

# Ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι

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SINCE ANCIENT TIMES humans have used their teeth not only as a means of food consumption or utterance, but also in exceptional circumstances as a tool or even a weapon. According to the findings of Forensic Dentistry, using the teeth to inflict injuries on another person is a common phenomenon in committing crimes and violent attacks, especially when biting represents the only method available for the victim or the assailant. In fact, bite wounds constitute to count as one of the most frequent of human traumas.<sup>1</sup>

This paper focuses on human biting as a medical issue in antiquity and seeks to illustrate the motives and the effects of human bites as well as the treatment of the wounds that they inflicted. I will first examine selected but representative references to human biting in the extant literary sources,<sup>2</sup> concentrating on texts that reveal possible reasons of such an act. The examination will then turn to the references to ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι (“bitten by man”) found in Greek medical and pharmacological treatises, which will throw light on a papyrus from Roman Egypt that preserves a recipe for treating human bite wounds. This will lead us to conclusions about the perception of

<sup>1</sup> D. E. Senn et al. (eds.), *Forensic Dentistry*<sup>2</sup> (London 2010) 306; C. Stavrianos et al., “Loss of the Ear Cartilage from a Human Bite,” *Research Journal of Medical Sciences* 5 (2011) 20–24.

<sup>2</sup> For examples in Greek mythology depicted in art see Ch. Stavrianos, N. Petalotis, P. Stavrianou, and P. Tsakmalis, “Humans Biting other Humans in Ancient Greek Mythology as Depicted in Five Works of Art,” *Bulletin of the International Association of Paleodontology* 6 (2012) 27–35.

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such wounds on the part of ancient physicians and pharmacologists, encompassing the motives for human biting, the relationship to injuries caused by (venomous) animals, and ideas of the appropriate treatment. The medications recommended can show how the doctors and pharmacologists understood human bites and evaluated their effects.

### 1. *The motivation of human biting*

We examine first the reasons that a human might cause damage to another person using his/her dentition. Modern forensics asserts several different causes. Human bites commonly are associated with aggressive behavior, used to deliberately inflict pain and take revenge. Again, biting a person is sometimes classified as an act of sexual passion. Or again, the act of biting oneself can be seen either as self-punishment, or as a sign of great anguish and despair. Finally, in many cases it can be seen as an act of stern determination or suppressing speech or laughter.

Ancient literary texts confirm this range of motives for biting oneself or another. Aggression, along with despair, was the reason for Alcibiades biting a boy, according to Plutarch's *Apophthegmata regum et imperatorum* (186D):

Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔτι παῖς ὢν ἐλήφθη λαβὴν ἐν παλαίστρᾳ· καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος διαφυγεῖν ἔδακε τὴν χεῖρα τοῦ καταπαλαίουτος.

Alcibiades, while still a boy, was caught in a fast hold in a wrestling-school, and not being able to get away, he bit the arm of the boy who had him down. (transl. Babbitt)

Similar feelings seem to have motivated the philosopher Zeno of Elea against Nearchus the tyrant, when the philosopher bit the tyrant's ear, according to Diogenes Laertius (9.26):

εἶτα περὶ τινῶν εἰπεῖν ἔχειν τινὰ αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸ οὖς λέγων καὶ δακῶν οὐκ ἀνήκεν ἕως ἀπεκεντήθη, ταῦτόν Ἀριστογείτονι τῷ τυραννοκτόνῳ παθόν.

Then, saying that he had something to tell him about certain people in his private ear, he laid hold of it with his teeth and did not let go until stabbed to death, meeting the same fate as Aristogiton the tyrannicide (transl. Hicks).

Biting was common between lovers; thus for instance in Ovid's

*Amores* 1.7.41–42, where the poet describes his amorous biting of his mistress as the alternative to his violence against her:<sup>3</sup>

*aptius impressis fuerat livere labellis  
et collum blandi dentis habere notam.*

A bruise pressed in by my lips would have been more fitting, her neck marked by the caress of my teeth.

