The *mnw*-plant, the *mnwh*-plant, the *fwn*-plant, and the *iHy*-plant: possible taxonomical identifications?

**Abstract**

More than 42 native and foreign floral and 11 faunal species were incorporated into the landscape design of early to mid-late 18th Dynasty Theban formal gardens by ancient Egyptian architects. The flora and fauna blended the landscapes, bad historical, cultural, and religious importance and symbolism, and were raised as surplus produce (repex) for the institutions to which they were connected by intricate networks of individuals (Reichart forthcoming; Reichart forthcoming-b). Four of the floral species have yet to be identified with certainty: the *mnw*-plant, the *mnwh*-plant, and the *fwn*-plant, and the *iHy*-plant. Current evidence from the ancient Egyptian record as well as previous scholarship on the four floras are examined in this case study, and it is possible, attempt to identify each with a particular species from our modern plant taxonomy.

**Mnw-plant**

An examination of the similarly spelled graphemes, palaeographies, and archaeobotanicals, as well as an analysis of the regional flora that grows beside the El-Ashtamen-Bere Saif canals in proximity to ancient Khnumu (Hermopolis) demonstrates that the *mnw*-plant is likely *Ploughman’s spikenard* (*Plectranthus discors* (L.) Deut DC.), a member of the camphorweed genus *Plectranthus* that is an evergreen, canna-loving, many-branched tree or scrub species of the daisy and composite family Asteraceae distributed along the Nile Basin, Red and Mediterranean Seas, Western and Eastern Deserts, Sinai and Fayum, which grows up to three meters tall, produces whitish yellow flower clusters arranged on peduncles with aromatic, oblong leaves, and clustered roots that have been used since pharaonic times.

*Ploughman’s spikenard* (non-plant) was associated with the ithyphallic local god Min (Mnw). Their leaves and roots were used in medicine to treat lung, stomach, and liver diseases, diabetes, cough, body aches and pains, and external cuts since pharaonic times.

**IHy-plant**

An examination of the similarly spelled graphemes, palaeographies, and archaeobotanicals, as well as an analysis of previous scholarship demonstrates that the *iHy*-plant is a fragrant tree or undershrub species of the gourd vine family Cucurbitaceae native to North Africa, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, and Central Asia that produces flowers and fruit, and which was grown in ancient Egyptian formal gardens beside his home at Thebes.

*iHy*-plant fruit and leaves were used fresh and dried in medicine to treat diseases in the stomach, eyes, heartburn, urinary and bladder infections, leg convulsions, as well as rashes, blisters, and BD lumps, for hair loss.

The author is still in the process of attributing a possible species to the *iHy*-plant.

**Mnw-plant**

An examination of the similarly spelled graphemes, palaeographies, and archaeobotanicals, as well as an analysis of previous scholarship demonstrates that the *mnw*-plant is likely *Abu Jahl’s melon-cucumis* (*Citrculinae cucumis* (L.) Schiede), a perennial, undershrub species of the gourd vine family Cucurbitaceae native to North Africa, the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, and Central Asia that produces flowers and fruit, and which was grown in ancient Egyptian formal gardens beside his home at Thebes. The roots, leaves, fruits, and seeds of *Abu Jahl’s melon* have been used as a stomach laxative, emetic, diuretic, as well as to treat lung, stomach, and liver diseases, diabetes, cough, body sores and pains, and external cuts since pharaonic times.

**IHy-plant**

An examination of the similarly spelled graphemes, palaeographies, and archaeobotanicals, as well as an analysis of previous scholarship demonstrates that the *mnw*-plant is likely *Alaffalcucum* (*Medicago sativa* L.) a perennial, protein-rich herb species, cultivated for human and animal consumption with erect, panicles of trifoliate leaves that produce raceme of purple, butterfly-like flowers that form into crescent-shaped pea pods in the spring of the pea and legume family Fabaceae native to Iran, Iraq, Asia Minor, Central Asia, Algeria, Tunisia, France, Italy, and introduced into Egypt as early as the Late Upper Paleolithic period.

*Alaffalcucum* is a low bank meadow flora that grows in seasonal submerged land habitats along the Nile banks; was introduced and cultivated for human and animal consumption in Egypt from the Late Upper Paleolithic period onwards based on its type species discovered at various archeological sites; has proven antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties for medicinal use; and based on similar graphemes and sociocultural contexts, seems to be closely associated with domesticated cattle breeds, fighting bulls and bullfighting, a bovine *mnw*-disease that is likely lumpyjoint disease, bull-like virility, courage, strength, bawdy, the moon, the gods Min of Koptos and of the Waat, Hammamat and Merti, and certain types of curses.