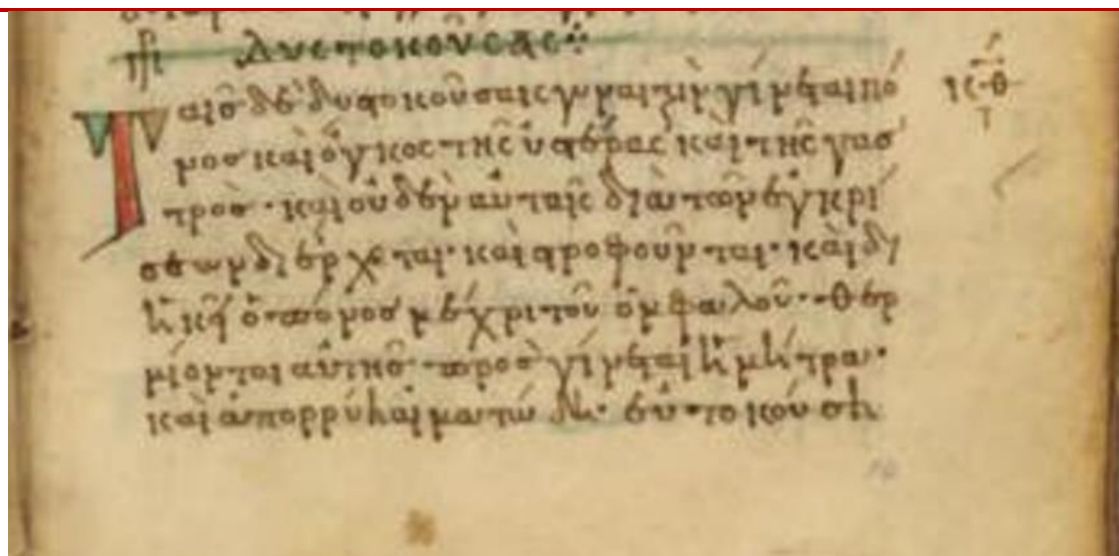
Ὁ γυναικεῖος ῥοῦς ῥευματισμός ἐστι τῆς ὑστέρας πολυχρόνιος αἰσθητός ἀποκρινόμενου πλείονος ὑγροῦ ὑδατώδους ἢ ἐρυθροῦ, αἱματώδους ἢ καὶ μέλανος, χωρίς ἀλγήματος ἔσθ' ὅτε δὲ καὶ μετὰ ὀδύνης καὶ δυσπνοίας καὶ ποδῶν οἰδήματος καὶ πόνου περὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς. Τοὺς δὲ κανθοὺς ὑποχλῶρους ἔχει. Καὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑπόθερμον, περὶ δὲ τὸ ὅλον σῶμα γλίσχρος πυρετός ἄτακτος ἐπιγενόμενος· θεράπευε τοίνυν οὕτως· φελλόν παλαιότατον ἐκ κεραμίου ἀνελόμενος κατάκαυσον εἰς κληματίδα, καὶ τρίψας δίδου κόκκους β', μετὰ ὀξυκράτου κύαθον α', πρωῒ καὶ ὀψὲ μετὰ γυναικείου γάλακτος· προστίθει εἰς αὐτῆς αἰδοῖον ἐν πεσσοῦ.

p. 46

9. For white and red female discharge.

The menstrual discharge is a discharge from the womb, long lasting, perceptible, of a liquid which is distinguished mostly as watery or red, bloody or even black, sometimes painless, but also with pain, dyspnoea, swelling of the feet and pain around the eyes. (The woman) has greenish rumps of the eyes, also a hot head and throughout the body persistent fever which occurs irregularly. Cure, therefore, thus: having taken very old cork, burn it in a clay vessel with twig wood and, after crushing it, give 2 pills with 1 kyathos² of a mixture of water and vinegar, in the morning, and with woman's milk, in the evening; apply to her private parts with a pessary.