Love-bites seem to have been a recurring theme in Roman elegists of the Augustan era, as some of Propertius' and Tibullus' poems show (e.g. Prop. 3.8.21–22, 4.3.25–26, 4.5.38–40; Tib. 1.6.13–14). This violent expression of love was associated with the passionate emotions during love making and probably with a latent feeling of possessiveness and domination on the part of one lover towards the other.<sup>4</sup>

Biting one's own lips (or tongue) is found in some texts metaphorically, as a gesture of patience and tolerance in a difficult situation. Thus e.g. Tyrteus 11.21–22:

ἀλλὰ τις εὔ διαβὰς μενέτω ποσὶν ἀμφοτέροισι  
στηριχθεὶς ἐπὶ γῆς, χεῖλος ὀδοῦσι δακῶν

But let everyone stand fast, with legs set well apart and both feet fixed on the ground, biting his lip with his teeth,

in which the poet exhorted the Spartans to struggle for their land during the Second Messenian War (ca. 640–620 B.C.). Finally, biting one's own lips was regarded as a sign of refraining from speaking or laughing. This is seen at times in tragedy and comedy. In Sophocles' *Trachiniae* 974–976 the old man advises Hyllus not to speak, because his father, Heracles, might hear him lamenting:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. E. Greene, "Travesties of Love: Violence and Voyeurism in Ovid's *Amores* 1.7," *CW* 92 (1999) 409–418, at 415; D. Fredrick, "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman Elegy," in Paul Allen Miller (ed.), *Latin Erotic Elegy. An Anthology and Reader* (London 2002) 457, 468–469; W. Turpin, *Ovid, Amores. Book 1* (Cambridge 2016) 87.

<sup>4</sup> E. Greene, *The Erotics of Domination. Male Desire and Mistress in Latin Poetry* (Baltimore 1998) 88.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. Davies, *Sophocles, Trachiniae* (Oxford 1991) 225.

Σίγα, τέκνον, μὴ κινήσης  
 ἀγρίαν ὀδύνην πατρὸς ὠμόφρονος.  
 ζῆ γὰρ προπετής· ἀλλ' ἴσχε δακῶν  
 στόμα σόν.

Hush, young man! Do not rouse the cruel pain that infuriates your father! He lives, though on the very edge. Bite your tongue and hold it! (transl. Jebb)

In Aristophanes' *Frogs* 43, καίτοι δάκνω γ' ἑμαυτόν, ἀλλ' ὅμως γελῶ, Heracles is trying not to laugh on seeing Dionysus and Xanthias at his door;<sup>6</sup> the expression δακῶν ἀνάσχου in Menander's *Samia* 356 describes a similar gesture.

## 2. The physicians' and pharmacologists' view

Greek physicians applied the word ἀνθρωπόδηκτος, "human" and "bite,"<sup>7</sup> both to a victim of a human bite and to the wound caused by a human bite. The authors of the medical treatises, however, offer no hint about the motivation of such an aggressive attack of human against human. Rather, some offer implicit information on the wounds' physiology, and their chief concern seems to have been about the medication to be applied to such injuries.

The terms most used by the ancient medical authors for human bites were δήγμα and ἔλκος. Although there can have been no crucial difference in the meaning of these two terms, δήγμα referred probably to the signs of the attack, while ἔλκος was used to describe the wound that the bite caused. Note, for instance, what Galen in *De comp. med. per gen.* 5.2 (XIII 778–779 Kühn) wrote about the dittany plaster, appropriate for θηρίων πληγὰς καὶ δήγματα σκορπίων, φυλαγγίων, μυγαλῆς, ἀνθρωπόδηκτα. On the other hand, Paul of Aegina (7<sup>th</sup> cent.), in his first reference to human bites, used both δήγμα and ἔλκος: εἴ γε κακοηθέστερα πολὺ τῶν ἄλλων ἐλκῶν φαίνεται τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπάρχοντα δήγματα (*Epit.* 5.26 [CMG IX.2 23 Heiberg]). The

