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Manuscript tradition of the *Galganum herbal* and *Melleus liquor*

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Abstract

This study focuses on the *Galganum herbal*, a medical handbook from the Late Middle Ages that discusses the effects of plants, with particular emphasis on the preservation of its Latin manuscripts. The primary problem addressed is the incomplete documentation and cataloguing of surviving manuscripts of this herbal, which has led to gaps in understanding its textual transmission and variations. The study seeks to answer the question of how the *Galganum Herbal* was preserved across different regions, particularly in Central Europe, and how its Latin manuscripts are connected to later vernacular translations, especially in Old Czech. The paper also mentions the medical collection *Melleus liquor*, in which the herbal is often survived. By systematically reviewing manuscript collections, the research aims to clarify the relationship between the Latin and vernacular versions and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the textual variants and the broader context in which the herbal circulated. By examining the macrostructure of entries and the broader *Melleus liquor* context, the study lays the groundwork for future research to categorize the manuscripts and further illuminate tradition of this popular medical text.

Keywords

medieval herbals; Alexander Hispanus; *Melleus liquor*; *Galganum herbal*; Old-Czech translations

The *Galganum herbal* is one of the most popular Central European herbals of the late Middle Ages. It was written in Latin most likely during the first half of the 14th century in Bavaria or Austria. Most surviving manuscripts date to the 15th century, when the herbal also circulated in vernacular versions. This article presents the results of a one-year student project focused on documenting the Latin manuscript tradition of the herbal.¹

The *Galganum herbal* is not referred to by any title in most manuscripts; only sporadically we find designations like *Tractatus de virtutibus herbarum*, *Virtutes herbarum* etc. No standard Latin title for this herbal has been established in the secondary literature. German-language texts use the name “Galgant-Gewürz-Traktat” for both the Latin and German versions, but this name causes problems. Therefore, this article refers to the herbal by its first entry, as “the *Galganum herbal*.”

In the Middle Ages, the term “herbal” did not refer to a booklet with dried plants, but rather a practical medical handbook. These handbooks described the use of simple medicines, with each chapter dedicated to a single medicine. Herbals were medical, not botanical texts, and typically lacked illustrations. Entries focused on the medicinal effects of plants based on the ancient concept of humoral pathology, not their appearance. These texts primarily focused on plant-based medicines, sometimes supplemented with animal and inorganic medicines to a lesser extent. Most herbals were arranged alphabetically, varying in length from dozens to hundreds of entries. However, the *Galganum herbal* does not follow alphabetical order, with a few exceptions. It has a diverse range of entries (typically 40 to 55), with a basic classification system: medicinal spices listed first, followed by foods used as medicine, and finally medicinal herbs.² But this classification may not be found in every manuscript.

Given the medical content of herbals, it is understandable that they are often found in various medical collections. This is also true for the *Galganum herbal*. The context in which the herbal has been preserved can be very diverse. In some manuscripts, this herbal appears together with several other treatises that are written in the collection of texts called *Melleus liquor*.³ To date, this collection has been known in its entirety only from a single, oldest manuscript in Madrid (Biblioteca nacional,

1 Manuscript tradition of the herbarium *Galganum* (MUNI/IGA/1231/2020).

2 Mauch (2006d: p. 196).

3 Mauch (2006e). Ute Mauch in her paper divides individual tracts of medical compendium *Melleus liquor* into 3 levels. 1. Man (*Regimen Mensium*, *Complexiones hominum*, *Dispositiones hominum*), 2. Medicines (*Herbarius*), 3. Diseases and their knowledge (*De febribus*, *De lepra*, *De urina*, *De fluxu sanguinis*, *De paralisi*, *De ydropisi*, *De tisi*).

