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Chapter:

Hungarian Ethnobotanical Studies in Romania

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Abstract The traditional ethnobotanical knowledge about the plant usage is due to the archaic folklore system in Romania, mostly in Transylvania forming an appreciable part of the country. The regions of Transylvania are inhabited by Hungarians and Romanians. This summary deals with the first herbal books from the 16th century published in the country, and the main ethnobotanical surveys in ten main regions in monographs, books and papers, mostly in Hungarian. Based on traditional observations and experiences of the people, the inventories present data about the local use of the plants in the ethnomedicine, in construction and household tools, as food and fodder, as well as in various beliefs and customs. The reports are of pivotal importance in the ethnomedicinal knowledge of the rural people underlining the significance of vernacular names, various applications, home treatments and special local terminology of the plant taxa in the selected areas.

These surveys are performed and continued nowadays, focusing on the preservation of the archaic elements, as well as on the study of new and promising plant taxa for further laboratorial analyses. The traditional knowledge of the informants has clearly decreased, therefore the conservation, documentation and prevention of these data from disappearance are of primary importance in the future.

Keywords: Hungarians, Transylvania, ethnobotany, ethnomedicine, herbarium, vernacular name, popular belief

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1. Introduction

The ethnobotany is on the bourn of the botany, the linguistics and the ethnography, which deals with the traditional knowledge about the plants and the natural environment (Szabó 1976). In the ethnobotany, several researchers study the multiple relation between people and plant such as biologists, pharmacists, physicians, anthropologists, ethnographers and linguists. Based on their different interest, hypothesis and questions, they appoint the various aims and roles of the discipline. The botanist is interested in the effect of the people on the flora and in their relation. The linguistic deals with the source and development of the plant terminology, while the ethnographer works studies the traditional role of the plants in the folk art and in the folk-poetry, their use in the local ethnomedicine and as food or children's toy (Hoppál 1990; Pócs 1990; Szabó 1990; Rácz 2000; Zsigmond 2005).

This research field has several traditional tendencies in Transylvania, a wide part of Romania for a long time past. Firstly, the ethnobotanical surveys of Hungarians are discussed living in Romania between the 16–18th century.

2. Preliminaries from the 16–18th Century

The first works in Transylvania have been documented as *herbal books*. The medical-botanical handbook *Herbarium* of Péter Melius Juhász from 1578 has been appeared 6 years after the death of the author by the support of Gáspárné Heltai, the leader of the printing house in Cluj-Napoca. This summary with 627 plant taxa has been prepared based on various handbooks from other countries, which contains the habitats of the plants, too. Afterwards, 480 species were identified including 138 plants which are known nowadays, too (e.g. mints bearing the name *polaj*). This work has been played an important role in its era as a sample work commenced the edition of several new Hungarian volumes. The *Herbarium* was edited and supplemented by an essay and comments in 1978, when the work was 400 years old. Balázs Szikszai Fabricius (Kovács), a teacher in Cluj has prepared a Latin-Hungarian vocabulary in this work with several botanical data, which refers to the wide botanical knowledge of the author (Szabó 1978).

The following medical work is the *Ars Medica* by György Nagyvárad Váradi Lencsés, which has been remained in handwriting form in the Teleki Library of Targu Mures. The manuscript has been prepared between 1570 and 1593 in Alba Iulia, which was copied firstly by Máté Patai (physician) between 1610 and 1612 in Oradea, then by the commission of the baroness Kata Wesselényi with the title *Ars Medica* in Sângeorgiu de Pădure in 1757. The original manuscript was copied by Béla Varjas between 1940 and 1943 under the title *Hungarian Medical Book from the 16th century*, which it was edited incompletely as a book in Cluj and destroyed in the World War I (Varjas 1943; Szabó 1978).

In the *Pax Corporis*, in the work of the physician Ferenc Pápai Páriz in the 17th century several medicinal plants were described with the vernacular name, habitat and traditional use (Pápai Páriz 1690).

