

The Bitter – and Flatulent – Aphrodisiac: Synchrony and Diachrony of the Culinary Use of *Muscati Comosum* in Greece and Italy

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Introduction: *L'amore dell'amaro*¹

While surely all of the world's cuisines exploit each of the five basic tastes – sweetness, sourness, saltiness, bitterness, and umami – there are noteworthy differences of preference between individual cultures. As someone who grew up in the United States but in a family that adhered relatively strictly to Old World and specifically southern Italian foodways, I have long been struck by differences of taste preferences between the mainstream cuisine of the US and my own family's cookery. Of these differences, perhaps the most striking one is the prominence of bitter foods in the southern Italian kitchen against their relative marginality in the American kitchen. Without doubt, this contrast is related to the two cuisines' contrasting orientations: on the one hand, toward traditional small-scale agriculture and horticulture, artisanal production and foraging and on the other hand, toward large-scale agriculture and industrial food processing, with an eye toward ease of preparation and mass-marketing through appeal to the gustatory common denominator. Though by no means a purely American phenomenon, this mass-market approach to food production and consumption was especially well developed in the United States in the course of the twentieth century and resulted in the disappearance in the mainstream cuisine of a host of once commonplace things, from artisanal bread to organ meats to fresh vegetables. And to whatever degree there were bitter items present in the northern European cuisines out of which general American cuisine grew, they were, it seems, all lost.

In a sense then, with the greater prosperity, the greater availability of food in general, there came something of an impoverishment of the range of tastes and an increased focus on the flavours that appeal most to, dare I say it, children. Now, in the period extending over the past, say, twenty-five years, a certain part of the American public has embraced a more eclectic approach to food. And with that, some items that are characterized by their bitterness have suddenly become surprisingly popular and even trendy. I cannot help but marvel at how the German bitter digestive, *Jägermeister*, so much like the *Amaro Lucano* that I grew up with, has now become an essential part of the inebriation rituals of college students throughout the country. A wonderfully bitter vegetable that, when I was growing up, could be found only amongst the 'old school' Italian families, *broccoli di rape*, is now a commonplace on restaurant menus and in

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supermarket chains; much the same can be said for radicchio and chicory. Even the humble dandelion, which – to the horror of my non-Italian childhood friends – we plucked ourselves from the yard to make salads and cooked dishes, is now widely sold, often with multiple varieties on offer.

Italians, like members of other American ethnic minorities, are proud of their traditional cuisine and happy to share it with others, though these positive feelings are also mixed with a sense of dismay and even horror at the ways in which our dishes are sometimes reinterpreted, bastardized, and debased. There is also for some of us, I must confess, a certain melancholy that arises from the realization that foodways that were long peculiar to us and thus important elements of our ethnic identity become, in the course of culinary miscegenation, little more than fleeting status-markers for conspicuous consumers: the mass-marketing of such items cannot help but contribute to the dissolution, for better or worse, of that ethnic identity.

One peculiarly – though not exclusively – southern Italian bitter food item, that has so far not yet been fully 'discovered' and subjected to commercialization in the world gourmet marketplace is the bulb of the *Muscari comosum* or tassel hyacinth. There are broadly speaking two groups of people who know these bulbs as a food: first, those with their cultural roots in parts of Italy, Greece, and Turkey who regard them as a traditional delicacy, and second, those who, as culinary scholars or adventurers, have taken an interest in those regions' cuisines or, as classical scholars, have investigated the frequent references to the bulbs in ancient Greek and Roman literature. Indeed, outside of the areas where *Muscari* bulbs are traditionally consumed, most of the attention they have received has been in connection with their use in antiquity and their contemporary use has been largely neglected. In the following pages I build on what is known of them from classical times and consider the modern names of the bulbs as a means of shedding light on the post-classical history of this bitter bulb.

