The use of herbs in Yemeni healing practices:
An interdisciplinary workshop on traditional knowledge and cultural concepts in scientific perspective


Centre for Interdisciplinary Area Studies – Middle East, Africa, Asia
Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Hehmeyer
Department of History, Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5B 2K3
E-mail: ihehmeye@ryerson.ca

Dr. Hanne Schönig
Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien – Vorderer Orient, Afrika, Asien (Centre for Interdisciplinary Area Studies – Middle East, Africa, Asia)
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Mühlweg 15, D-06114 Halle
E-mail: hanne.schoenig@zirs.uni-halle.de

Dr. Anne Regourd
CNRS, UMR 7192
Collège de France
Bibliothèque d’Assyriologie
52 rue Cardinal Lemoine
75005 Paris, France
E-mail: amalik@libertysurf.fr

***
Generously supported by Ryerson University, the Royal Ontario Museum Yemen Programme Fund (both Toronto, Canada), CNRS (Paris, France), and Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg
Rationale

Traditional medicine in Islamic countries is based mainly on three sources: 1) classical Arabic medicine, derived from the ancient Greek heritage, 2) Islamic (“the Prophet’s”) medicine, and 3) local pre-Islamic traditions. The range of drugs (vegetable, mineral, and animal) and their uses may differ in each country or region, in spite of the unification of these regions by Islam, because local pre-Islamic elements survive until today.

The workshop “The use of herbs in Yemeni healing practices” has as its primary objective an “applied study” of the special case of herbal medicine in Yemen. Due to the rich local vegetation, the main body of traditional medicines is plant-based. Herbal medicine is used by practitioners whose knowledge is derived from study of classical Arabic sources, as well as from oral transmission. Approximately 60% of Yemeni medicinal plants are mentioned in the Materia Medica written by the famous Andalusian pharmacologist and botanist Ibn al-Baytar (1197–1248). But a large part has not been described by any classical author – a fact which underlines the originality of Yemeni herbal medicine.

In Yemen, traditional medical lore along with its practitioners – namely druggists and healers – survives in our time. Modern biomedicine is beginning to dominate, a process that started several decades ago. However, as in the industrialized countries, traditional practices enjoy great popularity as complementary or alternative medicine. Yet, at the same time, plant resources are threatened in Yemen (and in other countries). The World Health Organization (WHO) adopted a strategy in 2002 to “ensure availability and affordability of traditional medicine, including essential herbal medicines” (who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs134/en).

The workshop will provide a forum for discussion across boundaries of disciplines such as history, social anthropology, oriental studies, biology, pharmacology and pharmacy. The individual contributions are based on textual analysis, as well as on empirical and experimental research, and will cover both historical and contemporary aspects.
Programme

Friday, 25 September 2009

09.00    Registration
09.40    Opening remarks: HANNE SCHÖNIG
09.50    Welcome address: PROF. DR. SHEIKH BAWAZIR, Cultural Attaché, Embassy of the Republic of Yemen, Berlin

10.00    Section 1: INTRODUCTION
Chair: HANNE SCHÖNIG

INGRID HEHMeyer (Toronto, Canada)
The validity of traditional medicine as an effective tool in issues of human health

10.40    Efraim Lev (Haifa, Israel)
Medieval medicine and pharmacology: Evidence from the Cairo Genizah

11.20    Tea and coffee break

11.40    Section 2: THE YEMEN-WIDE PERSPECTIVE
Chair: ANNE REGOURD

Dan M. Varisco (Hempstead, NY, USA)
Qât, sex and traditional healing

12.20    Dinah Jung (Heidelberg, Germany)
The use of agarwood in Yemen

13.00    Lunch at the institute

13.40    Visit to the Museum for Prehistory: “Himmelsscheibe von Nebra” (”sky disk”, guided tour of exhibit)
http://www.lda-lsa.de/landesmuseum_fuer_vorgeschichte/

15.15    Section 3: THE REGIONAL FOCUS (1)
Chair: DAN M. VARISCO

Abdul Wali Ahmed Al Khulaydi (Taizz, Yemen)
The main vegetation types and the important values of plants in the Jabal Bura’ protected area

15.55    Mikhail Rodionov (St. Petersburg, Russia)
Honey, coffee and tea in the ritual and healing practices of Hadramawt

16.35    Tea and coffee break
16.55  **AMIN AL HAKIMI** (Sana’a, Yemen)

*Traditional farmers’ knowledge of plant uses as the key point for preservation of biodiversity in the high mountain areas of Yemen*

17.35  **MIRANDA MORRIS** (St. Andrews, United Kingdom)

*Aloes and frankincense: Changing attitudes and uses in Southern Arabia (mainland Yemen, Soqotra and Dhufar)*

19.30  Dinner

**Saturday, 26 September 2009**

09.00  Section 3: **THE REGIONAL FOCUS** (2)

Chair: **ANNE REGOURD**

**ESTER MUCHAWSKY-SCHNAPPER** (Jerusalem, Israel)

*Healing through medicinal plants: Old Yemenite therapeutic traditions applied in Jerusalem of today*

09.40  Section 4: **THE LITERARY AND TEXTUAL APPROACH**

Chair: **HANNE SCHÖNIG**

**MOHAMMED MARAQ TEN** (Mainz, Germany)

*Healthcare and healing methods in pre-Islamic Yemen*

10.20  **PETRA G. SCHMIDL** (Bonn, Germany)

