

Aegyptus et Pannonia VII.



Acta Symposií anno 2021

BUDAPEST

Aegyptus et Pannonia VII.

Acta Symposii anno 2021

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Plants and Health Conference 2021, and the Proceedings

Dr. Hedvig Győry PhD

HEFT AEC president

In 2021, the HEFS Ancient Egyptian Committee, in partnership with the HNM Semmelweis Museum of Medical History, organised an international conference entitled “*Plants and Health from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day*”. The three-day conference focused on topics related to the application of plant material in medicine, but also included other topics connected to the use of plants in any practical or theoretical area of human life. We planned four sections with the following keywords:

History of healing and nutrition from the time of ancient Egypt to the present day

Which plants were used for healing, how, where, by whom and when, which plants were used to maintain health, or prevent disease in different parts of the world; what did people eat in everyday life, what were the festive foods/drinks, what were the expected results; and what are the related issues raised by ethnographic research.

Medicines and pharmaceutical science in historical periods in the light of sources

Who, how and why recorded knowledge of medicine in each period; what principles were used to treat patients or maintain health; what were/are the popular explanations of these issues or principles.

Herbal medicine and contemporary medicine

According to our current knowledge, what can we assess about the active ingredients of a given plant, the mechanism of action and its intensity, and what biochemical relationships can be discerned from their interactions.

Religious views and beliefs about plants

By whom, where, when, and what special magical properties have been attributed to plants, what is the role of plants in the social context, how is it explained, and how have plants been incorporated into everyday life/celebrations or healing practices

The conference was held between 14 and 16 October 2021 with 40 presentations. Due to the COVID pandemic, circumstances did not allow for a face-to-face meeting, so the event was entirely online. However, the possibilities offered by the Internet also allowed for smaller group discussions. The topics presented included the appearance and use of plants in different times and places, from ancient Egypt to contemporary Europe. They were divided into thematic and language (English and Hungarian) sessions, led by recognised scholars. After the lectures, it was possible to discuss the issues raised in front of the general public, and topics of narrower interest could be further discussed in separate rooms created within the Zoom system. Valuable contacts were made and new research ideas were generated. A small exhibition was also organised by the HNM Semmelweis Museum of Medical History for the occasion, as we had hoped until the last minute that the pandemic situation would change. However, it was only available to personal visitors.



During the conference it was possible to learn about new methods, we exchanged ideas and heard about research results and ongoing projects. A significant part of the presentations were given in English, the other part in Hungarian, but the papers included in the proceedings are all in English. The first part of the proceedings, as a result of the presentations and discussions, is published in this volume; the other part can be read in the next volume of the Aegyptus et Pannonia series.

Although not all the presentations are published, most of the aspects we covered are included in the volumes. The programme covered a wider range of topics: We were able to learn about plant finds from recent Egyptian archaeological excavations, the identification and use of plants in textual sources, religious connotations, and even the possibility of reconstructing perfumes. We could also look at the trade in plants between the Hittite Empire and Egypt, and learn which plants were used by the Copts in the Middle Ages. The latest research on Roman herbaria was discussed, and hitherto unknown ancient Egyptian texts were presented. Other presentations were devoted to the reproduction of some medicines based on ancient recipes. In one of the lectures we saw on video the process of preparation and examination of an ancient Egyptian medicine. Several papers dealt with temporal and spatial changes in the everyday and liturgical use and interpretation of a given plant, e.g. pomegranate in Greece. In India, Soma. In Hungary, thorn apple. In Estonia, pelargonium. In Finland and the Arctic, roseroot. And in the Arabian desert of Egypt, the apple of Sodom. The role of plants in religious ceremonies and concepts was also discussed, as well as the variety and significance of the scent they produce.

The lectures presented a wide range of the application of herbs in ancient and medieval medical methodology, with the help of Egyptian, Greek, Anatolian, and Hungarian herbariums. The conference participants were the first to hear that many ancient Egyptian medicines can still be found in the medieval Welsh medicinal knowledge. We also learned that a significant part of Dioscorides' usage of herbs could also be observed in Anatolian folk medicine. Lectures were given on the wide range of magical effects attributed to plants, spanning from antiquity to the Renaissance, in terms of iatromagic, iatromathematics, and iatromythology.

