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When Botany and Archaeology meet: the Ancient Catalan Flora Project

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During the last 25 years, archaeological activity dramatically increased in Catalonia where up to 12.000 sites have been inventoried (although not all fully excavated). The amount of data obtained gives useful information to build a Catalogue of Ancient Catalan Flora. Initial tests started in 2014 as pilot plans with BSc D projects and full development began in 2017.

For each taxon, information is collected from the following sources: (i) archaeobotanical data (presence of macroscopic and microscopic plant fragments, phytoliths, chemical traces, etc. recovered from sites), (ii) biological material (mainly pollen) from paleovegetation and paleoclimatic studies, (iii) archaeological objects with plant information: iconographic (representations and illusions) illustrations of plants in ceramics, paintings, sculptures, coins and all other objects of utilitarian, representation, religious, etc. uses, and (iv) epigraphic (inscriptions on all types of substrates) and written (from classical literary, scientific, technical, agronomical, etc. texts). The considered chronological period ranges from Protohistory to late Antiquity (roughly c. 500 BC – 500 AD), the territorial scope and the botanical thesaurus are those of *Flora dels Països Catalans*. The collected information, obtained from fieldwork, bibliographic sources, documentation repositories and museums, is stored in a database in Microsoft Access format.

At present, the database includes 1.189 documented citations and data obtained from 193 sources, from 255 taxa, mainly spermatophytes, although records of algae, fungi, bryophyte and pteridophyte have also been captured. Records come from 54 (= 63%) *comarques* (counties) and mainly from Iberian and Roman cultural contexts. 42 % are from archaeological objects, whereas 58 % are biological samples.

Examples of catalogued Orientalizing plant elements will be shown, including both artistic/religious illustrations and true plant remains documenting the presence of east-

ern plants in the W. Mediterranean Catalan Countries, mainly of Phoenician/Punic origin, dating back to VI-IV centuries BC.

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