

Medicina Antiqua



A life in research
A World of Books



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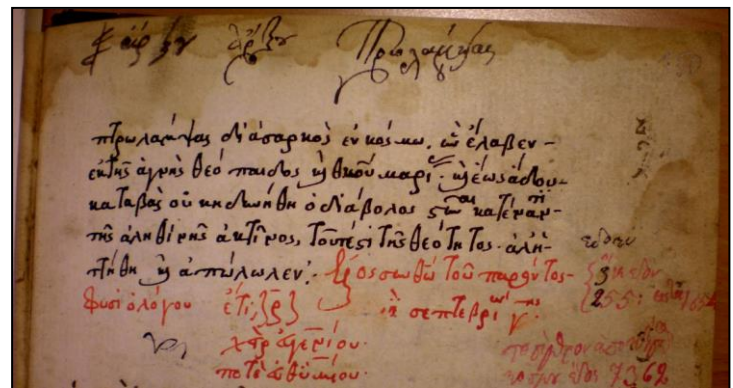
Medicina antiqua is a collection that stems from Alain Touwaide's fascination from youth with ancient culture followed by a classical education, his passion for medicinal plants, and his pioneering intuition that ancient medicine has sustained value. Alain's convictions were further boosted by Emanuela Appetiti, her interest in traditional cultures across the globe, her sense of wonder at the natural world, and her willingness to make knowledge useful. With unusual energy, remarkable persistence, and a sixth sense for tracing rare items, together, they assembled a unique library while researching ancient medicine and its tradition.

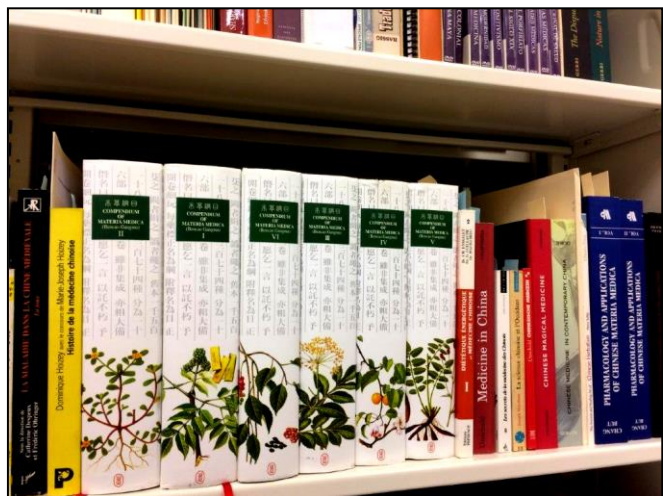
At the core of this collection is the literature that captured the experience of disease and the medical practice of the ancient Mediterranean world and theorized the knowledge of human health and disease in multiple treatises. This literature is present in the library in the form of both available printed editions and copies of many manuscripts which Alain has systematically searched for all over the world. The resulting collection is a *library of libraries* that brings together the remaining witnesses of the medical experience, knowledge, and wisdom of the Greek World.

Understanding the ancient texts and discovering the science they contain is a main focus of Alain and Emanuela's research. As early as in his college years in the early 1970s, Alain was convinced that there is value in ancient medicine, particularly in the knowledge of medicinal plants, contrary to mainstream opinion at that time. The undertaking was to understand this value. After he earned a doctoral degree in classical studies with a dissertation on ancient medicine, Alain abandoned the comfort of research in his field and moved to scientific and medical disciplines to gain an understanding of the science needed for a relevant interpretation of ancient medicine that accounts for its persistent tradition. He started acquiring literature and documentation in a great many scientific disciplines, from botany to paleopathology, to the history of diseases, to epidemiology, and to advanced drug discovery. Further on, with Emanuela, he expanded the range of disciplines to be brought into the research with the ethnoscience approach applied to botany, medicine, and pharmacy.

Though productive, this cross-disciplinary orientation of the research left one major question unanswered: how has it been possible that ancient information has come down to us? Interestingly but unsurprisingly, this interrogation, which haunted Alain since his college years, crossed paths with his search for manuscripts. Reconstructing the itinerary of the manuscripts from their place of copy to their present location, passing through the hands of readers and users, revealed that owners did use texts to learn and practice medicine, and also annotated them and introduced the results

of their own experience. After manuscripts reached the age of printing, their texts became more widely available, and they generated new inquiries. Only then did they shift from science to the humanities: ancient medicine became a topic of historical and scholarly research as it still is now. For his exploration of the history of manuscripts, Alain opened his library to codicology and palaeography, the tradition of texts and botanical illustration, intellectual history, schooling, the history of collecting and collections, and the history of libraries.





