

Book of Medicinal Simples [=Pharmaceutical Ingredients]

In French, manuscript on paper

Northern France, 1567

i + 262 + i folios on paper, four watermarks partially obscured in the binding: a crest with a five fleur-de-lys crown and letters JS (not found in Gravell, Briquet, or Bernstein); a hand extending from a cuff (similar to Briquet 11408, Beauvais, 1548, with many variants 1475-1548); a decorated jug with one handle and a cross on the lid (probably Briquet 12826, Paris, 1556-1561, Amiens, 1561, St-Germain-en-Laye, 1561, Paris, 1561-1562, Orléans, 1568); and a crown with three fleur-de-lys and rounded bottom (generally similar to Briquet 4750, Paris, 1485); original foliation in ink, occasional erroneous modern foliation in pencil, and correct modern foliation in pencil all at top outer corner recto, collation impracticable due to tight binding, no ruling, variable justification, with spacious margins on the right-hand side and bottom of all text, written in several sixteenth-century French Bâtarde hands ranging from tidy and precise to hastily executed, in black and brown ink in c. 25-c. 35 long lines, occasional moisture staining on top, bottom, and outer edges with some loss of text, rubrics, and original foliation at top, some small stains and blotches gained during use, rare incidents of worming, but overall good condition. Bound in late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century soft beige suede over pasteboard, stains on front and back covers with six deep scratches on front, once fastened with ties (remnants visible through pastedowns on inside covers), "R50" in modern pencil on inside front cover, sewn on four bands, restoration of spine, head and tail bands, edges of cover, and pastedowns. Dimensions 203 x 145 mm.

With around 1000 entries on plants, animals, minerals, and chemicals from the mundane (sorrel and nutmeg) to exotic (hippopotamus and mummies), this manuscript is an excellent witness to pharmaceutical and therapeutic knowledge in early modern France. It includes Latin-French and French-Latin glossaries. The history of pharmacy remains understudied, and the present volume, which is possibly unique and certainly unedited, offers exceptional research opportunities.

PROVENANCE

1. The last folio of the French-Latin index (f. 56) is dated November 19, 1567; as this section is necessarily the last addition to the collected texts, it is probably the manuscript's completion date. On first flyleaf a contemporary *ex libris* reads "Jacqt Joanne philopharmacus" (Jacquet Joanne, doctor in pharmacy). An experienced but messy hand writes the table of contents and at least a few quires of the manuscript; this may be the autograph of Joanne himself. If he was indeed the first owner, Joanne probably gathered entries from various sources as they became available to him, and when satisfied compiled the glossary-indices and bound his collection.

Jacquet Joanne is thus far unidentified in any further records or documents. A previous description of this manuscript suggested that there was an apothecary with the surname Joanne registered in the town of Hesdin (Pas-de-Calais) in 1789 who was also mentioned in the archives of the abbey of St-Vaast in Arras (Loriquet, Chavanon, and Tison 1902-1911); he could be a descendant of Jacquet Joanne (we have been unable to verify this statement).

2. Private European collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-56, incipit, "Table des noms des simples, en latin et francoys contenue en ce livre sommaire de la forme vertu nature qualite et temperature d'icelles. A. Abicz Sapin – fo. Li ... [f. 28rv blank] ... ziphes en esp[e]ces de mer x cvc"; [ff. 56v-58v blank];

Latin-French glossary-index, and French-Latin glossary-index. In the first index (ff. 1-27v), the Latin name of the plant, mineral, chemical, and occasionally animal, is listed first, followed by the French name, and in a third column, the folio number of its location. In the second index (ff. 29-56), the French name is provided first, then the Latin, again followed by folio location. Similar multilingual indices are found in printed volumes, such as Leonart Fuch's *L'histoire des plantes mis en commentaires* (Lyon, 1558), but do not always offer translated terms together. Dated by the same hand in the inner bottom margin at the end of the French-Latin index (f. 56): "19 novembre 1567." This is likely the completion date of this second index, and thus of the manuscript itself.