² Small container for serving wine. Capacity equivalent to 45.6 centiliters.



ff. 14r, 14v

27. ΠΡΟΣ ΔΥΣΤΟΚΟΥΣΑΣ

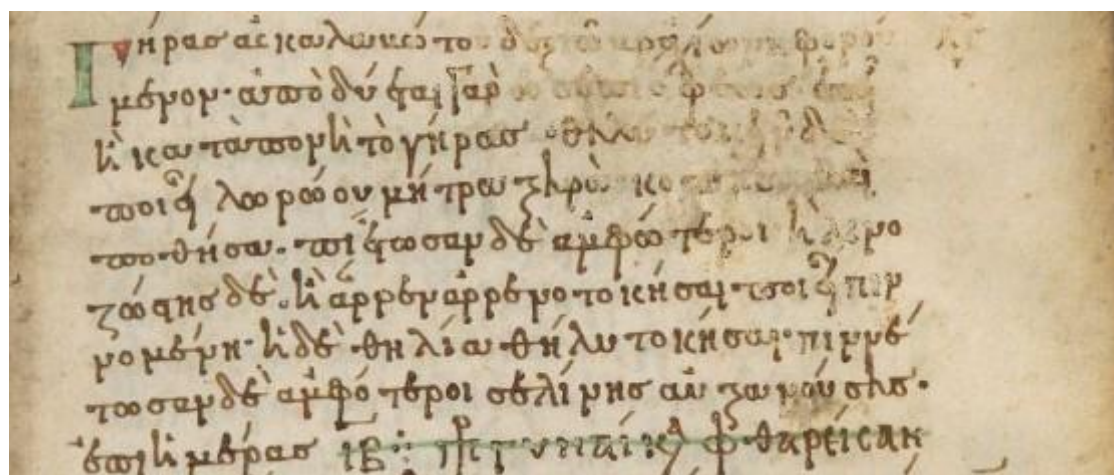
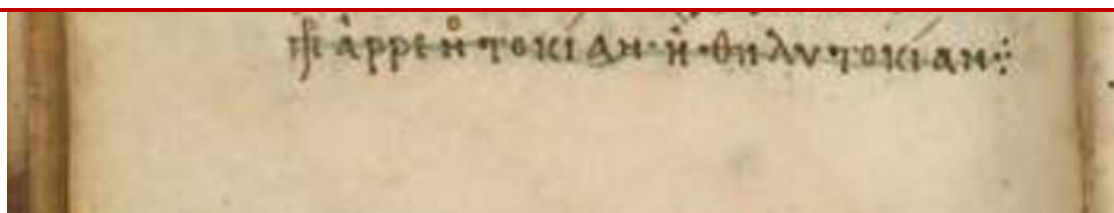
Ταῖς δὲ δυστοκούσαις γυναιξί γίνεται πόνος καὶ ὄγκος τῆς ὑστέρας καὶ τῆς γαστρὸς καὶ οὐδὲν αὐταῖς διὰ τῶν ἐκκρίσεων διέρχεται· καὶ στροφοῦνται καὶ διήκει ὁ πόνος μέχρι τοῦ ὀμφαλοῦ. Θερμὴ τε αὐταῖς προσγίνεται ἡ μήτρα καὶ ἀπορρῦει αἱματώδη· εὐτοκοῦση τοίνυν οὕτως ἐψήσας ἀμύγδαλα ἐλαίῳ διάχρισον τὴν ὑστέραν τρίς ἢ τεσσαράων νηστεύσασαν. Ἄλλο· Ὡὰ δύο σὺν πηγάνῳ καὶ ἀνίσῳ καὶ κυμίνῳ λειώσας οἶνῳ λευκῷ εὐώδει δίδου πίνειν ἀπυρέτοις· πυρέσσουσι δὲ δι' ὕδρομέλιτος.

p. 54

27. *For those who give birth with difficulty.*

Women who give birth with difficulty experience pain and swelling of the uterus and belly, and nothing comes out with bowel movements. They writhe and the pain goes all the way to the navel. The womb becomes hot and bloody fluids are discharged from it.

Indeed, she will easily give birth like this: after boiling almonds with oil, she smears the womb three or four times, without having received anything. Another: having ground two eggs with rue, aniseed and cumin in perfumed white wine, give to drink when they have no fever; but, if they have fever, with mead.



ff 14v, 15r

31. ΠΡΟΣ ΑΡΡΕΝΟΤΟΚΙΑΝ Η ΘΗΛΥΤΟΚΙΑΝ.