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. B. Stanford, *Aristophanes, The Frogs* (London 1963) 75.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. similar terms, such as κυνόδηκτος "bitten by a dog," ἀσπιδόδηκτος "bitten by an adder."

word ἔλκος occurs in Philumenus (prob. 2<sup>nd</sup> cent.) *De ven. animal. eorumque rem.* 5.1. (CMG X.1.1 9 Wellmann) and in Aetius 13.1 (6<sup>th</sup> cent.).<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, in the ancient medical treatises there is no detailed description of the physical aspect of the ulcers caused by human bites. However, one could come to sufficient conclusions about the physiology of the wounds by closely reading what Aetius noted about the treatment of the injuries. The human bite seems there to cause cavities in the victim's skin and muscular tissue, for Aetius recommended applying a medicinal mixture of thick substances so as to fill these up cavities, probably after a cleansing cataplasm had been applied to the affected area and before certain therapeutic plasters were spread on the skin (13.1):

εἶτα χρῶ τοῖς δυναμένοις ἀναπληροῦν, οἷόν ἐστι τοῦτο· μέλι, τερεβινθίνην, βούτυρον, στέαρ χήνειον, μυελὸν ἐλάφειον, εἰ δὲ μὴ παρείη, μόσχειον, ἴσα τήξας, χρῶ.

Then apply medicaments that can fill (the cavity) up, such as the following: honey, terebinth, butter, goose fat, deer marrow. In case of a lack of it (sc. deer marrow), (use) calf marrow, melt them and apply.

In the same passage the author used κόλπος, meaning a fistulous ulcer which spreads under the skin,<sup>9</sup> when referring to the trauma caused by a human bite. It seems that in many cases a fistulous ulcer could be created immediately after the bite, and the victim should heal it by applying boiled honey with a sponge:

Εἰ δὲ κόλπος εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς γένοιτο, μελικράτῳ κλύσας ἐπιμελῶς, σπόγγον καινὸν ἐφ' ἱκανὸν μετὰ μέλιτος ἐφθοῦ ἀναλαβὼν ἐπιτίθει.

If a fistulous ulcer is immediately created, wash diligently with honey and water, take a new sponge full of boiled honey and apply.

<sup>8</sup> See S. G. Zervos, "Αετίου Ἀμιδινῶ περι δακνόντων ζώων καὶ ἰοβόλων," *Αθηνᾶ* 18 (1906) 264.

<sup>9</sup> LSJ s.v.; R. Durling, *A Dictionary of Medical Terms in Galen* (Leiden 1993) 208 s.v.

Paul's discussion of human bite injuries, unlike that of Aetius, becomes extensive and detailed. He dedicated a separate chapter of his *Epitome* (5.26) to those injured by human bites, beginning by pointing out that "it will not be off the subject if one deals with persons bitten by men along with those bitten by venomous animals."<sup>10</sup> He held that human bites could prove more dangerous than those caused by venomous animals. The bite could put the victim's life in danger, if the attacker had eaten certain foods, or had been fasting:

εἴ γε κακοθεότερα πολὺ τῶν ἄλλων ἐλκῶν φαίνεται τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὑπάρχοντα δῆγματα, καὶ μάλιστα, εἰ νῆστις ὧν ὁ δάκνων τύχοι προβεβρωκῶς ὄσπρια καὶ μάλιστα φακῆν.

The bites inflicted by men are much more malignant than other ulcers, more especially if the person who bit happens to be fasting, or had previously eaten some pulse, particularly dried lentil. (transl. Adams)

It is worth noting that in this passage Paul made a connection—understood as very probable nowadays—between the food consumed and the hygiene of the oral area, considering that the condition of one's oral cavity is affected by the kinds of food one eats. Some foods can create microorganisms in the attacker's oral cavity, which could affect the teeth or saliva, making them toxic. In human bites, therefore, these toxic germs can attack the victim, infecting skin or muscular tissue.<sup>11</sup> Especially legumes—lentils included—seem to have occasionally become poisonous, as has been pointed out.<sup>12</sup> Note also that the human oral cavity presents a very sensitive and vulnerable area, subject not only to tooth decay but also to other illnesses such as ulcers and sores

<sup>10</sup> Οὐκ ἔξω τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἂν εἴη μετὰ τῶν ἰοβόλων καὶ τὰ ἀνθρωπόδηκτα γράφειν.

