

CROCO E ZAFFERANO A XESTE 3

BOTANICA, ETIMOLOGIA, AFFRESCHI

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ABSTRACT

Xeste 3 frescoes depict a spring setting with a flower identified as autumnal and sterile (so cultivated) *Crocus sativus*. *Crocus sativus*, however, blossoms in autumn so that its presence in a spring setting is justified with temporal hiatus (from collecting to offering), or hypothesizing a missing scenes (desiccation process).

For the flower identification the author, helped by botany and etymology, compares many species confused with the *Crocus sativus* during time such as the *Carthamus*, the *Colchicum*, the *Curcuma* and also the *Sternbergia*, concluding that the represented flower does not coincide with any of them and therefore can refer to a no more existing species. If, on other hand, we have to admit that it is a *Crocus*, Minoan representations attest its harvest but not its cultivation (so it can not be *sativus*) while Micenean texts confirm its cultivation, with scarce harvest from many sites.

To support it can't be *sativus*, the same frescoes from Xesté 3 are analyzed.

If they describe a life's celebration in a typical spring context, an autumnal flower is out of place. If they show an initiatory rite or a rite of passage, the offering of a near home cultivated flower is also out of place, because such rites imply fresh offerings, obtained through dolor (the bloody foot) and strain. A different interpretation for the meaning of the flower in the frescoes is therefore proposed, and it is that it symbolizes the Four Elements (water, earth, air and fire). Finally, a possible use of crocus in textile manufacture is proposed, together with a possible use the adyton as a regeneration space.