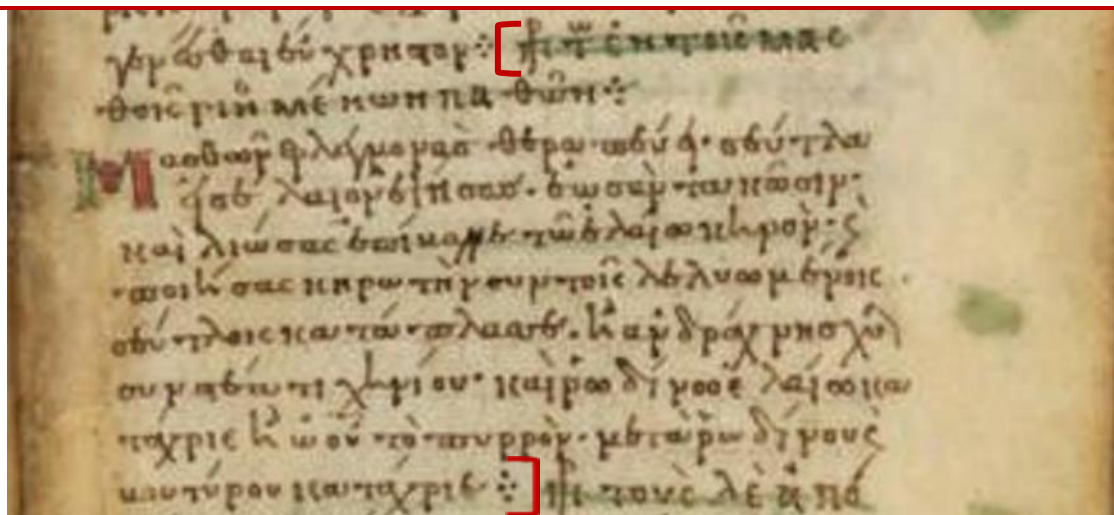
Γῆρας ἀσκαλαβώτου δεξιῷ βραχίονι
φερόμενον, ἀποδύεται γάρ, ὡς ἐπὶ ὄφεως
ἐστὶ, ἢ καταπονεῖ τὸ γῆρας. Θηλυτοκεῖν δὲ
ποιεῖ ὕλωρώου μήτρα ζηρᾶ κοπεῖσα καὶ
ποθεῖσα. Πιέτωσαν δὲ ἀμφότεροι· καὶ
λινοζώστις δέ, εἰ ἄρρεν ἀρροκῆσαι ποιεῖ
πινομένη· εἰ δὲ θήλεια θηλυτοκῆσαι
πινέτωσαν ἀμφότεροι σελήνης αὐξανούσης
ἐπὶ ἡμέρας ιβ'.

p. 56

31. *For the procreation of boys or girls.*

The moulting of a gecko carried on the
right arm, for it is shed, as is the case with
the snake, or oppressed by the old skin.
And the dry womb of a female hare³,
crushed and drunk, conceives girls. Let
them both drink. Also the mercurial drunk,
if a boy is (desired), makes to conceive
boys; but, if the desire is to conceive girls,
let them both drink when the moon is
waxing, for 12 days.

³ Translation by Marie-Helene Congourdeau for ὕλωρώου, from Kousis' transcription λωρώου: *hase*.



f. 16r

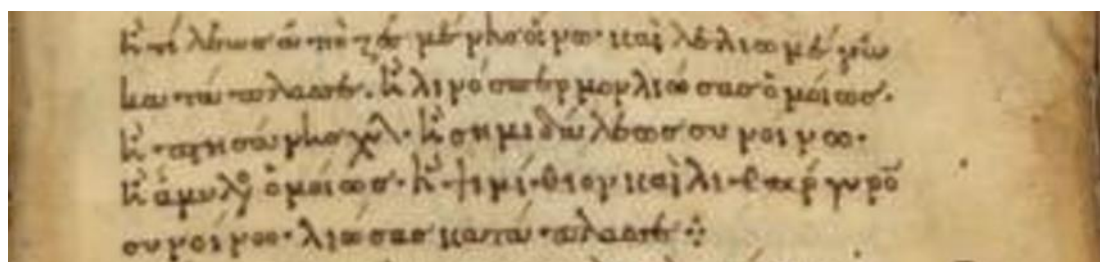
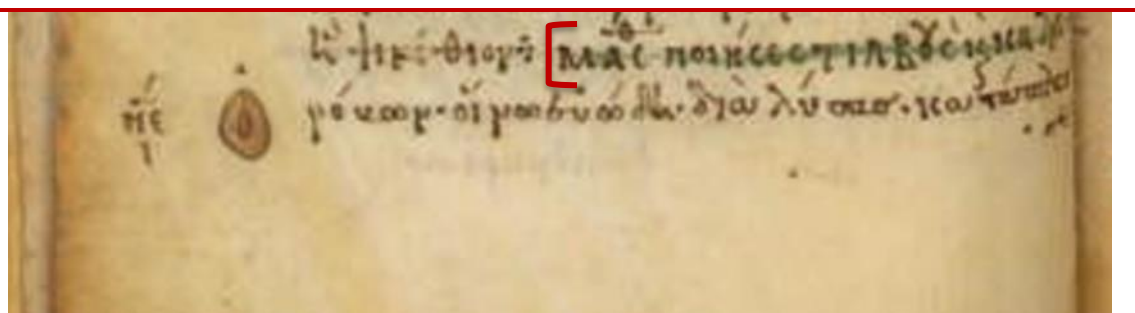
38 ΠΡΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΜΑΣΘΟΙΣ ΓΙΝΟΜΕΝΩΝ ΠΑΘΩΝ.