<sup>11</sup> On the relation of the kind of food to oral and other diseases in antiquity see J. P. Alcock, *Food in the Ancient World* (London 2006) 245–252.

<sup>12</sup> Theophr. *Hist.pl.* 8.8.6; Plin. *HN* 22.142. See K. B. Flint-Hamilton, "Legumes in Ancient Greece and Rome: Food, Medicine, or Poison?" *Hesperia* 68 (1999) 371–385, at 373–374, 376.

(ἔλκη, ἄφθαι, νομαί),<sup>13</sup> which can cause damage to the victim of a human bite. Recipes for mouthwashes described by the authors of medical treatises represent one more proof of the known toxicity of the oral area.<sup>14</sup>

Galen, Oribasius (4<sup>th</sup> cent.), and Dioscorides (1<sup>st</sup> cent.) were all interested in the treatment of human bite injuries. Galen collected a great number of alternative remedies against the wounds that they created. In his *De comp. med. per gen.* he gathered prescriptions for a variety of bites and other wounds, injuries from human bites included.<sup>15</sup> Most of the recipes are ointments (ἔμπλαστροι), based chiefly on herbs but also on minerals, some named after their first preparer, such as the βάρβαρος of Heras, the κηρὰ Ἀλιέως, the Ἴσις Ἐπιγόνου, and the ἔμπλαστρος ἡ Ἴκεσίου. The first three of these ointments are included in Oribasius' and Aetius' works,<sup>16</sup> in which other medicated creams or liquids for human bites are also mentioned: Oribasius included also ἄφρα ἔναιμος and some healing blends without designation (*Ad Eunap.* 3.12 and 71 [CMG VI.3 432]), while Aetius referred to the very effective plaster ἀνίκητος Κρίτωνος (13.1, 15.17).<sup>17</sup> Finally, although Dioscorides' treatise would be expected to be richer in information concerning the treatment of ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι, the pharmacologist mentioned only two recipes, one

<sup>13</sup> On oral diseases in ancient times see A. Wallace Park and H. B. Yaacob, "The Ancient Origins of Oral Pathology," *J. Nichon Univ. Sch. Dent.* 33 (1991) 211–243.

<sup>14</sup> Gal. *De comp. med. sec. loc.* 7.8 (XII 988–1007 K.); Paul. Aeg. *Epit.* 4.43–44 (CMG IX.1 362–365). Cf. *PSICongr.* XXI 3 col. III.11 (1<sup>st</sup> cent. B.C.): ἄλλη πρὸς ἄφ[θας]; *SB* XIV 12175.7–8 (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.), πρὸς πάντα τὰ ἐν τῷ στόματι πάθη; *P. Ryl.* I 29.2 (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), τροχίσκος πρὸς ἄφ[θας]; *P. Mich.* XVII 758A verso 6–8 and D verso 3, 4; L. C. Youtie, *P. Michigan XVII The Michigan Medical Codex* (Atlanta 1996) 11 (n. on line 7) and 33 (n. on lines 2–3).

<sup>15</sup> 1.16, 2.22, 3.9, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 6.2 (XIII 432, 437, 558, 560, 646, 774, 779, 788, 802, 878 K.)

<sup>16</sup> Orib. *Ecl.* 87.7 (CMG VI.2.2 264). Aet. 15.13 and 14, Zervos, *Αθηνᾶ* 21 (1909) 39–40, 48–49, 53–54.

<sup>17</sup> Zervos, *Αθηνᾶ* 18 (1906) 264 and 21 (1909) 104.

based on hazelnuts and another on vetch (*Mat.med.* 1.125.1 and 2.108.2 [I 114 and 183 Wellmann]).

