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A trio of the oldest botanists of East Slovakia

Ivan Hrabovec

Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Klemensova 19, CS - 813 64 Bratislava, ČSFR

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ABSTRACT: LUKÁŠ PEECHI, born before 1548 in Pečovská Nová Ves (Prešov county) was the author of the first comprehensive work on plants published in Hungary of the past. ANDREJ JASLINSKÝ (born 1715 in Snina, Hunemmé county) was a Trnava University professor, his textbook of physics had given attention to flora as well. ŽIGMUND HORVÁTOVSKÝ (born 1746 in Bardejov) was one of the first graduates of the Faculty of Medicine of Trnava University, his PhD. thesis had pertained to the local flora of Slovakia.

KEYWORDS: History of botany, East Slovakia, biography.

When studying the history of botany in Slovakia one learns that the author of the first work on plants printed in Hungary of the past was LUKÁŠ PEECHI, a native of East Slovakia. ANDREJ JASLINSKÝ, a professor of Trnava University recognized for the spread of education at the state-of-art level of the period, was also born in East Slovakia, as was one of the graduates of the same University, ŽIGMUND HORVÁTOVSKÝ.

In 1591 a description of medicinal herbs cultivated in gardens, the first one ever published in Hungary and containing 28 wood engravings, was printed in Trnava. The book contained descriptions of *Primula veris, Dianthus plumarius, Cheiranthus cheiri, Viola odorata, Mentha pulegium, Lychnis coronaria, Viola tricolor, Ruta graveolens, Rosmarinus officinalis, Narcissus poeticus, Hyssopus officinalis, Bellis perennis, Santolina chamaecyparissus, Majorana hortensis, Amaranthus hybridus, Ocimum basalicum, Tagetes patula, Lavandula angustifolia, Rosa* sp. hortensis and *Valeriana celtica.* The

author of the texts and the engravings was LUKÁŠ PEECHI (Péči, Pécsi) born before 1548 in Pečovská Nová Ves in the county of Prešov. Peechi had graduated as bachelor in law at the University of Cracow, upon graduation he had been travelling in West Europe, then settled down in Trnava at the age of thirty. He became collaborator and administrator of the book printing office and publishing house of calendars but his activities included those of a lawyer, graphic artist and writer. He was not a clerical personality or a Jesuit, as older German and Hungarian works have erroneously shown but a layman, as confirmed by Peechi himself in one of his works containing his own wood engraving showing his wife Martha and sons Ladislav and Imrich. He died probably in the year 1604.

General botany, at the level of that period, has been taught at Trnava University as early as the mid-18th century, similarly as in other, West European universities. The Trnava professors were giving attention to the flora and fauna also in their textbooks of physics. These chapters are also found in the book of Professor ANDREJ JASLINSKÝ, "Tuition in Physics". JASLINSKÝ was born on 1st September, 1715 in Snina (Humenné county). He studied at Trnava and Vienna universities. Himself a Jesuit, he became a professor of theology and philosophy at Vienna University, and later in Trnava where he also was the last Chancellor of this university. After that he went to work as canonist in Rožňava where, on the 1st January 1783, he died. In his textbook JASLINSKÝ has denounced scholasticism as a method of gaining knowledge, and appreciated experience and experiments as a supporter of Newtonian physics and of the Copernican heliocentric system. The second volume of his textbook contains a chapter on plants, explaining their substance and characteristic features, seeds and the way plants grow from seeds. He maintained that all plants originate from the seeds of their species rather than from random collections of elements or from putrefaction, as it had been explained before. JASLINSKÝ substantiated his statements by the work of the Italian natural scientist and physicain, FRANCESCO REDI who had critisized the conception of self-reproduction in 1668, challenging the species metamorphosis theory and referring to the works of MARCELLO MALPIGHI and ANTONIO VALLISNERI, Italian physicians. JASLINSKÝ has challenged and reflused Vallisneri's theory of preformism as irrational, maintaining that the germ already holds all properties and signs of the adult organism. His textbook contains a microscopic image of a plant tissue, pointing out the interlinkage of fibrous formations and diaphragmatic tubes with air channels in the transversal system. The same textbook also contained chapters dedicated to zoology.

In 1769 the Faculty of Medicine was established at Trnava University, instigating further development of the natural sciences as well. One of the five departments of the Faculty was that of botany and chemistry, with JOZEF JAKUB WINTERL as first Professor of the department. He was credited with the important fact that five graduates of this Faculty prepared their theses on botanical themes. First of these, terminating his studies at the Faculty of Medicine in the 1773/74 schoolyear was ŽIGMUND HORVÁTOVSKÝ. He was born on 22nd May, 1746 in Bardejov. His doctoral thesis, The Flora of Trnava was, in fact, the first work on local Hungarian flora. The book is commenced with explanations of characteristics which are then used in the brief descriptions of individual plant species. Those not found in the vicinity of Trnava are categorized by the author as "most rare", "rare", "growing in special places only", and generally known and widespread species. The morphological variability of plants was given detailed attention in the book which showed 120 genera and 230 species, classified by the LINNÉ system. The Flora remained however unfinished because HORVÁTOVSKÝ had included only 11 classes and a supplement from the total number (24) of LINNÉ's classes, in the majority of cases with generic designations as used until recent days: *Chenopodiaceae, Santalaceae, Apiaceae, Boraginaceae, Solanaceae, Schrophulariaceae, Campanulaceae* and *Poaceae.* Two new species were also presented by HORVÁTOVSKÝ - *Dactylis polygama* (Page 15), *Epilobium parviflorum* (Page 37) as well as two *Solanum nigrum* varieties. Current European floras accept two species from the HORVÁTOVSKÝ thesis: *Dactylis polygama* HORVÁTOVSZKY 1774, and *Thesium arvense* HORVÁTOVSZKY 1774. ELIÁŠ (1991) expressed doubts whether the introduction and the survey of taxa in the thesis were written by the same author, Ž. HORVÁTOVSKÝ, since the introduction is showing *Epilobium mollissimum* and *Dactylis polygama* as new species whereas the review of taxa fails to designate *Dactylis polygama* as a new taxon similarly to *Thesium arvense* (that was not mentioned in the introduction at all). The introduction may have been actually written by Professor J. WINTERL since at that time it was by no means unheard-of that a Professor was also a co-author of undergraduates' theses.

Summary

The paper describes the history of botany in the East Slovak region, familiarizing the reader with the biography and work of the oldest botanists born in Eastern Slovakia.

Súhrn

LUKÁŠ PEECHI bol autorom prvej práce o rastlinách, ktorá vyšla tlačou v bývalom Uhorsku. Narodil sa pred rokom 1548 v Pečovskej Novej Vsi, okres Prešov. ANDREJ JASLINSKÝ pôsobil ako profesor na Trnavskej univerzite. Narodil sa roku 1715 v Snine, okres Humenné. Vo svojej učebnici fyziky venoval pozornosť aj rastlinstvu. Medzi prvými absolventmi lekárskej fakulty na univerzite v Trnave bol ŽIGMUND HORVÁTOVSKÝ, narodený roku 1746 v Bardejove. Jeho dizertácia bola prvou lokálnou flórou na Slovenskom území.

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