

Oliver Hellmann, Arnaud Zucker (eds.)

**On the Diffusion of Zoological Knowledge
in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period**

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Georg Wöhrle (Hg.)

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Abbreviations

- ANRW Haase, W./Temporini, H. (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, 37 vols., Berlin/New York 1972ff.
- DNP Cancik, H./Schneider, H. (eds.), *Der Neue Pauly*, 12 vols., Stuttgart 1996-2002.
- Lampe Lampe, G.W.H. (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford 1961.
- LSJ Liddell, H. G./Scott, R./Jones, H. S. (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford⁹1940 (with Supplement 1996).
- OLD Glare, P.G.W. (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1982.
- RE Wissowa, G. et al. (eds.), *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, neue Bearbeitung, 83 vols., Stuttgart 1893-1980.
- SVF Arnim, H. von (ed.), *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, 4 vols., Leipzig 1903-1924.

Abbreviations of names and works of Ancient and Byzantine authors follow LSJ, OLD, and Lampe.

Abbreviations of Journals follow *L'Année philologique*.

Preface

This volume collects some papers presented at an international conference “On Diffusion of Zoological Knowledge in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period” held at Trier University on October 18-19, 2019. The conference was organized by the editors of this volume, Oliver Hellmann (Trier University) and Arnaud Zucker (University Côte d’Azur) in cooperation with the international research network *Zoomathia*. The aim of this network, founded in the year 2014 by Arnaud Zucker, is to promote and coordinate research on ancient and medieval zoology with a special focus on the transmission of ancient zoological knowledge in different cultural, temporal, and medial contexts.¹

The Trier conference continued a series of annual conferences organized within the framework of *Zoomathia*.² With its thematic stress on diffusion of knowledge, it picked up *Zoomathia*’s main topic with a special temporal focus: Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period. Within these periods, we can observe multifold processes of adaptation, absorption, enlargement, re-presentation and translation of zoological knowledge. Most of the zoological data that have been worked on are not new, they were established in Hellenistic times mainly by Aristotle and his colleagues in the Peripatetic school. Since then, authors and scientists began to transmit and transform these zoological data in manifold ways. Aristophanes of Byzantium (3rd/2nd century BCE), along with other compendia that were probably produced in the school of Aristotle, re-organized Peripatetic knowledge in an *Epitome* for his readers that Pliny the Elder (1st century CE) used as material for his monumental Encyclopedia (*Historia naturalis*). In philosophical and ethical debates, ethological descriptions of animal behavior were adapted and played a major role in the discourse on the relation of humans and animals, as, for example, in the works of Philo of Alexandria (1st century CE), Plutarch (1st/2nd century CE) and Aelian (2nd/3rd century CE). In Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period this process continues, yet under different socio-cultural conditions. This rich literature, in both Pagan and Christian tradition, has experienced significant

1 For more information see www.cepam.cnrs.fr/sites/zoomathia.

2 Most recent publications: Th. Fögen/E. Thomas, *Interactions between Animals and Humans in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, Berlin 2017; Ch. Franco/M. Vespa/A. Zucker, *Zoomathia: Learning About Animals in Ancient and Medieval Cultures*, Venice 2023.

losses such as the zoological work of Timotheus of Gaza (6th century CE), and maybe a comparable text of Tatian (2nd century CE)³.

This collection of papers does not pretend to cover in an exhaustive or systematic way the texts and issues of the topic. Through selected case studies, the papers of this volume, dealing in different ways with issues of literacy, social strategies and experience, analyze various aspects of diffusion and transformation of zoological knowledge in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Period. The texts discussed range from the *Physiologus* (2nd century CE) and Solinus (3rd century CE) up to al-Marwazī (12th century CE) and Bartholomew of Messina (13th century CE). As emerges from this short list, Greek, Latin and Arabic texts of different genres are taken into account, and more than once, questions about adaptation of knowledge to new geographic, social, cultural, religious and politic contexts are in the center of interest.

The *Physiologus*, a zoological text that in his textual history covers the whole time-span from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages (and beyond), is the subject of **Álvaro Pires**' contribution that opens the volume. The text's tradition starts with a Greek original in the 2nd century CE. Álvaro Pires' focus is on more or less fictional creatures in the Greek *Physiologus*—especially the siren and the centaur—emphasizing the function of fictionality within the text. Fictionality is seen “as a rhetorical tool to invoke any number of the qualities radiating from its conceptual core in the process of generating true knowledge.”⁴ The author assumes that this text deliberately includes characters that are not conceived by the author as ‘real’ in the same naturalistic way as others. The fictiveness of the siren and hippocentaur clearly stressed in the chapter devoted to these figures shows that the program of the text is not based on a claim to naturalistic realism. With this approach Álvaro Pires shows a new way to understand the allegories of the *Physiologus*.

Diego De Brasi devotes his paper to the animal lore in the *Hexaemeron* of Basilus (4th century CE). Using selected examples, he demonstrates how Basilus

3 On Late Antique and Byzantine zoology and science in general, see S. Föllinger, *Biologie in der Spätantike*, in: G. Wöhrle (ed.), *Biologie (Geschichte der Mathematik und der Naturwissenschaften in der Antike)*, 1, Stuttgart 1999, 253-281; S. Lazaris (ed.), *A Companion to Byzantine Science*, Leiden 2020; M. Frampton, *Life Sciences in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, 2015 (<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470015902.a0022341.pub2>); I.S. Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans. Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Thought*, London/New York 2006.

4 Pires, p. 17 in this volume.