In contrast to these medical authors and pharmacologists, who in scattered references to injuries caused by human bites equated them to animal injuries and insect stings, Philumenus included a special chapter in *De venenatis animalibus* dedicated to ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι and κυνόδηκτοι. Here he cited the prescriptions of other doctors and pharmacologists: Archigenes' *De med. per gen.* (5.1), two medical blends of Straton (5.2), and a recipe from Apollonius' treatise (5.6 [CMG X.1.1 9–10]).<sup>18</sup>

A special chapter dedicated to ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι is also in Aelius Promotus' *De ven. animal. et morb. ven.* (2<sup>nd</sup> cent.). He remarked that the injuries caused by humans could be quite serious (34):

περὶ δακετῶν ζώων μέλλοντες ἀναγράφειν τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιούμεθα  
ἐκ τῶν ἀνθρωποδέκτων. καὶ γὰρ ἢ τούτων δῆξις οἶδεν οὐ σμικρὰ  
βλάπτειν.

Intending to deal with venomous animals, we will start with those bitten by humans. This is because this kind of bite causes serious damage.

Precious information concerning the physiology of human bite wounds is offered in a recipe included in the series of medical prescriptions *GMP* II 5 (*P. Tebt.* II 273, 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> cent.), col. iv.23–29 to v.1–13. The text, entitled χλωρὰ ἢ ἀμίμητος, “The incomparable *chlora*,” presents a recipe for dog, asp, and human bites, and crocodile attacks. According to the papyrus text, human bites, like those of dogs, asps, and crocodiles, cause blisters on the victim's skin (iv.24–28):

πρὸς κυνοδέκτους  
καὶ ἀνθρωποδέκτο(υ)ς  
καὶ ἀσπίδο(δή)κτους  
[καὶ κρ]οκοδιλοπλήκτους  
[φλυ]κτίδας

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. D. Mavroudis, *Tὰ ιοβόλα ζῶα καὶ τὰ δηλητήρια φάρμακα στὴν ἀρχαία ἐλληνικὴ ἰατρικὴ. Καταγραφή τῆς σχετικῆς γραμματείας καὶ μελέτη τῶν ὁμοθεμῶν ἔργων τοῦ Φιλονόμου καὶ τοῦ Ἀνωνόμου* (Athens 2013) 127–212.



The medical term φλυκτίς refers to the pustule, the swelling filled with fluid or pus, which was caused by a creature's bite.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the human bite may result in blisters on the skin reminds us of Aetius' claim that a man's bite could sometimes cause a fistulous ulcer (κόλπος) on the victim's skin.

### 3. *Treatment and medication for human bite victims*

Examination of the treatment and the medicaments which Greek doctors and pharmacologists suggested for ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι reveals that medical care of the patients mainly consisted of two stages: cleaning the wounds with emollient natural substances and then applying palliative ointments on the injuries. This, for instance, is how Philumenus suggested treating a human bite wound before proceeding to heal the victim (*De ven. animal.* 5.1):

τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρωποδέκτους προχρίσας ἐλαίῳ μαράθρου ρίζαν (λειώσας) μετὰ μέλιτος, ἄχρι ἂν καθαρῆ τὸ ἔλκος, χρῶ, εἶτα σμύρναν καὶ τερεβινθίνην ἴσα ἀναλαβὼν ὡς μάλαγμα ἐπιτίθει.

after having first rubbed the man-bites with oil, grind a fennel root with honey, until the ulcer is cleaned. Then use myrrh and terebinth in equal quantities and apply as an emollient.

A similar treatment is offered by Paul of Aegina, who writes that when the inflammation clears up, the bite should be treated as a common ulcer (*Epit.* 5.26):

κοινῶς μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἰοβόλων λεχθέντα κατὰ τούτων ἕξωθεν κατὰ τοῦ δήγματος ἀρμόσει κατ' ἀρχὰς πλὴν τῶν ἄγαν τε δριμέων καὶ τῶν καυστικῶν· ἰδίως δὲ προχρίσας ἐλαίῳ τὸ δήγμα μαράθρου ρίζης μετὰ μέλιτος κατάπλασσε. [...] παυσαμένης δὲ τῆς φλεγμονῆς ὡς κοινὸν ἔλκος ταῦτα θεράπτει.