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***Muscari comosum*: the plant and its many names**

There are some forty species of plants in the *Muscari* genus of the family *Hyacinthaceae*, order *Asparagales*, and thus they are distant relatives of the plants in the family *Alliaceae*, to which belong onions, leeks, and garlic. The *Muscari*, which are native to Eurasia and thrive in the Mediterranean region, are characterized by their bunches of blue and purple flowers. Two species of particular relevance here are *Muscari racemosum*, with its grape-like clusters of flowers, and *Muscari comosum*, with an additional tuft of sterile tassel-like flowers standing up above the cluster of fertile flowers. The English names are 'grape hyacinth' and 'tassel hyacinth' respectively but one finds the name grape hyacinth commonly applied broadly to all members of the genus; an older name one encounters for *Muscari comosum* is 'purse-tassel' and a further scientific designation is *Leopoldia comosa*. The edible bulbs of these hyacinths are reddish, small – roughly nut-sized – and mucilaginous, with a more or less pronounced bitter flavour. Though grape and tassel hyacinths can be and are cultivated, as a food source the bulbs have traditionally been

foraged from where they grow naturally in wild contexts and in marginal spaces around farm fields and roads.

In classical texts, the edible hyacinth bulbs are referred to in Greek as *bolboi* (sing. *bolbos*). This term could also be used to refer to the bulbs of several other plants, including onions and garlic, but in many literary and scientific texts it is used without qualification in clear reference specifically to the *Muscari comosum* for which it was without doubt the primary name (Csapo, 116). The name *bolboi* has been maintained as the basic designation in both the modern Greek standard and in many regional varieties as well, though in some areas other designations are used. For example, on Crete the usual term is *askordoulakoi* (sing. *askordoulakas*), a secondary form that is derived morphologically from the word for garlic, *skordo*, through addition of a complex suffix, presumably with diminutive and affective semantic value. Another such derived word appears in the dialect of Megara, on the isthmus between Attica and the Peloponnese, namely, *brouboúlia*, a suffixed form of *broubes* 'wild edible plants' (cf. standard Greek *brouba* 'herb') (Syrkou 2006, 163). Another term, *koutsomamádes*, appears to be in use in some parts of the Peloponnese and perhaps also on Euboea, though its distribution remains unclear. *Koutsomamádes* seems to be of very restricted use; searches in dialect dictionaries and on the internet have met with little success. Several Greek speakers I consulted have, moreover, never heard the word and it makes little sense to them, though it sounds as if it may be a compound of the colloquial negative prefix *koutso-* 'lame, stunted, bad, etc.' and the word 'mothers,' though how such a term would be semantically linked to *Muscari* is not readily apparent.

The Greek word *bolboi* was itself possibly – and its use in reference to hyacinth bulbs was almost certainly – borrowed by the Romans into Latin and in classical texts in that language the plant is referred to exclusively as *bulbi* (sing. *bulbus*). Confusion regarding the actual plant indicated with this name by some authors (Dalby 1996, 244) and the frequent qualification of the name *bulbus* with, most especially, a reference to its putative Megaran origins – *bulbi Megarici* (Dalby 2000, 145; 2003, 63) inclines one to think that for some sectors of Roman society it was an uncommon or exotic item. This conclusion is supported by the fact that in modern Latin, a.k.a. Italian, the reflex of *bulbus* – *bulbo* – is not used in specific reference to edible hyacinth bulbs, either in the standard or in the dialects. But this is not to say that the *Muscari comosum* is or has not been widely known and consumed in Italy.

The Italian names for the *Muscari comosum* are numerous and deserve to be categorized. First, we can distinguish between learned names derived from the scientific designations for these plants – such as *muscaro*, *muscarino* – and popular names. The popular names can in turn be divided into those that refer semantically to the flowering portion of the plant and those that refer specifically to the bulb. Among the first group are: *giacinto delle vigne* or *delle viti* 'vine hyacinth', *giacinto dal pennacchio* 'plumed hyacinth', and the particularly euphonious *zazzeruto* 'long-haired'.