Μασθῶν φλεγμονὰς θεραπεύεις σεῦτλα εἰς ἔλαιον ἐψήσας, ἕως ἂν τακῶσιν, καὶ λειώσας ἐπίβαλλε τῷ ἐλαίῳ κηρόν, καὶ ποιήσας κηρωτὴν σὺν τοῖς λελειωμένοις σεύτλοις κατάπλασσε· ἢ ἀνδράχνης χυλὸν σὺν στέατι χηνεῖω καὶ ῥοδίῳ ἐλαίῳ κατάχριε ἢ ὠοῦ τὸ πυρρὸν μετὰ ῥοδίνου καὶ βουτύρου κατάχριε.

p. 58

38. *In connection with diseases that occur in the breasts.*

You can cure inflammations of the breasts: after chopping chard in oil, until dissolved, and grinding wax, pour it into the oil and, after making a mixture with the emulsified chard, apply the poultice; or smear purslane juice with goose fat and rose oil or smear egg yolk with rose oil and butter.



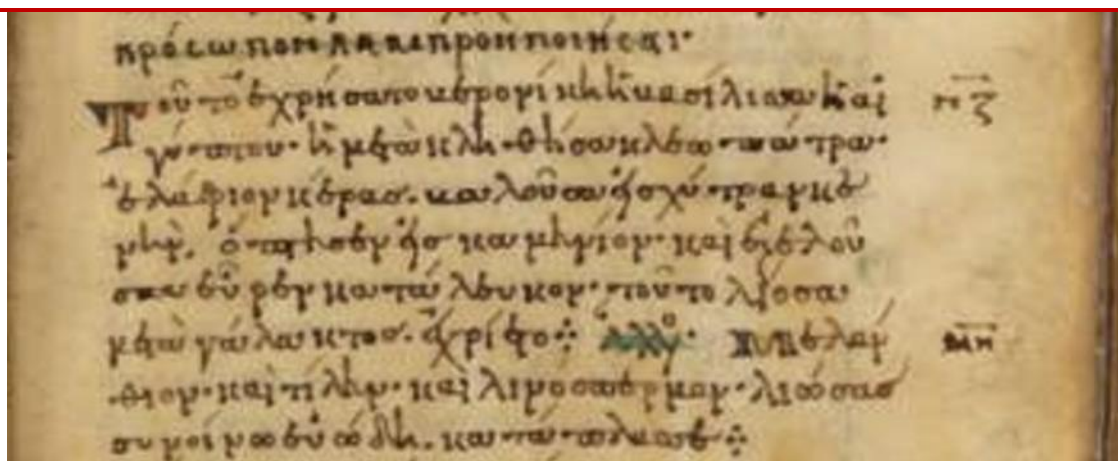
ff. 17v, 18r

51. ΜΑΣΘΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΙΛΒΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΛΟΥΣ.

Ὅρόβων οἶνῳ εὐώδει, διαλύσας, κατάπλασσε ἢ τήλεως ἀποζεομένης οἶνῳ καὶ λελειωμένης κατάπλασσε, ἢ λινόσπερμον λειώσας ὁμοίως ἢ πίσανης χυλόν· ἢ σιμιδάλεως σὺν οἶνῳ ἢ ἄμυλῳ ὁμοίως ἢ ψιμμίθιον καὶ λιθάργυρον σὺν οἶνῳ λειώσας κατάπλασσε.
p. 62

51. To make the breasts shiny and beautiful.

After dissolving carob with perfumed wine, apply the poultice; or fenugreek boiled with wine and crushed, apply the poultice; or after crushing in the same way linseed or barley juice, or wheat flour flower with wine or starch in the same way; or after crushing ceruse and litharge with wine, apply the poultice.