Wherefore, the general remedies for poisonous animals may be applied externally to the bite with advantage at the commencement, with the exception of such as are very acrid and caustic; in particular having first rubbed the bite with oil, apply a cataplasm of the roots of hog's fennel with honey. [...] When the inflammation subsides treat it as a common ulcer (transl. Adams).

<sup>19</sup> See the editor's note on iv.28: A. E. Hanson, "A *Receptarium* from Teb-tunis," in *Greek Medical Papyri* II (Florence 2009) 71–103, at 93.

Aetius, however, seems to have included one more step for the treatment of human bite wounds before applying medicinal plasters to the skin, in suggesting a mixture of thick substances to be applied (13.1, quoted above).

As far as the remedies for human bites are concerned, the most often mentioned are plasters (ἔμπλαστοι). It is interesting to note that many ingredients used in medical recipes for cataplasms were common in the treatises of different doctors and pharmacologists. This shows that the medical writers had observed and shared the properties and the healing powers of medicinal ingredients or more complex mixtures and judged them as appropriate treatment for those bitten by men.

The emollient power of the hog's fennel (μάραθρον) and honey made them the most useful ingredients for human bites; the drugs are cited as palliative substances in Philumenus' and Paul's treatises cited above, and are also registered in Oribasius' *Ad Eunap.* 3.71 (CMG VI.3 432): μαράθρου ρίζαν κόψας μετὰ μέλιτος ἐπιτίθει, "grind a fennel root with honey and apply." Other useful substances in plaster recipes for ἀνθρώποδηκτοί were wax (κηρός), litharge (λιθάργυρον), terebinth (τερεβινθίνη), incense gum (μάννη), galbanum (χαλβάνη), even pitch (πίσσα), and bitter vetch (ῥοβος).<sup>20</sup> We should also note that there were other, less common, medical ingredients for the treatment of human bite wounds, such as dittany (δίκταμνον), whetstone (ἀκόνη), and walnuts (κάρυα βασιλικά).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, sometimes Greek physicians registered the substances used in more complex healing mixtures, such as κερρά Ἀλιέως and Ἴσις Ἐπιγόνου, mentioned by Galen and consisting of a variety of simple drugs, e.g. red copper flakes, rust, birthwort, incense, salt, burnt copper, aloe.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Gal. *De comp. med. per gen.* 1.16 (XIII 432 K.); Philum. *De ven. animal.* 5.1–2 (CMG X.1.1 9).

<sup>21</sup> Gal. *De comp. med. per gen.* 5.2 and 6.3 (XIII 779 and 878 K.); Diosc. *Mat. med.* 1.125.1 and 2.108.2 (I 114 and 183 Wellmann).

<sup>22</sup> Gal. *De comp. med. per gen.* 3.8 and 5.2 (XIII 646 and 774 K.). Aet. *Epit.* 15.13, Zervos, *Αθηνά* 21 (1909) 39.

Another means of treatment is included in the medical recipe *GMP* II 5. The author compiled a list of medical substances consisting of burnt copper, pulverized stone, copper sulfate, calamine, rue, sarapias, cypress resin, wax, oil, and vinegar (iv.29–v.10):

χαλκοῦ κε[καυμένου] (δραχμαὶ) ζ	
[ ]	
λ[ίθου] σ[χι[στοῦ]	]
κ[αλ]κάνθ[ου]	]
κ[α]τμία[ς]	]
π[ηγ]άν[ου]	]
σ[α]ραπιάδος χλωρῶς [	]
ρήτινης κυπ[ρί]σου [	]
κηροῦ μνᾶ [	] α
αἰλέ[ου] κοτ(υλ ) [	]
ῥξο[υς] κ[ο]τ[υ]λ( ) [	]