8769 ff. 12v–19r), which contains a total of 11 treatises, including the herbal. The physician Alexander Hispanus is credited as the author of the collection. In other manuscripts, a smaller, not always the same number of these treatises was usually transmitted, of which only some are listed as authored by Alexander. However, the existence of Alexander Hispanus is very uncertain and the German origin of the text is considered.⁴

Since the herbal in manuscripts is often not marked with any title and can be part of various medical collections, it is sometimes difficult to identify it correctly in manuscripts, or to find it in catalogues of manuscript libraries. So far published lists of its copies are lacunary, which is why I devoted myself to a systematic search of catalogues and manuscript databases and tried to prepare an updated list of Latin manuscripts. I explored the collections of Czech libraries to learn more about the connections between Czech and foreign manuscripts. At the same time, I reflected on the division of the manuscripts into several basic groups based on the macro-structure of the text (i.e., the order and number of its entries).

Although most of the surviving manuscripts were not known ninety years ago, the herbal has been published twice. The first edition, based on the mentioned Madrid manuscript containing 42 entries, was published by Karl Sudhoff in 1936 and 1937.⁵ At the same time Poul Hauberg published another edition (with 53 entries) based on five manuscripts.⁶ Hauberg attributed the herbal to the Danish physician Henrik Harpestraeng from the 13th century based on his name appearing in some manuscripts and the presence of plants typically found in the north, such as *angelica* and *benedicta*. However, manuscripts mentioning the Danish doctor are rare and date only from the 15th century. Even Hauberg acknowledged content discrepancies between the herbal and Henrik's other works, yet he considered it an early work and published the edition under Henrik's name.⁷

Gundolf Keil was the first to come up with the fact that the herbal published by Karl Sudhoff was the same as the *Liber herbarum* (or *Latinske Urtebog*) attributed to Henrik Harpestræng. He pointed this fact out to William Crossgrove,⁸ who made it public in 1980, and Keil himself reflected it a few years later in the relevant entries in the volumes of the *Verfasserlexikon*.⁹ Keil also in collaboration with Willem Daems published a list of twenty German version manuscripts and one incunable and

⁴ For basic information about Alexander Hispanus see Keil (1983: pp. 53–58).

⁵ Sudhoff (1936), Sudhoff (1937).

⁶ Harpestræng (1936).

⁷ Keil (1981: pp. 476–479).

⁸ Crossgrove (1980: pp. 391–392).

⁹ Keil (1981: pp. 476–479; 1983: pp. 53–58).

mentioned another two Latin manuscripts.¹⁰ An updated list of twenty-two Latin manuscripts known at the time was prepared by Bernhard Schnell in his doctoral thesis in 1989.¹¹ For the time being, the most thorough research of the has been done by Ute Mauch, who published several articles on this issue and found more manuscripts that were previously unknown.¹² Other manuscripts, preserved in Czech libraries, are listed by Zachová and Stehlíková.¹³

We can summarize that 36 Latin manuscripts of the herbal have been recorded in the secondary literature so far. Currently a total of 49 manuscripts of the *Galganum herbal* have been found, bringing the updated list to a total of 85 manuscripts (see Appendix). Among them, the longest herbal contains 72 entries (Prague, the Library of the Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov, DG IV 13), and the shortest version excluding fragments contains 26 entries (Gießen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs 610; Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, Ms. 674; Uppsala, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, C 650).

As has already been mentioned, the herbal was most widely spread during the 15th century. To understand its tradition, it is necessary to take a closer look at the oldest manuscripts. The number of manuscripts from the 14th century has now increased by five, bringing the total to ten. Three of the newly found copies are located in Czech libraries. It is also worth mentioning that among the oldest manuscripts are four which contain a larger number of treatises from the *Melleus liquor* collection (see brackets).

- Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. quart. 1245, 1st half of the 14th century, 48 lemmas (seven treatises)
- Brno, Brno City Archives, St. James parish library, 113/110, 14th century, 52 lemmas (four treatises)
- Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms 1127, mid 14th century, 50 lemmas
- Madrid, Biblioteca nacional, 8769, 1st half of the 14th century, 42 lemmas (eleven treatises)
- München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 13076, mid 14th century, 43 lemmas

¹⁰ Daems & Keil (1982: pp. 398–402). They mentioned four Latin manuscripts, but based on my research 2 of them were German. This inaccurate information was also taken from him by Schnell (1989: pp. 186–191).

¹¹ The thesis is only available in manuscript form: Schnell (1989).