f. 18r

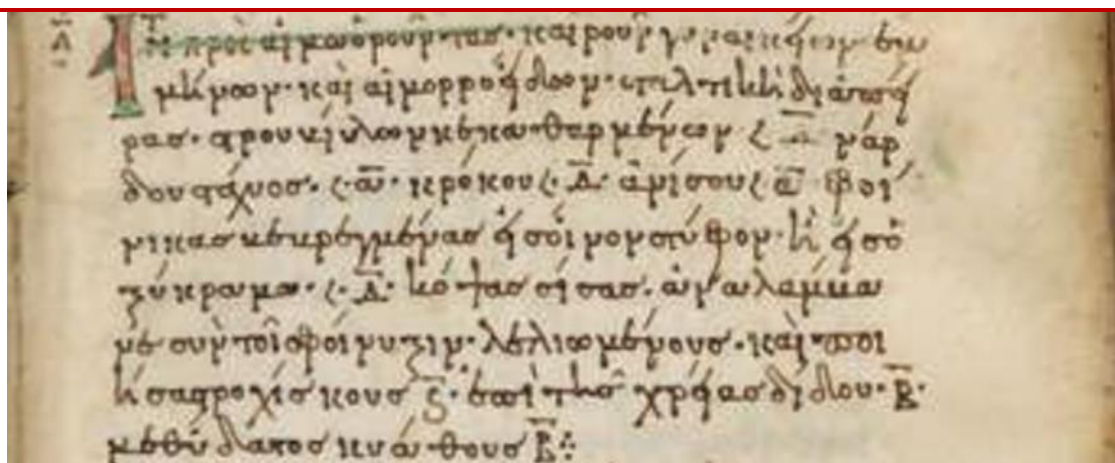
53 ΠΡΟΣΩΠΟΝ ΛΑΜΠΡΟΝ ΠΟΙΗΣΑΙ.

Τοῦτο ἐχρήσατο Βερονίκη ἡ βασίλισσα τῆς Αἰγύπτου, ἡ μετακληθεῖσα. Κλεοπάτρα. Ἐλάφειον κέρας, βαλοῦσα εἰς χύτραν καινήν, ὥπτησεν εἰς καμίνιον καὶ ἐξελοῦσα εὔρεν κατάλευκον· τοῦτο λειώσασα μετὰ γάλακτος ἐχρίετο. Ἄλλο· Μελάνθιον καὶ τήλην καὶ λινόσπερμον λειώσας σὺν οἴνῳ εὐώδει κατάπλασσε.

p. 63

53. *Make the face luminous.*

This was used by Berenice, the queen of Egypt, who was called Cleopatra. Having put deer horn in an empty earthenware pot, she boiled it on a stove and after taking it out, found it very white: after dissolving it with milk, she smeared it. Another: after dissolving wormwood, fenugreek and linseed with perfumed wine, he applied the poultice.



