

ACIÀ

MVSEI  
NAPOCENSIS

58 / II / 2021



MINISTERUL CULTURII  
MUZEUL NAȚIONAL DE ISTORIE A TRANSILVANIEI

# ACTA MVSEI NAPOCENSIS 58/II

HISTORICA  
2021

CLUJ-NAPOCA  
2021

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ACTA MVSEI NAPOCENSIS Publicație a Muzeului Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei. Orice corespondența se va adresa: Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei, 400020, Cluj-Napoca, str. Constanti Daicoviciu, nr. 2, Tel/fax: 004 0264 591718; Tel: 004 0264 595677. email: secretariat@mnit.ro	ACTA MVSEI NAPOCENSIS Publication of the National Museum of Transylvanian History. All correspondence will be sent to the address: National Museum of Transylvanian History, 400020 Cluj-Napoca, Constantin Daicoviciu St. no. 2, Tel/fax: 004 0264 591718; Tel: 004 0264 595677. email: secretariat@mnit.ro
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ISSN 1454-1521 (PRINT) și 2783-9710 (ONLINE)

DOI: 10.54145/ActaMN.58

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## PHARMATRANS. ALL THINGS APOTHECARY IN SIXTEENTH–TWENTIETH CENTURY TRANSYLVANIA. THE HISTORY OF PHARMACY COLLECTION IN CLUJ-NAPOCA\*

ANA-MARIA GRUIA\*\*


In 2021 the National Museum of Transylvanian History (hereafter MNIT) began implementing a three-year exploratory research project supported by the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research (UEFISCDI), code PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020–1562, that focuses on its History of Pharmacy Collection. The project envisages the publication in English of a complete collection's catalog, as well as the conservation, and restoration of some of these cultural goods. It also involves research of the history of pharmacy in Transylvania during the eighteenth century based on the previously unpublished sources in the collection (manuscripts, jars, tools, printed materials). These will be analyzed through innovative methods. They include complex chemical analyses of preserved pharmaceutical preparations (mass spectrometry, chromatography) and new data obtained through the ongoing restoration work of the oldest pharmacy in Cluj (the Hintz House that houses the collection). This will be the first exhaustive catalog of the collection. We envisage the publication of six volumes in 2023, comprising all of the ca. 2500 artifacts from the sixteenth–twentieth centuries). The series will be a valuable source for future studies, made available online and sent to 150 libraries in Romania and abroad through the book exchange network of the MNIT and the network of specialists and museums created through the project. The catalog will be made available online (in pdf format) on a dedicated website.

The **team** consists of project leader Ph.D. Ana-Maria Gruia, a specialist in the history of pharmacy, researcher Ph.D. Mária Pakucs, a specialist in paleography and economic history who will focus on the manuscripts in the collection, researcher Ph.D. Ioana Gruia, art historian and museographer, who will deal with the old books collection, Ph.D. candidate and conservation specialist Ioana Cova who will coordinate the manipulation and preservation of the items in the collection, and Ph.D. Alexandru Rădulescu will photograph the entire collection. The proposed activities and research are deeply interdisciplinary, at the intersection of fields of study such as entangled and global history, history of technology, social and economic history, cultural and museum studies (in which the project leader and the team members have studies and experience).

In connection to the **project's main objective**, i.e., the publication of its extensive catalog, the team has taken professional photographs of all 2416 artifacts, books, and manuscripts recorded under the 2362 inventory numbers during the first year. Ph.D. Alexandru Rădulescu has processed these photographs, and they have already

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\* This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, CNCS–UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020–1562, within PNCDI III.

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revealed new data on many of the cultural goods in question. The History of Pharmacy Collection has been recently moved for the first time since its opening, in the 1950s, in the Hintz House that hosts it and which is currently undergoing major renovations. On this occasion, we have identified a significant number of previously unknown items that we decided to include both in the inventory ledger and the project and its final catalog: four boxes full of financial documents from the Hintz pharmacy in Cluj and the Engel pharmacy in Iași (between the end of the nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth), documents about the history of the collection (Valeriu Bologa, previous museographers, blueprints of the museum), several education documents in the field of pharmacy, and several books. Another lot of druggist glass containers has just been uncovered during archaeological excavations in Cluj-Napoca (still ongoing), and we would like to add them to the collection as well. We estimate an extra 100 items (or small lots of similar items) in total, to be recorded and processed during the project's second year (with the pro bono continued cooperation of Ph.D. Alexandru Rădulescu).