In the 18th century, the famous garden of József Benkő in Aita Medie was documented simultaneously with the botanical garden of the University of Trnava and Budapest (Gazda 1999). In the country, József Benkő was the first follower of Carl von Linné: he has mentioned several plants in a funeral oration, and after 4 years he has reviewed the taxonomy of Linné in foot notes in Sibiu. This is the first edited work of the morphological terminology in Hungarian (Benkő 1781). His first Latin manuscript about the local flora, the *Flora Transsylvanica* (Benkő 1778a) has been disappeared while Benkő has sent it to print to

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Göttingen (Erneyi 1932), but its significance can be mentioned according to the citations of the contemporaries and the followers. The *Transsilvania Specialis* consists of the flora of Micoșoara and Covasna listing several curiosities such as *Angelica archangelica* L., *Chimaphila umbellata* (L.) Barton, *Lysimachia thyrso-flora* L., *Marsilea quadrifolia* L. and *Sison amomum* L. (Benkő 1778b). The manuscript, which was studied by Gábor Rácz and Erzsébet Johanna Rácz (Rácz and Rácz 1972), it was edited later as in form of a book, too (Szabó 1999). The following work from 1783 contains about 1000 plant name in Latin, Hungarian, German and French, supplemented by the vernacular names in Hungarian (mostly from the Székler folk terminology), in Romanian and German, too (Benkő 1783a, 1783b). For example, he was the first who has referred to the Romanian origin of some Hungarian words in the plant names, such as in case of the local name *szkumpia* of *Rhus hirta* (L.) Sudworth in Aita Medie (Benkő 1796). In addition, he had a significant role in the nomenclature of several taxa, such as *alacsony füzény* (*Lythrum hyssopifolia* L.), *havasi harangrojt* (*Soldanella alpine* L.), *nefelejcs* (*Myosotis* sp.) and *árvalányhaj* (*Stipa* sp.) (Vörös 2008). Hence, the data of ten regions of the country were discussed based on the performed ethnobotanical inventories from the 1930's (Fig 1).



Fig. 1 Study areas with ethnobotanical surveys in Romania
(<http://www.freeworldmaps.net/europe/romania/map.html>)

3. Study Areas in Transylvania

3.1. Bucovina

The sometime Bucovina is found in the northern part of Romania (Fig 1). The Széklers from Dornești were transmigrated to Falschnone and Varaždin in the 1940's, and to Érd in the 1960's. The transmigrated people and their descendants were interviewed ethnobotanically, and the results were published in a series consisting of four articles (Grynaeus and Szabó 2002). In this work, the 200 taxa were characterized by the data of their origine (which was important because of the migration), the vernacular and scientific name compared with the data of the Ghimes mountain, and the use with citations of the informants word for word. After the vernacular names, the monograms of the informants can also be found. The species were mentioned in the medical treatment, as device, handicraft, children's toy, food and ornamental plant, too. In the last paper of the series, the unidentified plants, the sacramentals and several terminological data were detailed with their origine from the Bible, from the name of the diseases and animals.

In an other work about the ethnobotany in Bucovina, more than 200 groups of diseases of the human medicine and veterinary were mentioned in alphabetical order with treatments, citations, study area, vocabulary and index, too (Sebestyén 2008).

3.2. Moldova

The Moldovan Csángós living in the north-eastern part of the country preserve significant traditions, cultural and historical values nowadays based on their ethnical isolation. Among the ethnobotanical field trip of this region, firstly the works about the Csángó's folk terminology of the plants can be mentioned (Csűry 1933; Halászné 1987). A wide inventory was carried out in 12 villages between 1970 and 1976, consisting of 103 plants with 191 local names, with using forms (e.g. tea = *csáj*, bath = *feredő*), treatments, as well as with citations word for word (Halászné 1981). An other work deals with 24 taxa used for the external injuries, dislocation and burnt wounds compared with the knowledge of the people of the Ghimes and with the data of a medical book from Gelence published in the 18th century (Halászné 1993). This book is based on the 150 years-experience of the rural people listing 99 home treatments used plants and 211 contemporaneous prescriptions, including similar data with the Moldovan ethnomedicine, such as in case of *Achillea millefolium* L. and some *Plantago* species.