Delving deeper in the investigation of the itineraries of manuscripts and texts, Alain crossed the boundaries of the Greek-speaking world and followed the transmission of classical science and medicine around the Mediterranean with the translations of Greek treatises into Arabic and Latin, and their adaptations to different environments, populations, diseases, and epidemiologies. This study soon revealed multi-directional exchanges which enlarged the geographical scope of the research and expanded the library into new horizons as far as India and China, their flora, and their medicinal uses of plants, together with other goods transmitted along trade routes, as well as diseases.

Emanuela, meanwhile, was studying traditional cultures, especially the Aboriginal populations of Australia and their contemporary health issues. Through personal contacts and visits to Australia, she had assembled a small, yet rich collection of monographs, articles, clippings, and photographs. Through her work with Alain, she became interested in the traditional uses of plants and medical practices among the Australian Aborigines and, to a lesser extent, among contemporary South American populations, Native Americans, and Canadian First Nations. In a few years, she significantly transformed the size of her collection, which she jealously kept separated from Alain's massive library as a secret private garden.

The library *Medicina Antiqua* reflects all the facets of Alain's inquiry and its successive developments over the years with a broad range of resources from general and specialized encyclopaedias and dictionaries to scientific monographs and articles on any question related to the history of ancient medicine and beyond. Over the past twenty years, the original library has dramatically increased, and it has been complemented by other material collected or created by Alain and Emanuela in their research, with archives, images of ancient manuscripts, early-printed books and specimina of herbarium, texts digitized from manuscripts, computerized databases and, more recently, websites and digital copies of articles and monographs in the public domain harvested from the Internet, in addition to scientific journals on a broad spectrum of topics from codicology to ethnopharmacology. All this forms the collection *Medicina antiqua*, which is a unique and vast ensemble of material across a broad range of scientific and scholarly disciplines articulated organically.

Initially, this library was a handy resource put together on a student budget to compensate for the dispersion of literature on such different disciplines as philology, history, medicine and botany among several university libraries across departments and town. When he had assembled a sizable quantity of books, Alain decided to transform his several bookshelves into a full library to be opened one day to the scholarly and scientific community. He changed his acquisition strategy accordingly, transforming it into a systematic campaign. Together with Emanuela, all the books they deemed indispensable for their research and this future open library were tracked down with unflinching persistence, even in the periods of hardship that their unusual itinerary out of the academia repeatedly imposed onto them, also taking advantage of their frequent scientific travels during which they acquired *in loco* books that would have been otherwise impossible to procure in the pre-Internet age.

In 2004, Alain and Emanuela realized this commitment to an open library when they had an opportunity to move their books from Europe to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Shortly afterward, they created an independent, yet formal research and education center that gives its identity to their activity across the disciplines they touch upon, and subsumes its apparent diversity in an overarching concept: the *Institute for the Preservation of Medical Traditions*. Alain and Emanuela's office became an active research center frequented by volunteers, students, interns, and visiting scholars coming from the universities in town, neighbouring and farther cities in the United States, and even from abroad, with very many different backgrounds, majors and interests in a vast array of topics. Intra-mural activities were complemented by extra-mural ones abroad, with major research programmes which attracted collaborators from all over the world, and occasional and formal university teaching in several countries that increased the impact of Alain and Emanuela's activity.

INSTITUTE for the *Preservation* of MEDICAL TRADITIONS

More recently, when Alain and Emanuela relocated to California, Emanuela merged her collection with Alain's material for the first time, immediately adding a new dimension to his library, with both historical and contemporary medical practices and traditions in one unique collection that connects past and present, and projects them toward the future.

Mindful of their own life-long experience of often-solitary pioneering and also painstaking activity off the avenues of institutionalized research, Alain and Emanuela have shared the results of their activity of collecting and researching for free and without any barrier, with a particular devotion to apprentice scholars whom Alain has mentored and both have stimulated by their dedication and commitment. For all of them, research and personal contact with Alain and Emanuela have been a transformative experience and a long-term source of inspiration best embodied by the collection *Medicina Antiqua*.