It is interesting to note that, apart from copper sulfate, wax, and oil, no ingredient in this recipe for human bite ulcers occurs in any other prescription described by the medical writers and pharmacologists. This peculiarity is easily explained: the papyrus recipe must have been adapted for an Egyptian milieu. The ingredients of a recipe that aims to heal more than one condition, two of which (bites by asps and crocodiles) reflect an Egyptian environment, were intended to serve for all of the health problems recorded.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the probability that the recipe was adapted to an Egyptian environment is corroborated by some ingredients

<sup>23</sup> See Hanson, in *Greek Medical Papyri* II 73–74 (introd. n.). For the danger of an asp bite in Egypt see J. Dalrymple, “Snakes and Scorpions in Late Antique Egypt: Remarks on Papyri Documenting Envenomation,” in *A.Pap. Congr. XXIV* (Helsinki 2007) I 205–213. For the danger of a crocodile attack, particularly in places where crocodiles were maintained for religious reasons, see D. Roumpekias, “Ατυχήματα στην ελληνιστική, ελληνορωμαϊκή και βυζαντινή Αίγυπτο από πληροφορίες παπύρων, οστράκων και επιγραφών,” *Hellenika* 69 (2020–2023) 101–126, at 113.

found in other recipes of the same *receptarium*, thus χάρτης “papyrus” (vi.9) and πήγανον “rue” (vii.13), which are well attested in medical recipes on papyrus as well as in documentary papyri.<sup>24</sup> It should be also considered that many of the medical texts originating from Tebtunis are or may be connected to the medical activities of the priests of the temple of Soknebtunis.<sup>25</sup>

To sum up, the motivation for human biting in antiquity was manifold; according to various ancient authors, it might be aggressiveness, the desire for revenge, or (self-)punishment, as well as sexual passion or self-restraint. In contrast to the literary texts, the medical and pharmacological treatises do not refer to the motives but merely concerned themselves with the treatment of the injuries that the human bites inflicted on the victims.

The physicians usually used a general characterization when referring to human-bite wounds (ἔλκη, πληγαί, δήγματα), without giving detailed information concerning their physiology (e.g. wound shape, bleeding). Therefore, the medication that they recommended for ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι constitutes our chief opportunity for determining the relation of these injuries to those caused by animals. According to most of the medical writers, the therapeutic recipes for human bites were the same as those recommended for dog bites. That seems reasonable, for the anatomy of the canine oral cavity bears similarities to the human one, in contrast to those of other animals, such as reptiles, scorpions, or fish. Moreover, the poison injected by venomous

<sup>24</sup> See Hanson, in *Greek Medical Papyri* II 97–98 (n. on vi.9), and A. Monte, “Medical Recipes for All Occasions: A *Receptarium* from Tebtunis?” *GRBS* 62 (2022) 77–109, at 96–97.

<sup>25</sup> See A. E. Hanson, “Greek Medical Papyri from the Fayum Village of Tebtunis: Patient Involvement in a Local Health-Care System?” in P. van der Eijk (ed.), *Hippocrates in Context* (Leiden 2005) 387–402, and “Recipes for Female Complaints and Other Ailments,” *A.Pap. Congr. XXIV I* 427–433; A. Jacob, “Demotic Pharmacology: An Overview of the Demotic Medical Manuscripts in the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection,” in N. Reggiani et al. (eds.), *Parlare la medicina: Fra lingue e culture, nello spazio e nel tempo* (Florence 2018) 52–79; Monte, *GRBS* 62 (2022) 77–86.

animals' bites of course required a distinct mode of treatment. Some powerful medicinal blends, however, such as Ἰσις Ἐπιγόνου, κισσὰ Ἀλιέως, and ἀνίκητος Κρίτωνος, were used to heal bites and stings of a variety of animals, including human bites.

The variety of ingredients used for recipes against human bites and the quantity of the references to ἀνθρωπόδηκτοι in the medical writers prove not only the frequency of this health issue but also show that this sort of injury could be treated in multiple ways in antiquity.

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