In separate sections, the participants were introduced to Hungarian ethnobotanical research, where, in addition to the methods of the way of collecting ethnobotanical data throughout Transylvania, the lecturers presented both the botanical aspects and the therapeutic potential of the plants included in the various Hungarian medicinal herbariums and pharmacopeias. In addition to the knowledge of plants preserved in the Hungarian witch-trial documents of the 15th to 19th centuries, the possibilities of historical and folk use against various diseases – such as tuberculosis and cholera – were also presented, and in connection with diabetes and surgery we also visited India and China. We got again an idea of how wound care has changed over the centuries, how plants have influenced the toolkit of surgeons, and which plants are still used in modern wound management. In connection with the Székesfehérvár Pharmacy Museum, an overview of the museum's extensive educational activities was presented in addition to its history. We have got acquainted also with the the most important medical tariff book of Hungary in the 18th century and the drawer labels of five apothecary furniture of the same period.

The approach to the flora of ancient Egypt is also diverse, and the study of the Ancient Near Eastern relations encompasses several scientific fields, such as Assyriology, Hittiteology and Biblical studies. The classical Greco-Roman world is also included in the next volume to facilitate comparison. In addition to history, interdisciplinarity also extends to other branches of the humanities, such as – among others – archaeology, history, linguistics, ethnography, philology, the history of religion and magic or iatromathematics.

In recent decades, the development of the sciences has moved in the direction of interdisciplinary cooperation, not only between related sciences, but also between seemingly distant branches of science. In addition to textual and material sources, the results and methods of the natural sciences are of fundamental importance for a more precise understanding of the past. The role of analyses and investigation of the various materials is thus becoming increasingly important, complementing traditional descriptive studies. As we also wanted to play a role in this process, several areas of natural science, such as archaeobotany, phylogenetics, types of data investigation and plant breeding, or various facets of medicine and medical history are also represented in the proceedings.

In this volume, we publish 11 studies that approach the world of plants from different perspectives within the broad framework of the conference. The focus is on ancient Egypt, but the articles also look at other areas. In addition to the data found in the articles and the results obtained, the methodological and theoretical approaches raise many new ideas, give exciting results and draw attention to various possibilities. For example, the multifaceted role of medicinal plants in the museum world or their application from the perspective of medical history and ethnomedicine.

With this volume, we hope to arouse interest in the unique world of the past, especially Egypt, to bring closer the world of nature and its possible effects on human life, and to encourage the birth of further results that will make the ancient Egyptian world better known and our own world better understood.

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Ancient Egyptian Committee



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HERBS IN THE “MIRACLE PHARMACY”

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ABSTRACT

Among the museum education and public education programs of the Fekete Sas Pharmacy Museum in Székesfehérvár, the dissemination of knowledge about medicinal plants has been emphasized for several years. Several of our exhibitions were based on this, together with the events related to them. („*Once upon a time there were medicinal herbs*”, „*The land of plants*”, „*Love of herbs*”) We placed a PLANT-STROKING stand in front of the entrance, which, in addition to its decorativeness, makes you want to visit the permanent exhibition, learn about medicinal herbs, and is also an integral part of our children’s activity programs.

One of our most important initiatives is the series of herb collecting tours organized for the seventh year in the framework of the HERBARIUS programs. During the fall and winter off-seasons, we welcome the public with educational interactive presentations, where our trained herbalist expert gives advice on the use of the collected materials. We also produced puzzles, reviews and other handouts. The books and professional articles that can be browsed in the exhibition help find the way around, and the PERFUME BOX located here, which aims to present various plant fragrances, also arouses the interest of the audience.

KEY WORDS: pharmacy, herbs, Székesfehérvár, museum, education

INTRODUCTION

When I joined the Szent István Király (King St. Stephen) Museum in Székesfehérvár (5, Fő u., www.szikm.hu) in 2004, the Fekete Sas (Black Eagle) Apothecary Museum (see next page) was almost 30 years old. The former Jesuit apothecary soon turned out to be the perfect place to disseminate knowledge about the history of the place. Previously, there had been no museum education here, and no temporary exhibitions on any subject apart from the permanent exhibition, which shows the beautiful furnishings of the former pharmacy. I started to plan how to get started, but I had no idea about

the history of pharmacy. I knew, however, that the “spirit of the place” would help, as the pharmacy in the heart of the city, with its old baroque interior, promised much more than what appears at the first glance. Slowly, the vision of the Csodapatika (Miracle Pharmacy) began to take shape.