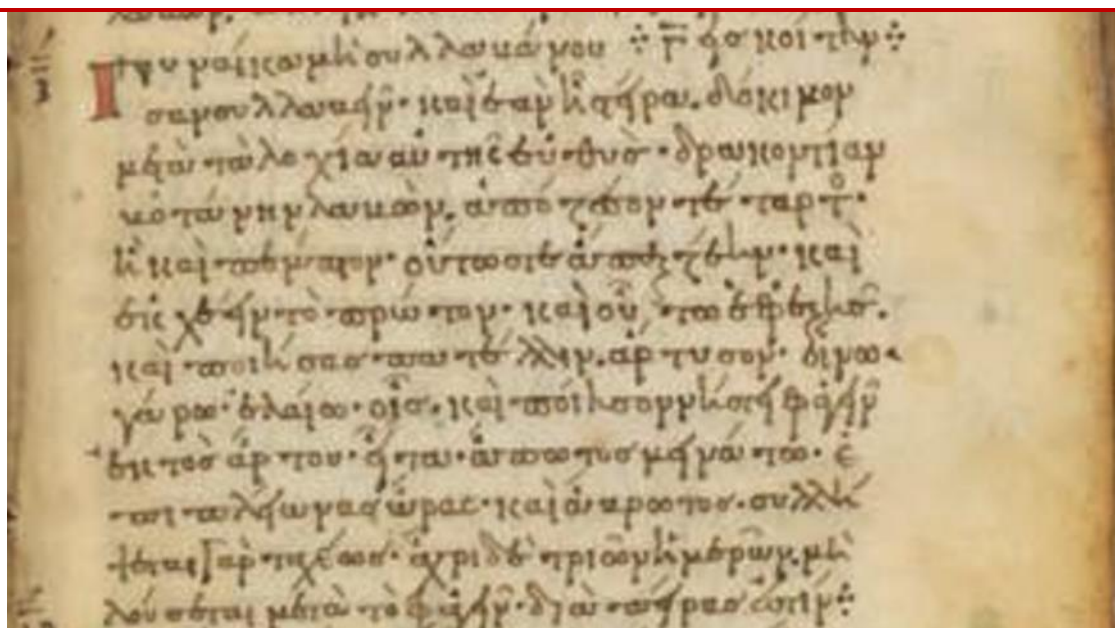
f. 21r

65. ΑΝΤΙΔΟΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΑΙΜΟΡΟΥΝΤΑΣ ΚΑΙ
ΡΟΥΝ ΓΥΝΑΙΚΕΙΟΝ ΕΜΜΗΝΟΝ ΚΑΙ
ΑΙΜΟΡΡΟΙΔΟΝ ΣΤΑΛΤΙΚΗ ΔΙΑ ΠΕΙΡΑΣ
Στροβύλων κεκαρθαμένων < Δ', νάρδου
σταχύος < Α', κρόκου < Δ', άνίσου < Α',
φοίνικας βεβρεγμένους εις οϊνον στυφόν η
εις οξύκραμα < Δ', κόψας, σήσας,
ανάλάμβανε σὺν τοῖς φοίνιξι λελειωμένοις
καὶ ποιήσας τροχίσκους Σ', ἐπὶ τῆς χρείας
δίδου Β', μεθ' ὕδατος κυάθους Β'.

p. 67

65. *Astringent antidote for
hemorrhages, women's menstrual flow
and hemorrhoids. Proved.*
Purified pineapples 4 drachms, spikenard
1 drachm, saffron 4 drachms, anise 1
drachm, dates soaked in rough wine or
vinegar 4 drachms. Having chopped and
sieved, mix with the crushed dates and
after making 6 pills, give 2 for use with 2
kyathos⁴ of water.

⁴ Bowl-shaped tumbler with a vertical handle, used for pouring liquids. Measurement of capacity equivalent to 0.04l.



f. 22r

73. ΓΥΝΑΙΚΑ ΜΗ ΣΥΛΛΑΒΑΝΟΥΣΑΝ

ΣΥΛΛΑΒΕΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΑΝ Η ΣΤΕΙΡΑ ΔΟΚΙΜΟΝ.

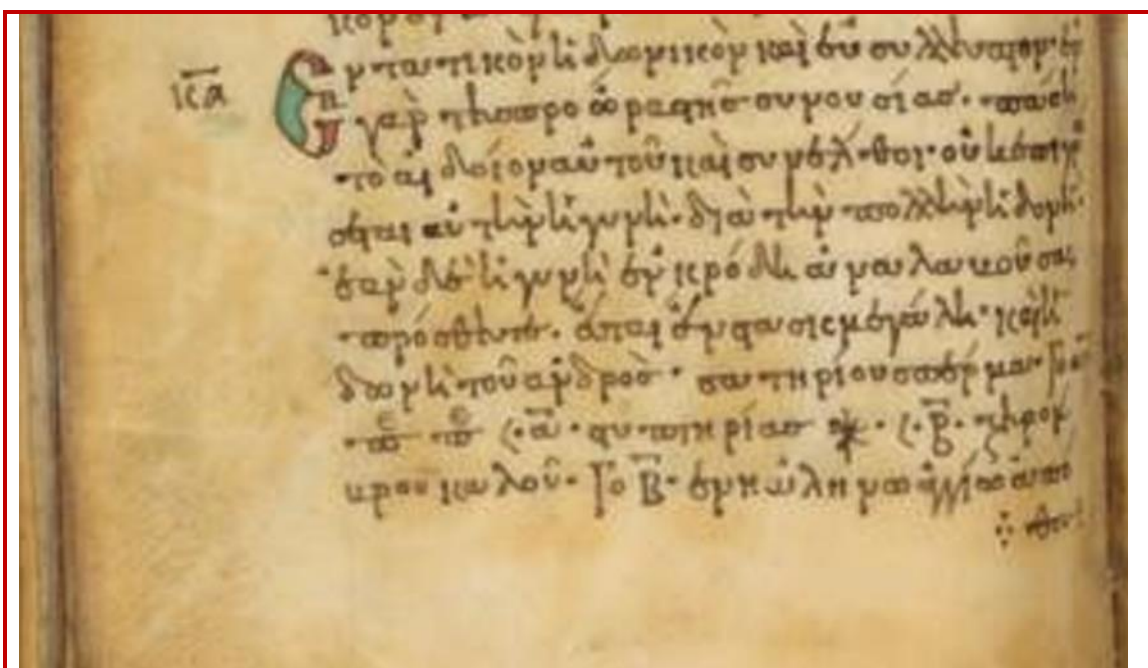
Μετά τὰ λοῖα αὐτῆς εὐθύς, δρακοντίαν βοτάνην λαβὼν, ἀπόξεσον τέταρτον ἢ καὶ πέμπτον· οὐθ' ὥστε ἅπαξ ζεῖν καὶ ἐκχέει τὸ πρῶτον καὶ οὕτως ἐφεξῆς καὶ ποιήσας πατέλλην ἄρτησον οἶνογάρῳ ἐλαίῳ, οἷς καὶ ποίησον νήστει φαγεῖν ἐκτὸς ἄρτου· εἴτα ἄποτος μεινάτω ἐπὶ πλείστας ὥρας· καὶ ἄβρωτος, συλλήψεται γὰρ ταχέως· ἄχρι δὲ τριῶν ἡμερῶν μὴ λούσεται μετὰ τὸ φαγεῖν διὰ πείρας ἐστίν.