One of the essential intermediate goals reached during this first year is identifying the intended structure of the catalog. There will be three types of records: one is typical to manuscripts (established by Ph.D. Mária Pakucs starting from the international standards of recording such goods), one typical to old books (established by Ph.D. Ioana Gruică), and the third type to all other artifacts (mainly apothecary jars, established by Ph.D. Ana-Maria Gruia). For the third type, we created an Airtable database with the following inter-linked tables: inventory numbers, sub-collections, people, bibliography, pharmacies, and cities. The first table includes fields about the description of each item or lot (hence the structuring according to 'inventory number' taken as the unit of analysis): type, category, sub-category, dating, dimensions, material, photographs, contents, the context of use, history of reuse, description, signature, decoration, state of conservation, previous restorations, date of acquisition, bibliography, keywords, therapeutic indications, etc. The second table includes items with shared characteristics and similar contexts of use (apothecary jars were usually produced in sets). Other tables grouped data regarding known personalities connected to the items in the collection, primarily pharmacists, pharmacies where the items were used, and the cities with such pharmacies. The final table is the bibliography, structuring the data on books, articles, and catalogs where items in the collection have been published before. The database will allow team members to structure, store and access the data more easily and collaboratively. The final catalog will start from the exported database entries and include transcriptions, translations, and conservation files.

For the introductory volume of the catalog, Ph.D. Ana-Maria Gruia has secured the collaboration of several specialists: Ph.D. Melinda Mitu, museographer at the National Museum of Transylvanian History, will prepare an article on the biography of Hintz György; Ph.D. Kovács Zsolt, lecturer at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj, intends to publish two papers, one dealing with the history of the Hintz House (the site of the oldest pharmacy in Cluj-Napoca that houses our collection, recently clarified during restoration works and wall-face researches) and the other focusing on the Jesuit pharmacy in town, along with one of its unpublished inventories; Ph.D. Cosmin Rusu, lecturer at the same university, will contribute with a paper on the history of sanitation and healthcare in Cluj. M.D. Robert Offner has offered to become a collaborator of the project (probably

preparing a text on Tobias Maucksch, the privileged pharmacist of Cluj in the eighteenth century). For this initial volume, Ph.D. Ana-Maria Gruia will write the introduction, a detailed presentation of the history of the collection (including an interview with Ph.D. Eva Crişan, its first curator), and a thorough analysis of the item categories. Ph.D. Mária Pakucs and Ph.D. Ioana Gruită will write the introductory studies of the volumes focusing on the manuscripts and old books in the collection.

The project has several intermediate objectives. The **first secondary objective** is to provide team members the opportunity to visit history of pharmacy museums in order to gain insight into their conservation, restoration, and display strategies, to acquire specialized secondary literature regarding such collections for analogies, and in-depth knowledge of the state of the art, and networking. Most of these visits took place in 2021, as team members visited a number of significant museums, in five countries: **Romania**, in Oradea (Muzeul Farmaciei – ‘Apotheca Rodia’), Sibiu (Muzeul de Istorie a Farmaciei), and Sighişoara (Muzeul de Istorie); **Hungary**, in Budapest (‘Arany Sas’ Patikamúzeum), Székesfehérvár (‘Fekete Sas’ Patikamúzeum), Kőszeg (‘Aranyi Egyszárvu’ Patikaháza and ‘Fekete Szerecseny’ Patikaháza), and Kecskemet (Orvos- és Gyógyszerészettörténeti Gyűjtemény); the **Czech Republic**, in Český Krumlov (the Jesuit pharmacy collection part of the Regionální muzeum Český Krumlov), Klatovy (the Barokní Lékárna u Bílého Jednorožce), Kuks (the impressive Czech Pharmaceutical Museum, Hospital Kuks), and Prague (the Historical Museum and the Natural History Museum); **Austria**, in Graz (the pharmacy collection of the Graz Museum, currently closed to the general public) and Mauthausen (the history of pharmacy collection inside the Pragstein Castle); and **Italy**, in Venice (Ca Rezzonico, Farmacia ai do San Marchi, Palazzo Mocenigo, Museo d’Historia Naturale di Venezia). These visits have provided a general context for the research of the collection in Cluj. They have allowed team members to establish personal connections with specialists from Central and Eastern Europe.

The **second intermediate objective** is to clean, consolidate, and restore the artifacts that require such specialized interventions (ca. 500 artifacts). More than 200 artifacts of the collection have been or are still being cleaned, conserved, or restored by specialists of the MNIT in 2021. The selected items, made of paper, parchment, glass, ceramics, and metal, have been processed and documented by Ioana Cova (team member) and several colleagues from the conservation and restoration department that she coordinates: Cornelia Rotariu, an expert in the restoration of ceramic cultural goods, Tudor Tomescu, expert restorer of artifacts made of ceramic, glass, faience, and porcelain, Radu Cordoş, engineer, expert restorer of metal items, and Adriana Bulbuc, expert restorer of paper goods. The pharmaceutical collection is generally in a good state of preservation. Except for a few cases of actual restoration (broken containers), the interventions were focused on cleaning and consolidating the patrimony goods.

