**Pharmaceuticals**

**from the Mineral**

**and Animal Kingdoms:**

**Considerations**

**on Ancient and Modern Uses**

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Galen of Pergamon (129-216 AD), in his treatise *On Simple Medicines*, dedicated three out of six books of his pharmacopoeia to the medicinal properties of substances derived from mineral and animal sources. The same is true for the 6th-century Byzantine compiler, Aetius of Amida. Pharmaceuticals from minerals and animals are indeed commonly present in the formulations collected by Galen in his works *On Compound Remedies*.

These substances are generally overlooked by scholarship or examined with greater scepticism and curiosity than botanicals by both humanists and scientists, due to their potential high toxicity, dubious efficacy and reliability, questionable origins, and unpleasant and disgusting odours and textures (*Dreckapotheke*). Nonetheless, ethnopharmacological studies focus on some of these substances because traditional medicines still use them worldwide.

This paper aims to offer a new perspective on the study of the therapeutic use of substances of mineral and animal origin. Could our current knowledge of the properties of natural substances improve our understanding of their ancient applications? Could the combination of specific substances along with their processing and preparation shed some light on the rationale for their use? This paper will provide some suggestions to decipher the oddness and the unseen complexity of ancient pharmacology.

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Manuela Marai holds degrees in Classical Languages and Literatures as well as Molecular Biology, and she is developing research strategies for using historical texts as sources for “new” drugs. In particular, her analysis focuses on the potential antimicrobial activity of wound healing salves in the works of Galen of Pergamon, and on the rationale behind the use and the processing of natural substances in the synthesis of compound remedies in antiquity.