Péter Halász has studied this region for 40 years and published several papers and 3 volumes presenting data about several mytic elements, beliefs, prediction, interpretation of dreams and magical numbers connected to the plants, as well as about the archaic and traditional livestock of the Csángós (Halász 2007, 2010). The reference book includes plant species used in the ethnomedicine, as fodder, food, sacramental, as well as in the construction, in folk songs and as motives on various textiles, completed by vocabulary and index, too.

Data about the plants can be found in other studies in this area (Diószegi 1960), mostly according to the mentioned diseases (Kocsis 2010), associated with magical elements and beliefs (Bosnyák 1973; Csoma 2000), or with healig treatments (Lakatos 2000). Several taxa were documented in the dyeing of the wool (e.g. *Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertn., *Juglans regia* L., *Malus sylvestris* (L.) Mill), listing the used plant parts, the dyeing process, the used other materials (e.g. vinegar, alum) and the dyed colour (Kobzos 1999).

3.3. Maramureș

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In the northern part of Romania, the botanical survey of Târgu Lăpuş has provided several data related to the food, aromatic and ornamental plants of the region, supplemented by ecological features of the vegetation (Mihalescu et al. 2010). As a monograph, Géza Kóczián has published traditional data about the use and beliefs of *Atropa belladonna* L. in this area (Kóczián 1990).

3.4. Țara Călatei

This region inhabited by Hungarians and Romanians consists of three main parts: Felszeg, Alszeg and Nádásmente. In the first study, altogether 71 plants species, some animals and other substances were documented used for various ailments. The healing methods are accompanied by peculiar magical elements and beliefs, presenting the actual aspect and ideology of the informants about the known diseases (Kovács 1976). Among the other ethnobotanical inventories in this area (Kóczián et al. 1977), 750 data were listed about the local name, using form and administration of 108 medicinal, wild, dyeing and cultivated plants collected from 8 villages (Szabó 2002).

The results of the collecting field work of the region were summarized in the common works of the botanist Attila Szabó T. and the linguistic János Péntek (Szabó and Péntek 1976; Péntek and Szabó 1976a, 1980). Their ethnobotanical guide divides the plants with 500 local names into groups according to their habitat, reviewed the basic methodology of the plant collection and documentation (Péntek and Szabó 1985). The authors have documented the relief, the landscape, the clima, the vegetation and the relation between plant and culture in Țara Călatei. They have surveyed the traditional knowledge of the people by questionnaires containing 1000 questions about the use, beliefs, role as symbols and linguistics data of the wild herbaceous, woody and ornamental plants, of the plants living in field or in kitchen garden, and of the fungi. The wild species mentioned in the interviews with 251 informants were listed according to the flora elements, but the division of the cultivated taxa was based on the life strategy, the place and type of the production, as well as the time and features of the domestication. The book was supplemented by a Hungarian and Romanian index.

Several horticultural and linguistic data were documented in the region (Péntek 1980), but the actual role of the nature in the everyday life of the people was reported in the work of Samu Vasas (Vasas 1985), highlighting the plants used in the human medicine and in the veterinary practice. Further studies report data about the plants occurring in the geographical nomenclature (Péntek and Szabó 1980; Péntek 1997), about the folk terminology of the vegetation types and their species (Péntek 2003), as well as about the appearance of the anthropomorphism (Péntek 1982, 1984).

In four settlements of Borsa valley, Aurél Vajkai had discussed the relation between the healing persons and the community, describing 122 plants with their herbal products (Vajkai 1943, 2003).

