

Session 37

CIRCULATION AND COMMUNICATION OF THE CHEMICAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE GREEK-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE 17TH CENTURY

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Chemistry probably may not have the nobility of the origins of other major sciences since it is firmly fixed in the practices of craftsmen. Thus, from its emergence in the Graeco-Egyptian world, the distinction between theorists and craftsmen had no meaning at all. In the chemistry, work and theory were remaining inseparable because the aim was always the transformation of bodies or the production of medicines or consumer goods. And people, including political powers, were expecting much of chemistry for medical and economic interests and for the natural philosophy knowledge as well.

The Greek-speaking chemistry was the object of a quite limited interest by historians of science. And yet this chemistry did not cease diffusing from the 1st century B.C. to the 17th century through many ways as it is obvious with the recently discovered manuscripts: through craftsmen, copyists, scholars, clergymen, in the Byzantine world and Ottoman Empire as well, and in interactions with the Arabian and Western thoughts and crafts. Its diffusion implicated various categories of people and was carried out under various constraints. Its communication was realized in both spellingly-free demotic Greek and scholarly ancient Greek.

In this Symposium, we wish to question the modes and networks of the communication of the Greek-speaking chemistry which was at the same time, from Antiquity to the 17th century, on the fringe of the development of the science thoughts and in the midst of the business of the world, the medical, economic and philosophical life of societies, transgressing the borders between art and science.