I found an excellent master teacher in the person of Dr. István Grabarits, a pharmacist from Kalocsa, to whom I owe a great deal. From him I received guidance, literature and many useful tips for my work, as well as a small basic kit of essential oils. It was clear from the beginning that the introduction to the world of medicinal plants would be an integral part of the knowledge to be imparted. I wanted to present as many aspects of herbs as possible, to make them visible, touchable, smellable and even tasty.

The museum programme started with children’s activities and then expanded to include exhibitions, lectures and even outdoor herbal events.

THE BEGINNING

I held the first children’s workshop at the Pharmacy Museum in the autumn of 2005, its title was “Medicine in grass and trees”. It is still our most popular museum education programme. It is about the history of our pharmacy and the particularities of the old pharmacist’s profession. This is followed by a botanical introduction, during which important, well-known medicinal plants are discussed.





From spring to autumn, our Plant-Stroking (Növénysimogató) stand in front of the pharmacy introduces the programme on the street, where you can even sniff and taste, for example, chives, rocket or stevia. It also helps passers-by to monitor the continuous development of the plants. Every year since 2015, we have planted it with fragrant and interesting herbs; this pleasant spot of colour on the Fő street of the city has become a favourite of the public.

Here I usually present the special blue essential oils of chamomile and yarrow, and mint, linked to menthol, or thymol, the active ingredient in thyme. The children love it, but the plants also inspire passers-by on the street to visit the museum.

It's a good opportunity to use the inscriptions on the drawers of the former furniture in our *officina* (it means “*workshop*” in Latin) and the containers, to help us in our work. Deciphering the Latin cartouches is another way of discovering interesting facts. We can look at plants or pictures of plants, but the real pleasure is always in the plant drugs, sniffing the herbs, tasting the rose hips tea or the sugar made of the common horehound. We discuss medicinal properties and other interesting fields of use. There is also a poetry section, Tamás Falu's poem “Chamomile” is our favourite. In winter, when live plants are not available, I give the children pressed and laminated herbs. This method always works, not to mention that it is great even as decoration. We also look at the bouquets of herbs lined up around the walls, but we don't usually take them in hand. The lessons are accompanied by a workbook with various exercises, drawings and crosswords.



Alongside these we also organise annual chamber exhibitions in the Fekete Sas. We organised the first one in 2006, entitled “Once Upon a Time There Were Herbs” (Egyszer volt gyógyfüvek), together with the Department of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants of the University of Horticulture, Budapest. In addition to the description of the drugs, the material presented included artistic plant illustrations and a good number of poems from the Hungarian Literary Herbarium collection published at that time. Then came the exhibition “Scented Pharmacy Containers” (Illatos patikaedények).

This was accompanied by thematic sessions and a smellable collection for the public. Rosewater, essential oils, menthol, thymol, camphor, frankincense, myrrh, cat's-root, aloe vera powder, etc. completed our existing stock, accompanied by a leaflet with a description of



the scented substances. There are now 77 different substances to sniff and some to taste (Wasabi).

Our Pharmacy’s Plant Box (Illatszertár) has also grown over the years. It was important to include not only delicious but also distinctly unpleasant herbal fragrances. We also present solid, liquid and even volatile substances, oils, balsams, dried plants and spices, such as *ferula asa foetida*, cat’s-root, patchouli, in addition to the pleasant peru balsam, rose oil or coumarin. In order to make the knowledge transfer and interactivity as varied as possible, we also include, for example, the use of a mortar, which was one of the basic activities of the old apothecary. Mustard seeds, aniseed and pepper are crushed and packed to take home. Tasting herbal teas and syrups is also practised here.

BIRTH AND ACTIVITY OF THE „MIRACLE PHARMACY”

In 2010, we won an EU grant, and several of our plans have come true. The project was called “*Miracle Pharmacy (Csodapatika) – from alchemy to naturopathy*”. It allowed us to buy materials, equipment and create a workshop room. More than 300 museum education programmes were held, as well as an Open University lecture-series, “*The Secret History of Healing*”. In the field of archaeology, one of our lecturers introduced us to the secrets of archaeobotany. The grant also made it possible to have a model of a pharmacy



laboratory to illustrate the tools of the profession, and the old drug-drying floor.