¹² Mauch (2005); Mauch (2006a); Mauch (2006b); Mauch (2006c); Mauch (2006d); Mauch (2006e).

¹³ Zachová (2013); Stehlíková (2017a); Stehlíková (2017b).

- München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 4374, mid 14th century, 53 lemmas
- Nelahozeves, the Lobkowicz Library, VI Fc 29, late 14th century, 51 lemmas
- Prague, the Prague Castle Archive, the Library of the Metropolitan Chapter, M XXIV, late 14th century, 41 lemmas (four treatises)
- Prague, the National Library, X C 5, late 14th century, 42 lemmas
- Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 295 Extr., late 14th century, 29 lemmas (six treatises)

If we roughly compare these manuscripts we can state the following remarks:

- The macrostructure of the Madrid and the Prague Chapter manuscript is almost identical except for one lemma.
- The manuscripts from Brno and Nelahozeves have only one swapped lemma but are otherwise identical. These manuscripts are closest to Hauberg's edition, both in the number and order of lemmas.
- The Berlin manuscript differs from the other manuscripts in that it has shortened entries.
- The rest of the manuscripts vary significantly in the order of lemmas.

As far as the Bohemian tradition is concerned, the *Galganum herbal* was very popular and spread in a large number of manuscripts. Even today of the total amount of 85 manuscripts, 18 Latin copies of the herbal are stored in the Czech Republic and for many of them the Bohemian origin is undoubted. Some of these manuscripts closely resemble printed editions, with similar order and number of lemmas. Others differ significantly, which is common with herbals, as each scribe adapted the text to their own needs.¹⁴ The herbal was not only copied but also became the basis for several Old-Czech translations, although it was previously thought that its vernacular versions were limited to the Germanic languages.¹⁵ In the 16th century, the herbal was also printed in a shortened form.¹⁶

In terms of the order and number of lemmas, some of the copies from Czech libraries dating back to the 15th century are very close to the 14th century manuscripts mentioned above. The Prague manuscript VI F 11 is completely identical to the Madrid manuscript. Another four manuscripts (Nelahozeves, the Lobkowicz Library, VI Fc 14; the Prague Castle Archives, the Library of the Prague Chapter, M VIII;

¹⁴ Schnell (2019: pp. 301–302).

¹⁵ Not only the herbal, but also other parts of the *Melleus liquor* were translated, see Stehlíková (2017a: p. 198); Stehlíková (2017b).

¹⁶ Stehlíková (2017a: pp. 202–206).

Prague, the Library of the Royal Canonry of Premonstratensians at Strahov, DG IV 13 and Prague, the National Library, XIV D 24¹⁷⁾) are related to the Brno manuscript from the end of the 14th century and are therefore also close to the Hauberg's edition.

While grouping the manuscripts into families based on the order and number of lemmas provides some insight, it is not sufficient to establish clear relationships between the manuscripts due to the large variability in the surviving texts. Future research must focus on the contextual analysis of how these herbals were traditionally circulated. Specifically, attention should be given to the groups of *Melleus liquor* treatises that often accompany the herbal. Although Ute Mauch has explored this approach, the newly discovered manuscripts should be reexamined to refine our understanding. It is notable that some fixed groups of treatises seem to have originated as early as the 14th century and were frequently copied, while the oldest (Madrid) manuscript, which contains the largest collection of *Melleus liquor* treatises, may have been quite isolated. A particularly interesting discovery is the mid-15th century Munich manuscript (Universitätsbibliothek, oct. Cod. ms. 347), which matches the order of the 42 entries in the *Galganum Herbal* and the number of treatises.

A deeper exploration of the origins of these fixed groups could help determine whether any existed prior to the Madrid manuscript and were used for compiling the largest redaction of the *Melleus liquor*. Furthermore, if the collection of *Melleus liquor* has Bavarian or Austrian origins, the high number of Bohemian manuscripts and early Old-Czech translations may point to a potential origin for the collection in South Bohemia, as this region shares linguistic ties with Bavaria and Austria. The newly discovered manuscripts provide a valuable starting point for further research to address these important questions.