Of those referring to the bulb, there is a full range of secondary forms based on the names of the edible bulbs of the genus *Allium*, appearing either as derived forms with affective suffixes or else with qualifying adjectives. Interestingly, these names often tend to be fairly restricted in geographical use and within one and the same region a surprising array of names can be encountered, including various forms derived from one or more of the names of the main members of the *Allium* genus. For example, just in the province of Catania (eastern Sicily), one finds in different locales the following names: a) from 'onion' – *cipudazza*, *cipudruzza*, *cipudduzza sarvaggia*, *cipudduzzu*; b) from 'garlic' – *agghioru niuru*; c) from 'leek' – *purrazzu*; in addition, there occurs a further name with at least two variants – *rubittuni*, *trubittuni* – which perhaps refers to the reddish colour of the bulbs; cf. *rubino* 'ruby' and the Nuorese dialect (Sardinia) form *arrubina*.² In general, names derived from the words for 'garlic' and 'leek' are fewer and less widely in use than ones which refer to 'onion' though in some broad areas, for example, parts of Sardinia, 'garlic' forms appear to be dominant. Of the 'onion'-derivatives, the most common formation corresponds to the standard *cipollaccio*, which is 'onion' with the pejorative suffix *-accio* attached (cf. *porrettaccio* 'leek' + *-accio*). But other suffixes are also used, including the augmentative, thus *cipollone*, and the diminutive, *cipolline*, the form used in my family's Campanian dialect. In addition to the derived forms there are also those which combine the word for 'onion' with a qualifying adjective or phrase: *cipolla canina* 'canine', *selvatica* 'wild', *di serpe* 'serpentine' – and, of course, there are many variants exhibiting distinctive dialectal phonological developments of the names and suffixes.³

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There remains one important family of names for *Muscari comosum* to consider here, namely, standard Italian *lampascione* (pl. *lampascioni*), the best-known such name outside of Italy. In the region of Puglia, dialectal variants of this word are the dominant and perhaps exclusive appellation for edible hyacinth bulbs, with variation involving not just slightly differing dialectal phonological developments but also non-lautgesetzlich deformation of the initial consonant and reformations of the suffix; among the forms cited by Rohlfs (1955/1959) for just the dialects of the Salentine peninsula (the 'heel of the boot') are: *lampascioni*, *lampasciuni*, *ampascioni*, *ampasciulu*, *pampascione*, *pampasciulu*, *vampascione*. Related forms are found to the north throughout Puglia and further variants have also been reported from Campania to the west, e.g. *lampagione*, *lampascione*, *vampasciuolo* (Hammer et al., 237), though derivatives of the word for 'onion' are widespread in much of Campania (*cipollina*, *cipollaccio*), as well as in Basilicata (*cevoddine*, *cipuddènè*) and in Calabria (*lampascione* but also *cipujuzzu*, *cipullazza*) (Rohlfs, 1977). Further afield, in central and southern Sardinia, alongside 'garlic'- and 'onion'-derivatives one also finds forms in the *lampascione*-family: *lampajoni*, *lampajone*, *lampaone* (Rubattu).

Finally, there are two alloclot speech-communities in southern Italy whose names for *Muscari* bulbs can be noted. The Albanian-speaking Arbëreshë of Basilicata have borrowed an 'onion'-derived form – *çëpuljin* – from the neighbouring Lucanian dialects

(Pieroni et al., 174). In Puglia, the Greek (*Griku*) dialects of the Salentine peninsula employ a form – *lampaiúne* – belonging to the *lampascione*-family of names used in the surrounding Pugliese dialects (Rohlfs 1964, 289).

We will consider below the etymology of the *lampascione*-family but only after we examine further the properties and historical uses of *Muscaria comosum*.