p. 70

73. *To conceive a woman who does not conceive, even if she is sterile. Check.* Immediately after her lochia⁵, after taking dragon-grass, boil it four or even five times, so that you boil it once and pour off the upper liquid and so on; and after preparing a paste with it, incorporate *enogarum*, oil and eggs⁶, and make her eat it on an empty stomach without bread. Then let her remain without drinking for many hours, also without eating; indeed, she will conceive quickly. He will not bathe three days after eating it. It is proved.

⁵ Translation by Marie-Helene Congourdeau for τὰ λοῖα, from Kousis' transcription τὰ λοχία: *lochies*.

⁶ Translation by De Guerra for οἷς.



f. 23v

85. ENTATIKON ΗΔΟΝΙΚΟΝ ΚΑΙ
ΕΥΣΥΛΛΗΠΤΟΝ.

Εἰ γὰρ πρὸ ὥρας τῆς συνουσίας πάσει τὸ
αἰδοῖον αὐτοῦ καὶ συνέλθει, οὐκ
ἐπιγνώσεται αὐτὸ ἡ γυνὴ διὰ τὴν πολλὴν
ἡδονήν. Ἐὰν δὲ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν κρόδει
ἀναλαβοῦσα προσθηται, ἔσται ἔνστασις
μεγάλη καὶ ἡ ἡδονὴ τοῦ ἀνδρός· σατυρίου
σπέρμα Γο ας', πεπέρεως < Α', στυπτηρίας
σχιστῆς < Β', ξηροκηροῦ καλοῦ Γο Β', ἐν
ὕαλινῳ ἀγγεῖῳ ἀπόθου.