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17 It has the same order but a smaller number of lemmas.

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The Latin *Galganum herbal* – an updated list of manuscripts¹⁸

1. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 2o Cod. 572, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 20v–26v (Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)

18 Manuscripts that we have not personally examined are marked with an asterisk.

2. Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 4 Cod 235, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 200r–206v
3. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. germ. quart. 1245, 1st half of the 14th century, ff. 49r–51r (Crossgrove 1980, Schnell 1989, Schnell & Crossgrove 2003, Mauch 2006)
4. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. lat. quart. 181, 14th/15th century, ff. 25v–28b, ff. 34v
5. Brno, Archiv města Brna, Knihovna fary u sv. Jakuba, 113/110, 14th century, ff. 54v–66v
6. Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, Hs 10, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 6v–13r
7. Eger, Föegyházmegyei Könyvtár, B. V. 3, late 15th century, ff. 291r–296r
8. Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, Ms. 554, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 173v–178v
9. Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen-Nürnberg, Ms. 674, 15th century, ff. 112r–113r
10. Gdańsk, Polska Akademia Nauk Biblioteka Gdańska, Ms. Mar. F 253, 15th century, 198v–201r
11. Gießen, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs 610, 15th century, ff. 17v–19r (Hauberg 1936, Schnell 1989, Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)
12. Graz, Universitätsbibliothek, 1295, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 168v–172v
13. København, Københavns Universitet, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling, Cod. A. M. 792, 4o, 15th century, ff. 147r–152v (Hauberg 1936, Schnell 1989 erroneously under Uppsala)
14. København, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Gammel Kongelig Samling 3457, 8o, 16th century, ff. 144v–151r (Hauberg 1936, Schnell 1989)
15. Krakow, Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Cod. 774, 15th century, ff. 80r–81v
16. Kremsmünster, Stiftsbibliothek, CC 16, 15th century, ff. 252v–257v
17. Křivoklát, Zámecká knihovna, I d 20, 15th century, ff. 47v–56v
18. Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms 84, mid 15th century, ff. 91r–93v
19. Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, Ms 1127, mid 14th century, ff. 128r–134r
20. London, British Museum, Arundel, MSS 334, 15th century, ff. 100v–115v
21. London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, HS. 549, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 212r–216v (Keil 1985)
22. London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, HS. 555, mid 15th century, ff. 1r–4v (Keil 1985)
23. Los Angeles, University of California, Biomedical Library, Benjamin MS 1.11, mid 15th century* (Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)
24. Madrid, Biblioteca nacional, 8769, 1st half of the 14th century, ff. 14v–20r (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989, Mauch 2006)

25. Melk, Benediktinerstift, Cod. 686 (770, O 5), 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 227va–233vb
26. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 720, late 15th century, ff. 221r–224v, ff. 266r–281r
27. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 724, mid 15th century, ff. 72v–82v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)
28. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 3661, 15th century, ff. 28r–28v
29. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4374, mid 14th century, ff. 231r–234v
30. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 7744, 15th century, ff. 45r–52r (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)
31. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 7755, mid 15th century, ff. 140v–148r (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989, Nicoud 2016)
32. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 13076, mid 14th century, ff. 20v–23v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)
33. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14526, 4th quarter of the 15th century, ff. 124r–134r
34. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14574, 15th century, ff. 181v–183r
35. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14662, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 125v–127v
36. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14706, 15th century, ff. 3v–7r
37. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14764, 15th century, ff. 67r–75r
38. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 19701, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 22r–26v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)
39. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 24816, 15th century, ff. 15v–19v (Mauch 2006, Nicoud 2016)
40. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 25072, mid 15th century, pp. 143–160 (Mauch 2006)
41. München, Universitätsbibliothek, oct. Cod. ms. 347, 15th century, ff. 255v–265r
42. Nelahozeves, Roudnická lobkowiczká knihovna, VI Fc 29, late 14th century, pp. 51–60
43. Nelahozeves, Roudnická lobkowiczká knihovna, VI Fc 14, mid 15th century, pp. 303–309
44. New Haven, Yale university, Mellon MS 9, mid 15th century, ff. 153v–160r
45. Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Bibliothek, Hs. 34399, 15th century, ff. 5r–9v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Mauch 2006)
46. Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum. Bibliothek, Hs 5848, 15th century, ff. 1v–5v*
47. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Wood empt. 25, sign. 8613, late 15th century, ff. 17r–35r (Thorndike & Kibre 1963)

