

Véronique Zech-Matterne, Girolamo Fiorentino, eds.

AGRUMED

Archaeology and history of citrus fruit in the Mediterranean:
Acclimatization, diversifications, uses



CNRS COLLECTION DU CENTRE JEAN BÉRARD, 48 ÉFR



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Acclimatization, diversifications, uses

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DOI: 10.4000/books.pcbj.2107
Publisher: Publications du Centre Jean Bérard
Place of publication: Naples
Year of publication: 2017
Published on OpenEdition Books: 15 January 2018
Serie: Collection du Centre Jean Bérard
Electronic ISBN: 9782918887775



<http://books.openedition.org>

Electronic reference

ZECH-MATTERNE, Véronique (ed.) ; FIORENTINO, Girolamo (ed.). *AGRUMED: Archaeology and history of citrus fruit in the Mediterranean: Acclimatization, diversifications, uses*. New edition [online]. Naples: Publications du Centre Jean Bérard, 2017 (generated 17 January 2018). Available on the Internet: <<http://books.openedition.org/pcb/2107>>. ISBN: 9782918887775. DOI: 10.4000/books.pcbj.2107.

This text was automatically generated on 17 January 2018.

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The book brings together 16 contributions on the ancient and recent history of citrus fruits. Although they represent the main fruit production on a worldwide scale, very little is known about their original domestication and routes of introduction into the Mediterranean and temperate Europe: few organic remains identified as citrus have been found on archaeological sites. Nevertheless, evidence has been retrieved for various periods in the form of pollen grains, seeds, rind fragments, and occasionally wood and whole fruits in areas of primo-domestication, Asian, and from sites along the potential routes of diffusion. Iconographic figurations and textual references also exist. The contributions presented here – written by researchers specializing in phylogeny, taxonomy, morphometry, archaeobotany, history, iconography, the study of classical letters, and curators of collections – present the latest knowledge relating to the taxonomy of the *Citrus* genus and the methods used in attempting to identify ancient specimens. Analysis of botanical remains and a variety of other sources, has allowed the citrus diversity in China, India, Israel, Egypt, Italy, and North-West Europe to be described. Greek, Latin and medieval texts have been explored in order to identify recognized species, cultivation methods, modes of consumption, uses, and virtues attributed to citrus fruits since their first occurrences. The conservatories and germplasm collections of citrus are presented from a historical point of view, as are the important role they play in genetic research to improve cultivars, the conservation of rare and ancient varieties, and the role of informing the general public is also emphasized. The symbolic representation of citrus fruits in the arts, literature, and philosophy completes this overview, and fills a gap concerning these emblematic Mediterranean fruit.

L'ouvrage rassemble seize contributions relatives à l'histoire ancienne et récente des agrumes. Alors qu'ils représentent la première production fruitière à l'échelle mondiale, peu de travaux ont été menés sur leurs aires d'origine et leurs voies de diffusion, car très peu de vestiges organiques correspondant à des restes d'agrumes ont été découverts dans les sites archéologiques. Néanmoins, des témoins subsistent pour diverses périodes, sous la forme de pollens, semences, fragments d'écorce, occasionnellement bois et fruits entiers, dans les zones de primo-domestication, asiatiques, et dans les sites jalonnant les routes potentielles de dissémination de ces espèces vers la Méditerranée et l'Europe tempérée. Il en existe également des représentations iconographiques et des mentions textuelles. Les présentes contributions – rédigées par des spécialistes de génétique, taxinomie, morphométrie, archéobotanique, histoire, iconographie, lettres classiques, mais aussi des conservateurs de collections archéologiques et actuelles – présentent les dernières connaissances en matière de classification et de tentatives d'identification des restes anciens, ainsi que des synthèses qui mettent en valeur l'ensemble des témoins, ou certains indices particulièrement remarquables, de la diversité des agrumes en Chine et Inde, Israël, Égypte, Italie, Europe du Nord-Ouest. Les sources grecques, latines et médiévales sont également mises à contribution pour mieux appréhender les espèces reconnues, les modes de culture et de consommation, les usages et vertus attribués aux agrumes depuis leurs premières occurrences. Les conservatoires et grandes collections d'agrumes sont présentés du point de vue historique, et l'importance du rôle joué par ceux-ci dans la recherche génétique visant à améliorer les cultivars, la conservation de certaines variétés et l'information du public, est soulignée. Un éclairage sur la représentation symbolique des agrumes dans les arts, la littérature et la philosophie, complète ce tour d'horizon, qui vient combler un vide concernant des espèces particulièrement emblématiques de la Méditerranée.

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