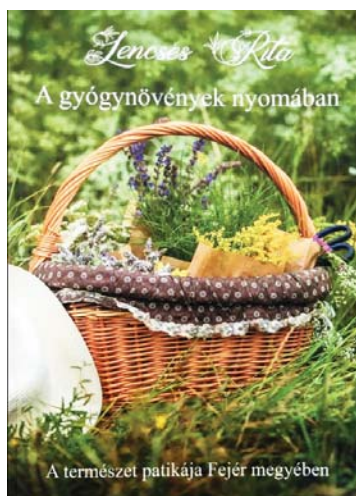
We have also made progress in the field of art. In the summer of 2012, we staged two of Ervin Lázár’s apothecary-themed tales, performed by the Szabad Színház (Free Theatre) of Fehérvár. „*Miracle Pharmacy*” and „*Beans Berci and the Miraculous Nectar*” were staged

in the *officina* to the great delight of the audience. There have been more than 50 performances so far. (In the story of Bab Berci, the thousands of names of the common horsetail are the cause of the trouble.)

Since 2010 we have been participating in the „*Night of Museums*”, where we decorate our pharmacy with bouquets of the latest herbs (St. John’s wort, lavender, linden, thyme, poppy, etc.) Our puzzles on different themes are popular, which require searching, sniffing and tasting to solve. There are also arts and crafts activities for the enjoyment of young and old alike, making scented pillows, bath salts enchanted with essential oils, mini drug collections and thousands more. We also offer guided tours and lectures, give herbal poems, postcards to the individual visitors to take away, and the opportunity to try the fragrance pharmacy and how to use the pestle in the mortar.

In 2015 we organised an exhibition of old herbal books entitled “*The Land of the Plants*” (Növények országa), which told the story of the development of botany as a science. In 2016 “*Spices-Love*” (Fűszerelem) followed it, which took us into the fascinating world of spices. In 2018, in the framework of the Fehérvár Baroque Year, we presented the medicinal herb and ornamental gardens belonging to the former Jesuit monastery and pharmacy with the chamber exhibition “*Horticulturing Monks*” (Kertészkedő szerzetesek).

Also in 2015, we started our herb collecting tours under the Herbarius programme, from March to October. For 7 years we have been collecting herbs and fruits in locations near Székesfehérvár, led by a well-trained physiotherapist, Rita Lencsés. Last Christmas we published the related booklet entitled “*In the Wake of Herbs. The Nature’s Pharmacy in Fejér County*” (A gyógynövények nyomában – A természet



patikája Fejér megyében), which describes 45 medicinal plants. During the winter season, monthly interactive educational programmes are held at the Fekete Sas Pharmacy Museum, where you can





get concrete practical advice on the use of medicinal plants.

When the opportunity arises, we also participate in festivals and popular events. We usually hold our programmes in tents to attract the public. We offer interactive puzzles, arts and craft programmes and herbal demonstrations. Most recently, we participated in the *European Ornamental Plant and Garden Art Days* (Európai Dísznövény és Kertművészeti Napok) in Fehérvárcsurgó. On these occasions we also distributed our leaflets: Herbal colouring book, Poetry book, Puzzle collection, Apothecary tales, etc.

CONCLUSION

We no longer operate as a pharmacy, but – with these many activities – the most important aim of our work is to continue to make herbs known to the widest possible audience, young and old, as this is for the benefit and healing of all. We are looking for new ways to do this, because we want to share our “treasures” with as many people as possible. Therefore, we welcome everyone to continue or start to visit our Miracle Pharmacy in Székesfehérvár!





NATIONAL HERBARIUM OF DENMARK
BOTANICAL GARDEN, ARSLENGÅVE
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COPENHAGEN S



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MUSEUM BOTANICUM
HAUNIENSE



Museum Botanicum Hauniense



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Universitetets botaniske Museum,
Gothersgade 130, København K.

1830 1149

These plants has been cultivated in Hort. Bot. in
Copenhagen from seeds received from Paris in 1803.
To Paris came these seeds from Egypt with the label:
"Bupleurium d' Egypte Nectoux O. P. sur Ch."
O. Lagreëus.



Bupleurium d' Egypte
Nectoux O. P. sur Ch.
Original collection
1803

ОБРАЗЦА ДЛЯ ФЛОРИ СССР
Bupleurum lancifolium Hornem.
Typus!
1949. Teste I. Lincevski

MUSEUM BOTANICUM
HAUNIENSE

MUSEUM BOTANICUM
HAUNIENSE

! Bupleurum lancifolium
Hornem.
LECTOTYPE
Sven Snogerup Nov. 2000

Lectotype of
Bupleurum lancifolium Hornem.
Susana S. Neves Jan. 2000