ff. 59-109, incipit, "Sommaire de la forme · vertu · nature · qualité et température des simples. gr. ἀσπάραγος / arab. si'lios ou si'Lios Lat. *Asparagus*. Il ya de deme sortee l'asperges ...; ... f. 109, *De zeduar*, ... eu semble provocquent l'appetit et conforte la digestion";

Collection of medicinal simples, first alphabetical series, copied, translated, or summarized from an unidentified text or texts. The entries in this manuscript run in two (more or less) alphabetical series, the first from ff. 59-109, and second from ff. 109-262, probably representing two main sources. A few entries also include the Greek and Arabic names in a different, smaller hand above or next to the Latin rubric.

There are numerous familiar plants and minerals, many still eaten or used medicinally today. Some are purgatives or poisons. Examples include: asparagus (f. 59); sorrel (f. 62v); boric acid (f. 65); camphor (f. 66); calamine (f. 67v); crocus (f. 68v); endive (f. 71v); hellebore (f. 73); iron (f. 74); gum arabic (f. 76); hyssop (f. 77v); juniper (f. 78v); lapis lazuli (f. 79); lemon balm (f. 87); nutmeg (f. 88v); coconut (f. 88v); oregano (f. 90); peony (f. 91v); poppy (f. 92); psyllium (f. 94); quince (f. 96); pistachio (f. 96v); elderberry (f. 100v); mustard (f. 102); saffron (f. 104v); and thyme (f. 106). One item is not a raw ingredient: *gallia muscata* (f. 76v) "c'est unne confectione de choses aromaticques" (that is, a medical confection, like today's lozenges, made of a mixture of medicinal herbs; see Norri, 2016, p. 453).

Some entries are perhaps particularly curious to the modern reader, including asphalt (bitumen, ff. 62v-63), petroleum (f. 95), "nuce vomica" or strychnine (f. 89), deer heartstone (f. 90v), and medicinal clay (f. 107v). The most intriguing entry may be that on human mummies (f. 83v): "os des corps humains pulverisez et pris en breuvage servent a beaucoup d'infirmitez ..." (on the therapeutic use of mummies, see Sugg, 2013). Ancient and medieval authorities are also cited, including Nicholas Propositus (f. 71), Dioscorides (f. 82), and Aëtius of Amida (f. 84).

ff. 109-262v, *De Abicse*, incipit, "Entre les arbres qui portent se signu le sapin ...; ... f. 262v, *Botrya*, ... souffes sans terra le est droist".

Collection of medicinal simples, second alphabetical series, copied, translated, or summarized from an unidentified text or texts. This series is less organized and more hastily copied than the previous one, with alphabetical order abandoned near the end. It is possible that entries before f.

222v were gathered from a single source and subsequent entries from additional sources over a period of time (as indicated by the haphazard order and frequent pen and ink changes).

Items found in the previous series occasionally repeat. New examples include: wolf's bane (f. 109v); animal fat (f. 110rv); chickweed (ff. 111v-112); alder (ff. 112v-113); hollyhock (f. 113rv); water (f. 116rv); mead (f. 116v); ammonia (f. 117); beet (f. 121v); cotton (f. 122rv); calendula (ff. 123v-124); chamomile (f. 124rv); honeysuckle (f. 126); chestnut (f. 128rv); clematis (f. 132); snails (ff. 132v-133v); columbine (f. 133v); sea urchin (ff. 140-141 and ff. 141v-142); mushrooms (ff. 147v-148); heliotrope (f. 151rv); a number of semi-precious stones (ff. 155v-158); hippopotamus (f. 166); common weasel (f. 175); salamander (f. 197); scorpion (f. 199); jujube (f. 200); yew (f. 201); mountain ash (f. 203); copper flakes (f. 205); electric ray (f. 206v); truffles (f. 209v); cattail (f. 210); wine (f. 213); cardamom (f. 224rv); aloe (f. 225rv); wormwood (ff. 232-233v); geranium (f. 237rv); cadmium (f. 241rv); cicada (f. 244); osprey (ff. 249v-250); gypsum (f. 253rv); and cinnamon and cumin (f. 260).