***Qui Veneris ostium quaerunt... ‘those who seek the harbour of Venus’*⁴**

From the extant discussions of *bolboi/bulbi* in classical Greek and Roman texts, there are a number of things that we can infer about the consumption of *Muscaria comosum* bulbs in antiquity.⁵

First, it seems clear that among the Greeks *bolboi* were a well-known and reasonably common food, though it is difficult to say how widely – both geographically and socially – they were consumed. That there was a range of usual preparations for them among the Greeks is indicated by Galen and the evidence he offers is corroborated in other Greek and Roman texts: ‘There are many different recipes for them: they can be boiled in water, as I have said, elaborately seasoned dishes can be made with them, they can be served fried, and they are popularly baked in the ashes’ (Grant, 150). Implied here is that in opposition to the elaborately seasoned dishes with boiled *bolboi*, there were also simply seasoned dishes of boiled (and possibly also raw) *bolboi*, as likely reflected in a recipe that appears in the Roman *Apicius*: ‘Serve bulbs in oil, *liquamen*, vinegar, sprinkle with a little cumin’ (Grocock & Grainger, 253). More elaborate seasonings for *bolboi* are mentioned by Philemon, which are in his opinion required to make palatable the otherwise ‘poor and bitter’ vegetable: ‘Look, if you please, at the bulb, and see what lavish expense it requires to have its reputation – cheese, honey, sesame-seed, oil, onion, vinegar, silphium’ (cited in Athenaeus vol. I, 281). Actual recipes of a more elaborate nature are offered in *Apicius*: one involves cooking the bulbs, then frying them in oil and dressing them in a sauce of thyme, pennyroyal, pepper, oregano, honey, a little vinegar and, optionally, *liquamen*; a second recipe calls for the bulbs being boiled and pressed into a pan and served with a sauce of thyme, oregano, honey, vinegar, *defrutum*, date, *liquamen*, and oil (Grocock & Grainger, 253–55). Fried bulbs could also receive the simple treatment of being dressed just with *oenogarum* (*ibid*).

A further, seemingly very humble dish that was apparently well known in classical Greece deserves special mention here, namely, *bolbophakē*, a soup made of tassel hyacinth bulbs and lentils. This soup was thought of as hearty, stick-to-the-bones fare, judging from a passage by Chrysippus, cited in Athenaeus (vol. II, 221): ‘In the winter season, a bulb-and-lentil soup, oh me, oh my! For bulb-and-lentil soup is like ambrosia in the chilly cold.’ *Bolbophakē* is mentioned in at least one other place, again in a citation in Athenaeus (vol. VI, 151), this time in an anecdote from Lynceus, where the soup is served, as Dalby (2003, 64) puts it, ‘at a courtesan’s establishment,’ namely that of the particularly well-regarded and witty Gnathaena, and is accidentally spilled by the men who were drinking in her house.

What this anecdote calls to mind indirectly is the association in classical times of *bolboi* and sex, for the Greeks and the Romans both believed that tassel hyacinth bulbs had noteworthy aphrodisiac power. Indeed, most classical literary references to the bulbs are at least partly concerned with that aspect of them. Regarding *bolboi*, Galen says ‘some men who fill up on their food feel quite clearly that they hold their semen and are keener for sex’ (Grant, 150). Further citations on this topic appear densely in a passage on *bolboi* in the second book of Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophists* (vol. I, 277–9):

- a) Alexis, dwelling on the aphrodisiac properties of bulbs, says: ‘Pinnas, crayfish, bulbs, snails, buccina, eggs, extremities, and all that. If anyone in love with a girl shall find any drugs more useful than these...’
- b) from Xenarchus: ‘That house perisheth whose master’s fate it is to lose his virile powers... Impotent is that house, and even the bung-necked comrade of the goddess Deo, the earth-born bulb, so helpful to its friends when boiled, has no power to save it now...’
- c) from Heracleides of Tarentum: ‘Bulbs, snails, eggs, and the like are supposed to produce semen, not because they are filling, but because their very nature in the first instance has powers related in kind to semen.’
- d) from Dilphilus: ‘Although bulbs are not easy to digest, yet they are nourishing and wholesome; further, they are purgative, they dull the eyesight, and they rouse sexual desire.’
- e) citing a proverb: ‘A bulb will do you no good unless you have the qualities of a man.’