Related to the flora of this area, altogether 509 taxa were documented in the Malom valley by Cluj-Napoca. This work evaluates the species according to their life strategy and ecological characters on ecodiagrams (Csűrös and Csűrös 1996).

3.5. Ghimes

The Ghimes valley along the Tatros river includes elements both from the Csángó and Romanian culture. The inhabitants of the three settlements of the valley (Lunca de Sus, Lunca de Jos, Ghimeș-Făget) preserve an archaic and valuable knowledge about the plants. In Transylvania, the first ethnobotanical inventory was published from this area (Holló and Rác

1968). Mária Antalné Tankó has summarized plant species according to the disease types with plant list and with the peculiar dialects of the region (Antalné 2003).

In the 1970's, various plants, animals and other substances were listed in Lunca de Jos and in Trei Fântâni (Kóczyán et al. 1975, 1976; Szabó 2002). The first study reports plants used for 11 and 12 disease types in the human medicine and veterinary (Kóczyán et al. 1975). In addition, the authors have also described 86 plant taxa with vernacular names and using forms (Kóczyán et al. 1976).

In addition to Lunca de Jos, further ethnomedicinal surveys were carried out listing 170 plant taxa with 182 local names (Frendl and Balogh 2004, 2006). In these studies, the analogic mind was highlighted. In case of the colour analogy, the colour of the used plant parts refers to the administration and treatment (e.g. the yellow root of *gyertyagyükerűfű* – *Gentiana asclepiadea* L. for jaundice). In the name analogy, the local plant names cover the traditional use (e.g. *vérburján* or *blood herb* – *Hypericum perforatum* L. used for bleeding). The authors mention medicinal and food plants with anthropomorphic features and beliefs, too.

A peculiar collection was also published from Lunca de Jos: based on the diary of a Csángó shepherd Berta Tankó Mónus, the elements of the traditional livestock and plant production were summarized, supplemented by the events of her everyday life, prediction of the weather, beliefs, customs and folk songs, illustrated with the citations of the informant word for word (Bakay and Harangozó eds. 2007).

The study of the ethnobotanical values of Ghimeş-Făget has been started in the end of the 1970's. Tankó and Ilyés (1978) have published only the local names of the plants of the village. In the following work, based on 36 interviews, altogether 146 wild and 104 cultivated plants were divided into the following groups: herbaceous plants living in field, forest, water and on the edge of the river, woody, fruit-bearing and ornamental plants, weeds, as well as taxa from the kitchen garden. The plants were characterized by their use in the ethnomedicine, as food, construction or handicrafts (Rab et al. 1981). In a complementary field work, the authors report medicinal data about 58 plant species in 120 forms for 11 human diseases and in the veterinary practice, too (Rab 1982).

However, Lunca de Sus is provided by permanent medical service and pharmacy, people know and use medicinal plants nowadays. In our preliminary work, 170 plants and 13 fungi were documented with local names, from which 115 taxa are of primary importance in the ethnomedicinal treatments (Papp et al. 2009a; Papp 2011). This survey was completed by several microbiological analyses of a selected species which was mentioned in the settlement (Fancsali 2010).

Pál Pálfalvi summarizes taxa according to the habitat, life strategy, ecological needs, protection and taxonomy in 500 hectares (Pálfalvi 1995). In his field work, based on the botanical and ethnobotanical history of the region, the main publications were illustrated on a map with the time and place of the edition, highlighting the most important plants of the 800 taxa mentioned by 200 informants in 20 vegetation types (Pálfalvi 2001).