The **third specific objective** is to gain new knowledge on the artifacts in the collection through the latest methods: microscope investigation, micro-photographs, and especially chemical analyses of *materia medica* preserved in some of the old containers. In 2021 the team has identified the containers from which samples will be collected next year. They will be sent for analysis locally, in Cluj-Napoca, or at the Department of Chemistry and Industrial Chemistry of the University in Pisa. The exact list will be decided upon at

the beginning of 2022. The laboratory in Pisa has specialized in such research through a national project entitled *Colors and balms in Antiquity: from the chemical study to the knowledge of technologies in cosmetics, paintings, and medicine* (2007) that involved analytical studies of pharmaceutical preparations from historical collections (seventeenth–nineteenth centuries). The most important advantage of this department's experience is its expertise in performing and interpreting the results of such chromatographic and mass spectrometric analyses. The team led by Prof. Maria Perla Colombini has created a database of biomolecular markers by analyzing reference materials, replicas of old formulations, and artificial aging of both reference materials and replicas. The results are subsequently interpreted in the context of written historical sources to reconstruct the original recipes of the formulations and the processes involved, thus with the cooperation of the institution holding/commissioning the analyses. In the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the samples, we will benefit from the cooperation of Ph.D. Márta Guttmann, chemist and expert conservator, lecturer at the University of Sibiu. An interesting discussion has arisen around the opportunity and appropriate methods of collecting samples from tightly sealed eighteenth century containers in the collection (in order not to damage them in any way). The matter will be decided during the second year of the project.

Taking digital micro-photographs of relevant details found on items from the History of Pharmacy Collection is a novel research method envisaged by the project. Ph.D. Magó Andrea Beatrix, working for the MNIT, is the specialist collaborator for this task. Her analyses will allow us to clarify faded inscriptions, production details (bookbinding decoration or painting layers on drug jars, for example), and identify some of the materials employed (parchment vs. paper), natural specimens preserved, and previous interventions. The use of ultraviolet and infrared light is sometimes very relevant for our research that focuses on different materials. She has already tested the Mic-Fi – VIS/IR/UV digital microscope and has performed an initial set of four in-depth analyses (compiling observation files).

The **fourth objective** is to transcribe, translate, and analyze all manuscripts in the collection, most of which have never been edited before. This lot mainly consists of handwritten pharmacy inventories, pharmaceutical taxes, study diplomas, manuscripts, labels, prescriptions, and book annotations. Ph.D. Mária Pakucs has become acquainted with the specific traits of many manuscripts dating from the seventeenth and the eighteenth century (chronology, languages, scripts, terminology) and has performed contextual research (such as the apothecary prescriptions of Baron Samuel von Brukenthal and his family kept at the County Branch of the National Archives in Sibiu, the Brukenthal Collection, inventory CD 1–51). She has transcribed and translated an eighteenth-century manuscript sheet (from the apothecary chest of Tereza Kemény) and some of the manuscript annotations of Giovanni Battista Gusetti on one of the old books in the collection. Mária Pakucs has also read and started transcribing the following manuscripts: *Inventarium von der Maros Vasarhelyen Apothecken etc. 1790* ('The 1790 inventory of the apothecary shop in Târgu-Mureș') and *Prothocollum ellaboratorum apothecae neo-erectae Armenopolitanae a prima Iunii 1788* ('The 1788 inventory of the apothecary shop in Gherla'). Ph.D. Ioana Gruitǎ, in charge of the manuscripts dated to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has already fully transcribed and translated Iosif Țiucra's *Carte de mână pentru nedoctori* ('Hand-written book for non-doctors,' 1878) and has processed about 60 old books.



Due to the problematic reading of some of the manuscripts, their numerous pages, and the documents recently discovered in the Hintz House, we might have to select only the most important ones to transcribe and translate fully. Others, such as the financial documents, the prescriptions, and various lists, will only be accompanied by an abstract of their contents.