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Several Roman writers also mention the aphrodisiac power of tassel hyacinth bulbs and there are two such references in verse, one from Ovid (*Art of Love* book II, lines 421–4) and the other from Columella, which refer specifically to the variety from Megara: ‘Let hyacinths’ fruitful seed from Megara come, which sharpen men’s desires and fit them for the girls...’ (vol. III, 15). Note too Pliny’s comment in his passage on various kinds of bulbs: ‘venerem maxime Megarici stimulant’ (*Pliny* vol. VI, 63). In Petronius’ *Satyricon* (p. 341), bulbs are invoked along with snails as treatments for impotence and Varro, cited in the section devoted to tassel hyacinth recipes in *Apicius*, indicates that they may have been routinely featured at wedding banquets: ‘If I have said anything about bulbs, those who seek the harbour of Venus should have them cooked in water, and they can be served at dinner when a marriage takes place, but they can also be served with pine nuts or with the juice of rocket and pepper’ (Grocock & Grainger, 255).

While the Roman comments on *bulbi* most often refer to their alleged aphrodisiac quality and, moreover, often refer to them in that context as 'Megaran,' it seems reasonable to suspect that they were to some degree at least regarded as an exotic and luxury item. Taking the Greek comments as a whole, however, there does not seem to be any corresponding special attitude toward the bulbs among the Hellenes. The aforementioned discussion of *bolboi* by Galen seems to imply that they were a common food and one can draw a similar inference from two additional comments on them cited in Athenaeus: a) Diocles of Carystus is quoted as saying 'Wild vegetables fit to boil are the beet, mallow, sorrel, nettle, orach, [*bolboi*], truffles and mushrooms' (vol. I, 267);⁶ b) Plato, in portraying his new citizens at dinner in the second book of the *Republic* is quoted writing '... they will have a relish also, such as salt, of course, and olives, and cheese; and they will cook bulbs [*bolbois*] and green vegetables, the sort of which they make boiled dishes in the country' (vol. II, 131). To the Greeks then, it seems that *bolboi* had more of a rustic association than an exotic one.

There is no question but that the wealthier and literate sectors of Roman society were in matters cultural strongly attracted to and influenced by the Greeks and, judging from the extant literature from antiquity, this was no less – and perhaps even more – the case regarding culinary interests and tastes than matters in other cultural spheres. This Hellenophilia they displayed, as Dalby says, by their 'employing Greek or eastern cooks, by importing and paying high prices for Greek and eastern delicacies, by assiduously transplanting Greek and eastern plant varieties, by adopting Greek names for foods and for finished dishes' (1996, 198). And besides the influence the Greeks exercised on the Romans in the culinary sphere, they also had a central influence regarding the related field of diet and medicine (cf. Dalby 2000, 122), and it is clear that tassel hyacinth bulbs were thought of as having other effects on health, positive and negative, beside that of aphrodisiac (Grant, 150).

With these matters in mind, it seems natural to surmise that the use of tassel hyacinth bulbs in Rome may have been just one of the innumerable instances of a high cultural import from Greece. But from this it would be wrong to conclude further that the bulbs themselves or their consumption or even their use as an aphrodisiac were genuinely or generally foreign to ancient Italy. On the contrary, one must first bear in mind that Greek influence in Italy was not merely a cultural phenomenon that belonged to the upper echelons of society. Rather, the Greek presence and influence was also significant for the broader population of Italy by means of the presence of Greek merchants, artisans, and slaves. Perhaps more important for the case at hand, one must also remember that in the centuries preceding the founding of Rome itself, the Greeks settled extensively along the coasts of southern Italy and Sicily as well. Insofar as those settlers were in the habit of consuming *bolboi* in Greece, they surely continued the practice upon arrival in the colonies of Magna Græcia, where the tassel hyacinth also naturally occurred in the wild.