Alongside medicinal materials is an entry on the appearance, dangers, and care of cankers and lesions ("les chancres et les crevissa", ff. 124v-125), followed by an entry on "cancellus" (ff. 125rv), described as "petitz chancres." The next entry is "chantharidus", the blister beetle (a group that includes the Spanish fly), noted here as a corrosive; their venom was used for removing warts. Galen is cited as using their whole bodies in medicine. Dioscorides reports that only the head, feet, and wings are to be used as the body is poisonous. This text may be heavily paraphrased from Mattioli's *Commentarii* (see the 1565 edition, pp. 358-359) which, appeared first in 1544 in Italian, and was available in both Latin and French by the 1560s when this entry was composed. Actuarius (f. 113v), Pliny (f. 236), Aristotle (f. 244), and Theophrastus (f. 247) are also cited.

Early modern medicine was, by and large, based on knowledge drawn from ancient and medieval authorities. As evidenced by this manuscript, it principally relied on plant and mineral remedies to alleviate symptoms of illness. With around 1000 entries on plants, animals, minerals, and chemicals from the mundane (sorrel and nutmeg) to exotic (hippopotamus and mummies), this manuscript is an excellent witness to pharmaceutical and therapeutic knowledge in early modern France. The history of pharmacy, and especially therapeutics, remains understudied (Eamon, 2011, p. 42); this manuscript offers unique research opportunities.

The most common books of botany and pharmacy in the early modern period were commentaries on Dioscorides's *De materia medica*. An Ancient Greek physician, Dioscorides wrote his pharmacopeia of about 600 plants, animals, and minerals in the first century CE. Supplemented by the natural histories of Pliny, Theophrastus, Aristotle, and others, it remained the foundation of pharmacology for 1500 years. In the later Middle Ages *De materia medica* was translated into several vernacular languages and expanded by commentators as new substances became available to European markets (Boas, 1962). While some pharmaceutical books contained medicinal recipes, many, like this one, are made up of "simples": pure ingredients found in nature to be harvested, prepared, and mixed by doctors and apothecaries to create medicines. The description of each simple usually includes their primary property (hot, cold, dry, or moist, according to Galenic principles), appearance, varieties, effects, and basic medicinal preparation.

This manuscript's simples (term for pharmaceutical ingredients), probably drawn from multiple sources, show a careful selection of knowledge deemed trustworthy or useful. It was designed with day-to-day use in mind: the reader can search in Latin or French, entries are brief and to the point, and its workaday appearance is appropriate to its function as a technical volume. Citations of ancient and medieval authorities legitimize the therapeutic efficacy of its contents. A few substances, such as malabatro (f. 85) and brassica (f. 122v) are scored through, with notes directing the reader to another entry. Other entries leave lacunae where the French equivalent for the Latin name was unknown (ex. ff. 93, 122v). This tells us that the text was not copied directly from a prepared source, but was translated, or perhaps even composed, by the scribe himself.

Selected entries have been checked against contemporary Latin and French printed books of medical simples and pharmacy, including Ruel's *De natura Stirpium* (1538), Laguna's *Annotationes* (1547), Fuch's *L'histoire des plantes* (1558), Rondelet's *De ponderibus* (1561) and *Dispensatorium* (1565), and Mattioli's *Commentarii* (1565). The topics, organization, entry length, and level of detail are similar to French translations of Mattheus Platearius's *Circa instans*, but contain different text (see Ventura 2017, and London, Wellcome Library, MS 626). At present, this remarkable text appears to be one of a kind.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

"Early Modern Medicine," Cambridge University, Department of History and Philosophy of Science Research Guide
<https://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/students/research-guide/early-modern-medicine>.

London, Wellcome Library, MS 626 (France, c. 1480-1500)
<https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b1879175x-?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&z=-0.3021,-0.0771,1.6043,1.5424>.

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