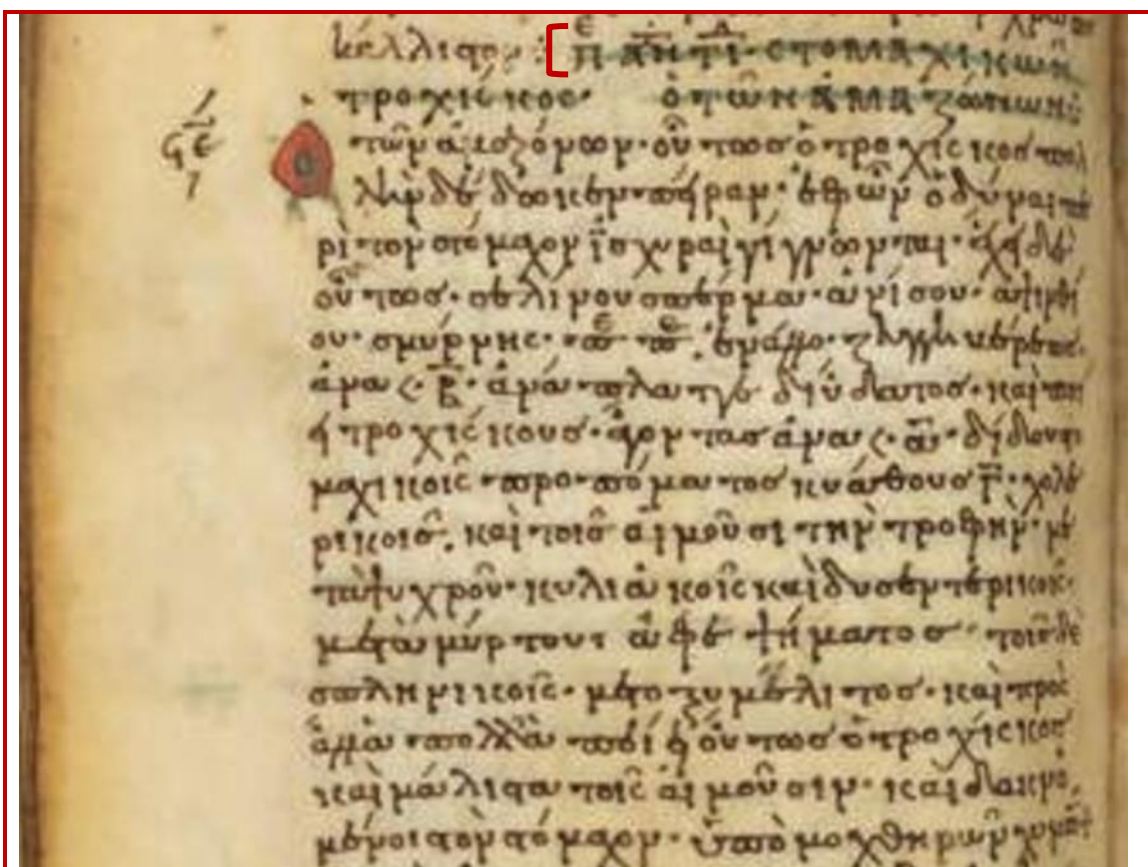
p. 73-74

85. *Aphrodisiac for erection and easy
conception.*

Indeed, if before the moment of
intercourse (the man) smears his private
parts and has intercourse, his wife will not
discover it by the much pleasure. But, if
the woman after taking it applies it in the
vagina⁷, there will be great erection and
pleasure of the man: seed of satyrion 1½
ounce⁸, of pepper 1 drachm, of chopped
alum 2 drachms, of good dry wax 2
ounces, deposit it in a glass container.

⁷ Translation by Marie-Helene Congourdeau for κρόδει: *vagin*.

⁸ Weight measurement equivalent to 27.28 gr.



f. 31v

125. ΕΠΙ ΠΑΝΤΟΙΩΝ ΣΤΟΜΑΧΙΚΩΝ
ΤΡΟΧΙΣΚΟΣ Ο ΤΩΝ ΑΜΑΖΟΝΩΝ.

Ὁ τῶν ἀμαζόνων οὗτος ὁ τροχίσκος πολλὴν δέδωκε πεῖραν, ἐφ' ᾧ ὅδυναι περὶ τὸν στόμαχον ἰσχυραὶ γίνονται. Ἐχει δὲ οὕτως σλίνου σπέρμα, ἀνίσου, ἀψινθίου, σμύρνης, πεπέρεως· ἐν ἄλλῳ ζιγγιβέρεως ἀνά < B', ἀνάπλαττε δι' ὕδατος καὶ ποίει. τροχίσκους ἄγοντας ἀνά < A'· δίδου στομαχικοῖς πρὸ πόματος κυάθους Γ', χολερικοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῦσι τὴν τροφήν, μετὰ ψυχροῦ· κοιλιακοῖς καὶ δυσεντερικοῖς μετὰ μύρτου ἀφεψήματος· τοῖς δ' σπληνικοῖς μετ' ὀξυμέλιτος καὶ πρὸς ἄλλα πολλὰ ποιεῖ οὗτος ὁ τροχίσκος καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς ἐμοῦσι καὶ δακνομένοις τὸν στόμαχον ὑπὸ μοχθηρῶν χυμῶν.

p. 89

125. *Amazonian pill for all stomach pains.*

This pill of the Amazons passed many tests on those who suffer strong stomach pains. Thus it is: celery seed, anise seed, wormwood seed, myrrh seed, pepper seed; in another (recipe), ginger seed, 2 drachms of each (ingredient). Model with water and make tablets weighing 1 drachm each. Give to the sick of the stomach with 3 kyathos of drink; to those who suffer from bile and to those who refuse food with cold water; to celiacs and dysenterics with decoction of myrtle; to the sick of the spleen with oxymel; also in many other cases this pill is effective, and especially, for those who vomit and feel pangs in the stomach by unpleasant humors.