Viagra antiquitatis

Though tassel hyacinths are nowadays cultivated for their edible bulbs, they were and still are to a degree a wild food for which knowledgeable people forage, just as was the case in classical antiquity. Such wild foods have traditionally constituted an important nutritional supplement to the basic diet for rural populations and also a source of folk medicines, many of which have demonstrable pharmaceutical value. In the case of *Muscari comosum*, we note that the Roman physician Dioscorides (first century AD.) wrote that tassel hyacinth, boiled with barley meal and pig's fat, caused tumorous growths to suppurate and break up, which is remarkable in light of the fact that a tassel hyacinth extract is currently used in chemotherapy for cancer (Riddle, 100).

While *Muscari comosum* does have some real medicinal qualities, its most famous rôle as *viagra antiquitatis* seems – to this writer and life-long consumer of the bulbs – dubious. But there are good reasons why people believed the bulbs have aphrodisiac power. First, the bulbs do have a demonstrable diuretic effect, recognized and commented on by the ancients. Second, *Muscari* bulbs contain a mucilaginous liquid and its viscous quality was identified with that of semen, as can be seen from the quote above from Heracleides; other foods associated with viscous and gelatinous liquids – snails, eggs, cows' feet, etc. – were likewise thought to be sexually strengthening for men. Third, in the particular case of tassel hyacinth bulbs, there is a striking physical resemblance between them and surgically exposed testicles, given the basic shape of the bulb, their reddish colour and the relation of bulb to stem (resembling vaguely the *vas deferens*); add to this that the flower bulb is itself a generative organ and it seems clear that, in terms of the metonymy of magic (as opposed to scientific) thinking, the tassel hyacinth bulb is a vegetal analogue of the testicle and through consumption its force is transferred to the eater.

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Lampascioni: torches, testicles and tomfools

Earlier we delayed offering an etymology for the Italian name for the tassel hyacinth, *lampascione*, though it is, in fact, remarkably straightforward at one level.

The form *lampascione* and all its dialectal variants can be traced back to a Late Latin *lampadio-lampadionis* (Rohlfs 1956, 285). From a phonological standpoint, the one point of interest is the development of the cluster [-dy-] which in the particular form *lampascione*, used now in standard Italian, shows a non-standard/non-Tuscan and specifically south-eastern development, proper to the dialects of Puglia and neighbouring parts of Basilicata and Campania. Clearly, standard Italian has borrowed a south-eastern form, which is not surprising, given the prominence of tassel hyacinths in Pugliese cuisine and the lack of any cognate of *lampascione* or any other unique word for the bulbs in a culinary context from Tuscany or elsewhere in central and northern Italy. Yet, note that there are dialectally *lautgesetzlich* forms attested for far-flung Sardinia, where [-dy-] develops not to [-š-] but to [-y-], e.g. *lampajoni* (*vide supra*). Whether these forms developed in Sardinia directly from *lampadio(-ne)* or were borrowed from

the Neapolitan dialect area, they indicate the previous existence of a larger area in which the tassel hyacinth had a name of this family.

The earliest attestations of *lampadio* are in the Latin translations of the Greek medical texts of Oribasius. There were two separate translations, the first of which likely dates to the sixth century AD with the second having been made not much later; both were made at or for the Ostrogothic court in Ravenna (Mørland, 16). One form occurs in the translation of the Synopsis, namely, *lampadiones*, the 'proper' Latin form (Molinier, 11). In the translation of the Euporistes, however, we find a striking set of forms from the two translations: two forms are found in manuscripts of the older translation, the conservative *lampadiones* but also *lampajonis*, and from the corresponding passage in the younger translation we find *lampagionis* (p. 444); these forms clearly reflect stages in the dialectal developments of the [-dy-] cluster.

