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Understanding myths in medicine: A discussion of the mythological narratives in an herbal treatise

The Egyptian medical corpus contains a wealth of information on myths, both in the form of simple references or allusions to them but also entire mythological narratives. The overall purpose of the myths is to situate disease and treatment within the divine realm in order to function as explanatory models. A unique herbal treatise dating to the New Kingdom contains a number of myths, both well-attested accounts and entirely obscure ones. Proper understanding of the content and purpose of the treatise is contingent on comprehension of these myths which revolve around the Heliopolitan Ennead, namely the gods Osiris, Horus, Seth, and Nut. In this talk, I present the myths recorded in the herbal and discuss how they are used as well as how they were adapted to fit the context of the herbal.