As a new research field in the area, ethnogeobotanical surveys are carried out since 1999, including both anthropological and botanical studies. These inventories consisting of the topography of the flora and the plant habitats can provide data for the planning of provisions and conservation, based on the experience of the rural people (Molnár and Babai 2009). The ethnoecology comprises the use of the landscape and the ecological knowledge of the people, but the ethnobiodiversity studies the evolution of the species, the linguistic elements, as well as cultural and historical values, too. Altogether 172 taxa were mentioned with 235 vernacular names and with the assignment of the correct source of the local knowledge. These data refer

to the abundance and change of the local flora, to the habitat of the plants, to the taxonomical peculiarities and to the exact folk experiences about the landscape (Babai and Molnár 2009; Molnár and Babai 2010).

3.6. Uz valley

In this region, the sporadic farms are inhabited by Csángós from the 20th century, who work in the agriculture as self-providers, supplemented with preparation of dairy products (Frendl and Kripner 2005). The two main villages namely Cinod with 200 people and Egershec with 100 inhabitants are not provided neither by permanent medical service, nor pharmacy or post office. Based on their isolation, they know, collect and use the plants from their environment regularly, completed by animals and other (e.g. human) materials. In our collection work, among the described 180 plant species 105 taxa were mentioned in the human ethnomedicine (Papp et al. 2011) and in the veterinary (Frendl et al. 2007). With respect to the horticultural customs, several herbs and ornamental plants were observed and recorded with their used parts and using forms (Papp et al. 2011a, 2013).

3.7. Gheorgheni

Gheorgheni located in the northern part of Romania was surveyed by János Rab for 17 years, performing botanical, ethnobotanical, geographical, ethnographical, linguistic and historical studies in the area. In his book, the local vegetation types, the terminology, the use and the beliefs of the wild and cultivated plants were summarized (Rab 2000), similarly to a further study about the local flora (Rab et al. 1980). In a case study, Rab has dealt with the ethnogeobotany named as a subsidiary science of the ecology, supported by several examples from the local vegetation (Rab 1993).

The following study about the gatherer agriculture deals with a tinder and 18 woody plants and shrubs used as devices and as food in indigency. For example, the bitter fruit of the *belekenyér* (*Sorbus aucuparia* L.) or the berries of the *bodzafa* (*Sambucus nigra* L., *S. ebulus* L., *S. racemosa* L.) were consumed in the indigent period in the region (Tarisznyás 1978).

3.8. Depresiunea Plăieși (Cașin)

In the eastern region of Romania, an ethnobotanical inventory of 23 wild and 47 cultivated plants was carried out in three villages namely Imper, Cașinu Nou and Plăieși de Jos. Altogether 26 taxa were used in the human medicine and 10 in the ethnoveterinary with several vernacular names, indicating the study area and the name of the informants (Pintér et al. 1974).

3.9. Câmpia Transilvaniei

This region located southeasterly from Țara Călatei is famous for its traditional folk music and dance. In the ethnobotanically studied village namely Colonia altogether 150 ailments were interpreted with local treatments and citations of the informants. The healing persons are mostly the women dealing with the collection and use of the medicinal plants, and with the curing process of the inhabitants of the settlement. The author has listed some minerals, human materials, animals and other substances, as well as 73 plants belonging to the fruit-bearing, wild woody taxa and shrubs, wild and cultivated herbaceous plants, completed by the used devices and mentioned beliefs connected to the transmission of the diseases. This work forms a true notion of the actual condition of the ethnomedicine, and of the relation between elderly and youth in the village (Keszeg 1981).

3.10. Széklerland

The present area of Széklerland consists of the Harghita, Covasna and Mureş counties. The region is widely known by its historical, ethnographical, cultural and botanical values. The medicinal and aromatic plants of Harghita were summarized in a volume with the Hungarian, scientific and vernacular names completed by their ethnobotanical data and administration's form (Csedő ed. 1980).

The process of the traditional drainage of *Betula pendula* Roth. was studied ethnobotanically and ethnographically in the work of Györffy (Györffy 1937). The sweet sap called "virics" can be extracted from the trunk of the tree in spring and used for various diseases. e.g. for kidney problems or pneumonia. These methods of the extraction using special devices are in disappearance nowadays.