48. Praha, Archiv Pražského hradu, Knihovna metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta, M VIII, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 92r–99r
49. Praha, Archiv Pražského hradu, Knihovna metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta, M XXIV, late 14th century, ff. 149v–152r
50. Praha, Knihovna Národního muzea, XI D 28, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 41rv–48v
51. Praha, Královská kanonie premonstrátů na Strahově, DG IV 13, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 78v–89v
52. Praha, Národní knihovna, I E 42, 14th/15th century, ff. 34r–36v
53. Praha, Národní knihovna, V A 7, 14th/15th century, ff. 14v–17v
54. Praha, Národní knihovna, VI F 11, 14th/15th century, ff. 127v–133v
55. Praha, Národní knihovna, X C 5, late 14th century, ff. 113r–115v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)
56. Praha, Národní knihovna, XI C 2, 15th century, ff. 147v–155r
57. Praha, Národní knihovna, XIV D 24, 15th century, ff. 72r–79v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)
58. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. med. et phys. 2o 33, 15th century, ff. 250v–267r (Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)
59. Solothurn, Zentralbibliothek, Cod. S 474, 15th century, ff. 32v–35v* (Schnell 1989)
60. Trier, Stadtbibliothek, Ms. 8o 306/1978, 15th century, ff. 5r–11v*
61. Uppsala, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, C 650, late 15th century, ff. 60r–63r
62. Uppsala, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, D 600, 8o, 15th century, pp. 175–195 (Hauberg 1936, Schnell 1989)
63. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2864, 15th century, ff. 364v–368v
64. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2962, 15th century, ff. 60v–66r (Schnell 1989)
65. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 4978, 15th century, ff. 67r–87r (Thorndike & Kibre 1963)
66. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 5295, 15th century, ff. 49v–69r* (Daems & Keil 1982, Schnell 1989)
67. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 295 Extr., late 14th century, ff. 46r–56r (Mauch 2006, Nicoud 2016)
68. Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 912 Helmst., 15th century, ff. 17r–19v (Schnell 1989, Mauch 2006, Nicoud 2016)
69. Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, III F 24, mid 15th century, ff. 169r–174v*
70. Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. ch. f. 293, 15th century*
71. Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Cod. Car. C 111, mid 15th century, ff. 64r–67v (Thorndike & Kibre 1963, Schnell 1989)

Latin Fragments (*Streuüberlieferung*)

72. Darmstadt, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt, Hs 783, 14th/15th century, ff. 329r–330v
73. Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden, Mscr.Dresd.P.29, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 78r–78v
74. Freiburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 19, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 118r–118v (Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)
75. København, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Ny Kongelig Samling 67, 8o, 16th century, (Hauberg 1936, Schnell 1989)
76. København, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Ny Kongelig Samling 134, 4o, 15th/16th century (Hauberg 1936, Schnell 1989)
77. Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, 1226, mid 15th century, ff. 1r–3v (Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)
78. Mainz, Stadtbibliothek, Hs I 300, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 126v–127r
79. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 822, mid 15th century, ff. 33r–36v (Schnell & Crossgrove 2003)
80. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 5905, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 48r
81. Olomouc, Vědecká knihovna v Olomouci, M I 359, f. 153
82. Praha, Archiv Pražského hradu, Knihovna metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta, M I, 1st half of the 15th century, ff. 58v–59v
83. Praha, Knihovna Národního muzea, II F 2, 15th century, f. 100r–v
84. Praha, Královská kanonie premonstrátů na Strahově, DC III 3, 15th century, ff. 192–193
85. Solothurn, Zentralbibliothek, Cod. S 386, 2nd half of the 15th century, ff. 175r–175v (Daems & Keil 1982, Schnell 1989)

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