*Magic and medicine in a 13th-century treatise on the science of the stars: The Kitab al-Tabsira of the Rasulid Sultan al-Ashraf ‘Umar*

11.00  Tea and coffee break

11.20  Section 5: **IN THE FOCUS OF SCIENCE**

Chair: **INGRID HEHMEYER**

**ULRIKE LINDEQUIST** (Greifswald, Germany)

*The potential of Yemeni medicinal plants from a pharmaceutical point of view*

12.00  **MOHAMMED AL-DUAIS** (Jena, Germany)

*The miraculous plant “Halka” (Cyphostemma digitatum) – from grandmother’s kitchen in Yemen’s southwestern highlands to modern medicinal and culinary applications*

12.30  **JACQUES FLEURENTIN** (Metz, France)

*From traditional medicinal plants of Yemen to therapeutic herbal drugs: The valorisation of natural resources, an applied ethnopharmacological programme*
13.10 Lunch at the institute
13.40 Section 6: CONCLUSION AND GENERAL DISCUSSION
Chair: INGRID HEHMEYER

Wade E. Pickren (Toronto, Canada)
 Crossing borders: Knowledge and practice in transitional spaces

General discussion

15.10 Botanical Gardens of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (guided tour)
 http://www2.biologie.uni-halle.de/bot/boga/english/english.html

16.30 Moritzburg (guided tour)
 http://www.stiftung-moritzburg.de/
 City of Halle, walking tour

19.00 Dinner
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. Mohammed Al-Duais</td>
<td>Institut für Ökologie Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena Dornburger Straße 159 07743 Jena Germany <a href="mailto:dassssan@yahoo.com">dassssan@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Amin Al Hakimi</td>
<td>Faculty of Agriculture Sana'a University P.O. Box 13768 Sana'a Yemen <a href="mailto:aminalhakimi@yahoo.com">aminalhakimi@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Abdul Wali Ahmed Al Khulaidi</td>
<td>Plant Ecology and Geography Agricultural Research and Extension Authority Taiz Yemen <a href="mailto:abdulwali20@yahoo.com">abdulwali20@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Sheikh Awadh Bawazir</td>
<td>Cultural Attaché Embassy of the Republic of Yemen Budapesterstr. 37 10787 Berlin Germany <a href="mailto:kultur@botschaft-jemen.de">kultur@botschaft-jemen.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>John Christopoulos</td>
<td>PhD candidate Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology University of Toronto 350 Victoria Street Toronto, Ontario M5S 1K7 Canada <a href="mailto:john.christopoulos@utoronto.ca">john.christopoulos@utoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dr. Jacques Fleurentin</td>
<td>Société Française d’Ethnopharmacologie Université de Metz 1, rue des Récollets 57000 Metz France <a href="mailto:jacques.fleurentin@free.fr">jacques.fleurentin@free.fr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. agr. Ingrid Hehmeyer</td>
<td>Department of History Ryerson University 350 Victoria Street Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 Canada <a href="mailto:ihehmeye@ryerson.ca">ihehmeye@ryerson.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dr. des. Dinah Jung</td>
<td>Department of East Asian Art History, Forschungsstelle 619 – Ritualdynamik Universität Heidelberg Hauptstraße 113 69117 Heidelberg Germany <a href="mailto:Dinah.Jung@web.de">Dinah.Jung@web.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Prof. Dr. Efraim Lev</strong></td>
<td>Dpt. of Eretz Israel Studies Faculty of Humanities University of Haifa Mount Carmel, Haifa 31905 Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Ulrike Lindequist</strong></td>
<td>Institut für Pharmazie – Pharmazeutische Biologie Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald Friedrich-Ludwig-Jahn-Str. 17 17489 Greifswald Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Dr. Mohammed Marqten</strong></td>
<td>Seminar für Orientkunde Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz Jakob-Welder-Weg 20 55099 Mainz Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Dr. Miranda Morris</strong></td>
<td>School of History St. Katherine’s Lodge, The Scores University of St. Andrews St. Andrews, Fife KY16 9AL United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Dr. Ester Muchawsky-Schnapper</strong></td>
<td>Department of Judaica and Jewish Ethnography The Israel Museum Jerusalem 91710 Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Prof. Dr. Wade E. Pickren</strong></td>
<td>Department of Psychology Ryerson University 350 Victoria Street Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3 Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Dr. Anne Regourd</strong></td>
<td>CNRS UMR 7192 College de France Bibliothèque d’Assyriologie 52 rue Cardinal Lemoine 75005 Paris France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Prof. Dr. Mikhail Rodionov</strong></td>
<td>Dept. of South and Southwest Asia Peter-the-Great Museum of Anthropology &amp; Ethnography Russian Academy of Sciences Univ. Naberezhnaya, dom 3 St. Petersburg 199034 Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Dr. Petra G. Schmidl</td>
<td>Institut für Orient- und Asienwissenschaften, Abteilung Islamwissenschaften</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regina-Pacis-Weg 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53113 Bonn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Dr. Hanne Schönig</td>
<td>Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien – Vorderer Orient, Afrika,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mühlweg 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>06114 Halle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Prof. Dr. Daniel M. Varisco</td>
<td>Department of Anthropology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hofstra University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hempstead, New York 11549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>