The local flora and vegetation of the region were surveyed in terms of coenological, floristical, medicinal and ecological aspects from the 18th century (Kovács 1997). Among the monographies, data were published about the use of *Picea abies* (L.) Karst.: the woody parts can be applied in handicrafts, in charcoal-burning, as constructive element or firewood, but the resin ("szurok") for soaps and as child food in chewed form (Csergő 1978). The use of the bark of other pine species was described in devices, in the tanning, but the resin and the cone ("csencsök") for wounds (Kisné 2006). The endemic *Quercus* species were studied for the vegetation and linguistics data, and for their use in devices and furnitures (Kovács 2009).

The people living in the farms of Varşag have traditional customs related to the use of the fruit-bearing and ornamental plants, the vegetables, the local foods and teas, as well as in the local celebrations, too. In this field trip, more than 100 medicinal plant taxa, some animals and human materials were interpreted used in different forms for various diseases (Mészáros 1998).

People have used regularly the work *Pax Corporis* (Pápai 1690) in their everyday life in Neaua. This work presents the curing persons and their methods: e.g. some people are responsible for the tooth extraction or for the massage. The 40 treatments were listed with the correct citations of the informants, supplemented by the materials originated from plants or from the pharmacy, by peculiar beliefs and data of the homeopathy, too (Zillmann 1997).

In Aiud, 17 local food plants were summarized based on their collecting method, used parts and prepared dishes. These data were introduced in a case-study about the use of *Carum carvi* L. as soup, tea, brandy and spice in various foods (Vita 1994). In Lopadea Noua, by Aiud, altogether 7 groups of the diseases were documented based on the citations of the informants, underlining some special disappearing methods and beliefs, such as the tin alloy and the use of "coaly water" against bad spirits (Sipos 2010).

Vlăhiţa and Căpâlniţa were studied for the use of 171 plant species mentioned under 257 vernacular names. Beside the rational data, neither beliefs nor magical words were detected in these villages (Frendl 2001).

The rural people in Şiclod, which is located on the limit of the Harghita and Mureş counties, they use only rational elements in the ethnomedicine without pow-wows or beliefs. The traditional curing methods of the village (Balázs 2010). The human medicine can be represented by the use of collected plant taxa and other substances, while in the veterinary drugs and remedies are applied mostly nowadays. Recently, the archaic knowledge is influenced by the improved use of various books and media sources, and by the knowledge of the families coming from Hungary. Based on these double sources, the author presents the actual medicinal knowledge of the people in her work.

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The Depresiunea Ciucului in Harghita county can be divided into 3 main parts namely Felcsík, Középcsík and Alcsík. The vegetation of the county was studied for the flora elements, for the ecological features and for the agricultural occupations (Csűrös et al. 1980). Miklóssy has studied 47 settlements in the area with ethnobotanical questionnaires according to the use of taxa for wounds and of 68 dyeing plants with the detailed dyeing process including previous dyeing and drying (Miklóssy 1978). The majority of the collected 24 astringent species is used as foment, e.g. the fresh leaves of *zsanika* (*Alchemilla vulgaris* L.), the tepals of *Lilium candidum* L., or the resin of *Picea abies* (L.) Karst. These plant materials were supplemented by 13 ointments containing e.g. flour, honey, wax or sour cream used against bleeding (Miklóssy 1980). Also in Depresiunea Ciucului, the ethnobotanical surveys of Sândominic and Racu were represented by irrational and magical elements, introducing the possible causing agent of the diseases, the special healing persons and their unique medicinal treatments with an index and a data store (Pálfalvi 1999; Kosz 2010).