The etymology of Late Latin *lampadio* itself deserves consideration and again, the basic facts are straightforward: this form is a borrowing from the Greek *lampadion*, a diminutive of *lampás* 'torch, oil-lamp, (metaphorically) the sun'. The semantic link of this word to the tassel hyacinth is obvious if one considers the appearance of the flower: the 'tassel' or shock of flowers that stand straight up from the top of the plant resemble in form the flames of a torch.⁷ In other words, the name *lampadio* for tassel hyacinth surely was originally inspired by the flowering top of the plant, rather than the edible bulb.

Perhaps also relevant to the development of *lampadio* as name for the tassel hyacinth is the fact that in Latin it also served as a personal name; for example, *Lampadio* is the name of a slave in Plautus' comedy *Cistelleria* and it was also the name of one of the earliest Latin grammarians, C. Octavius Lampadio, commentator on Naevius, who himself wrote a play named for a character *Lampadio*. Could this moniker in later times have come to be thought of as a proverbial dunce's name? In any event, it is clear that at some point, the primary reference of *lampadio(-ne)* was switched from the flower to the bulb and so the word, at least in some dialects, was available for broader, figurative application, with a fortuitous coincidence of vegetal and genital references that renders it uniquely appropriate as a term of abuse meaning, roughly, 'imbecile'.⁸

Së magna nGrecia e purë mMagna Grecia

The development of the southern Italian name *lampadio/lampascione* etc. for the tassel hyacinth must be seen as a reflection of the popular use of the plant from classical times on. The original distribution seems to have corresponded to a high degree with the area in which the bulbs are still eaten today and that, in turn, corresponds to the broad area of southern Italy which in antiquity was comprised of the Greek colonies, mostly on the coast, and the neighbouring interior areas, where the local Italic peoples came under strong cultural influence from the Greeks early on. Though it would be unwise to conclude that consumption of the bulbs was strictly the result of Greek influence, the textual and linguistic evidence suggests strongly that the popularity of the tassel hyacinth in southern Italy reflects in good measure the deep cultural impact of Greece on the area.

Notes

1. Many thanks to Amy Dahlstrom, Giannis Bertakis, Catherine Chatzopoulos, Eleni Staraki, Aristidis Vouzakis.
2. For the names from Catania, see Lentini & Venza 2007 and the supplemental list of plant names: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/supplementary/1746-4269-3-15-S2.pdf>. For the Nuorese form, see Rubattu 2006 at: [http://www.toninorubattu.it/ita/NU-A3\(ar-az\).htm](http://www.toninorubattu.it/ita/NU-A3(ar-az).htm); for a comprehensive list of Sardinian dialect forms, see the entry for 'cipollaccio': <http://www.toninorubattu.it/ita/C2.htm>.
3. For a useful list of Italian names sorted by region, see: http://www.dymi.gr/www.dymi.gr/eu_progr_grundtvig_recipes_italy_general_el.html. For other Italian names, with pictures and information about the plant, see: <http://www.dipbot.unict.it/alimurgiche/scheda.aspx?i=24>.
4. Varro apud Apicius, translation by Grocock & Grainger 2006, 255.
5. For a brief but excellent introduction to the topic with extensive references to the classical literature, see the entry for 'bulb' in Dalby 2003, 63–4.
6. Gulik translates *bolboi* incorrectly as 'iris-bulbs' here and in other passages.
7. <http://www.losgazquez.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/tassel-hyacinth.jpg>.
8. *Lampascione* manifests the union of two themes of abuse: 1) *imbecille vegetale*: *citrullo* 'cucumber', *cucozza* 'zucchini', *testa di cavolo* 'cabbage-head', *testa di rapa* 'turnip-head'; 2) *imbecille genitale*: *coglione* 'testicle', *minchione* 'prick', *testa di cazzo* 'dick-head'. Armando Polito, on an Italian chat-site, makes this connection as well: http://forum.dialettando.com/forum_new/show_thread.lasso?mode=..

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