The valley of the Târnava Mică and Corund stream is famous for the salt mining. In the surveyed villages of the valley, 99 herbaceous and 41 woody taxa, as well as 11 wild flowerless plants were documented based on the interviews with 600 informants by Gub (Gub 1993, 1996). The more than 100 cultivated species including agricultural, horticultural, fruit-bearing, exotic and ornamental plants were characterized by 71 local treatments. Among the medicinal plants, 121 taxa were mentioned in 12 home prescriptions and preparations for various diseases. For example, against external injuries, 52 plants and a tinder species (*Fomes fomentarius* (L.) Fr.) were applied as foment, ointment or plaster soaked in alcohol or boiled with fat, and used e.g. with vinegar, honey or bacon (Gub 1991, 1998). The author reports several data about the folk customs, beliefs and prediction for the wheather connected to the plants of the region (Gub 1994), the vegetation types and the protected flora elements, as well as the local use of the salty water of the region (Gub 2001, 2003). As a unique trade all over the world in Corund, the traditional working of the tinders were presented in a volume for devices, huts and ornaments, including the collection and preparation of the fungi with several illustrations (István and Szócs 2008).

Along the river Kis-Homoród, ethnobotanical study of Lueta has been started for 6 years. The settlement is provided by pharmacy since 2008 and medical service from the neighbouring village 2 days weekly (Papp et al. 2009b; Papp 2011). Among the described 220 taxa 143 medicinal plants were mentioned in their curing methods with 355 vernacular names for 102 diseases (Boris 2010; Papp et al. 2011b). In addition, the food and ornamental plants, the fungi, as well as the used animals and human materials also were reported in the village (Erdei 2011).

Among the other settlements along the Kis-Homoród, Crăciunel has neither pharmacy nor permanent medical service, therefore people use the medicinal plants regularly in home treatments. The listed 92 species among the reported 175 taxa were summarized according to their habitat, used parts, storage and preparation form (Papp and Horváth 2013).

However, Trei Scaune was mentioned as a separate county formerly, it covers the whole area of Covasna recently. Ethnobotanical survey was performed in a settlement (Araci) of the region resulting 207 wild and 171 cultivated plants covered by 535 local names, and 15 fungi and moss species also were documented. The work lists the role of the plants as food, fodder, medicinal or dyeing taxa with their symbolic role, as well as the rarefying and new-discovered species (Péntek and Szabó 1976b). In related to the "*nagyerejű fű*" (*Atropa belladonna* L.), a particular study was published associated with its traditional use and connecting belief in the region (Kakas 1973).

The following summary of the flora of Covasna was reported by Rácz and Füzi, reviewed the scientific and local terminology of the plants, the characters of the habitats, the method and the admissible quantity of the collection yearly, the used parts and the administration of the listed species (Rácz and Füzi 1973). In the county, some studies were published related to the plant production and the agricultural activities (Zakariás 1995), and to the ethnobotanical values in 8 settlements, resulting data about 169 plants, some animals and other materials (e.g. bacon, honey and tallow) used for 20 disease types (Bartha et al. 2011; Bartha 2013).

4. Summary

The first Hungarian ethnobotanical studies were published from the 16th century in Transylvania, a significant part of Romania, including several medicinal and herbal books, contemporary manuscripts, scientific articles till these days. Recently, the lifestyle has been changed in the selected regions significantly, based on the migration of the youth to the cities or to abroad, and the change of their interest and turning to the official medicinal data of the scientific books and media sources. This process influences the preservation, transmission and maintenance of the ancestral ethnomedicinal data in Transylvania. In accordance, the elderly are considered as the most authentic and true informants in the country nowadays.

Based on this phenomenon, during the ethnobotanical surveys, the source of the collected traditional knowledge has to be documented, separating the archaic and official data from each other. This aspect is a new point in the inventories nowadays, which opens new directions toward the discovery and analysis of several promising medicinal and phytotherapeutical data, bearing valuable ethnographical, botanical and pharmaceutical results in the future.

In sum, the reported data and the continuous change of the lifestyle of the people draw the attention for the significance of the conservation and further laboratorial analyses of the observed values, highlighting the most important and urgent task of the researchers in Transylvania in these days.

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