The **fifth objective** of the project is to research and present the most relevant discoveries made regarding the history of pharmacy during eighteenth-century Transylvania as reflected by the collection under discussion during international conferences and at least three articles in prestigious periodicals (ISI/ErihPlus). Though the research of the topic has already started, the most significant contributions will be obtained from combining the results of the chemical analyses with the new data from the manuscript collection and the context of the era's pharmaceutical practice and mentalities. During the first year of the project, team members have already delivered two presentations during international meetings. Ana-Maria Gruia took part in the international conference entitled *Health, disease, and healing in old Cluj (The history of healthcare until the end of the nineteenth century)*, held online by the Association of the Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület on 1 and 2 October 2021. Her presentation was entitled *From bezoar and cantharidis to deer antler. Medicines of animal origin in the History of Pharmacy Collection in Cluj-Napoca*. Ioana Cova participated in the International Conference of Doctoral Candidates in History organized online on 12–13 November 2021 by the Doctoral School of the 'Babeş-Bolyai' University in Cluj. Her presentation was entitled *How archaeological items become museum objects: a pharmaceutical archaeological glass collection*.

The **sixth objective** is to promote the project, its activities, and results through a dedicated website, posts on social media platforms, press releases, and a book launch event in 2023. The logo and the bilingual website of the project have already been created. The website, <https://pharmatrans.mnit.ro>, in Romanian and English, is connected to the website of the National Museum of Transylvanian History in Cluj-Napoca. It has the role of promoting the project, the collection, and including, upon completion, the catalog in a free download format. In 2021 we have completed the website's information (project details, team, goals, results, contact). We have added more than 40 blog posts in Romanian and English, detailing some of the activities already performed. On the leading social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram), we have posted and promoted more than 50 posts (all marked with the hashtags #pharmatrans #mnit and #uefiscdi, maximum individual reach 11.7 K).

Through the completion of the project, we hope that the catalog will become a helpful tool for future researches in Romania and abroad, providing the basic data for study and comparative material for other collections. The project will also contribute to the conservation, restoration, and promotion of Transylvania/Romania's cultural (and technical) heritage. The research results of the current project can become a model of an inter-disciplinary approach applied to the eighteenth-century history of pharmacy in Transylvania.

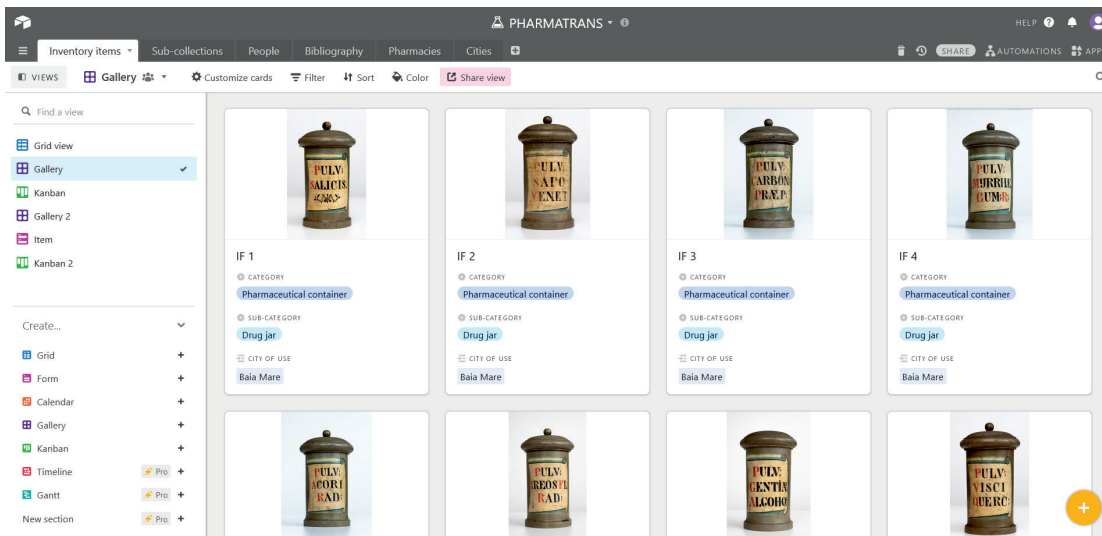




**Fig. 1.** Homepage of the dedicated website, affiliated to the website of the National Museum of Transylvanian History: phmatrans.mnit.ro.



**Fig. 2.**  
Ph.D. Alexandru  
Rădulescu  
photographing an  
apothecary jar.



**Fig. 3.** The structure of the Airtable database employed for the structuring, collaborative access, and future export of data regarding the items in the History of Pharmacy Collection.



**Fig. 4.** Ph.D. Magó Andrea Beatrix taking micro-photographs.





Fig. 5. Apothecary jars made of glass, with painted decoration, after restoration.



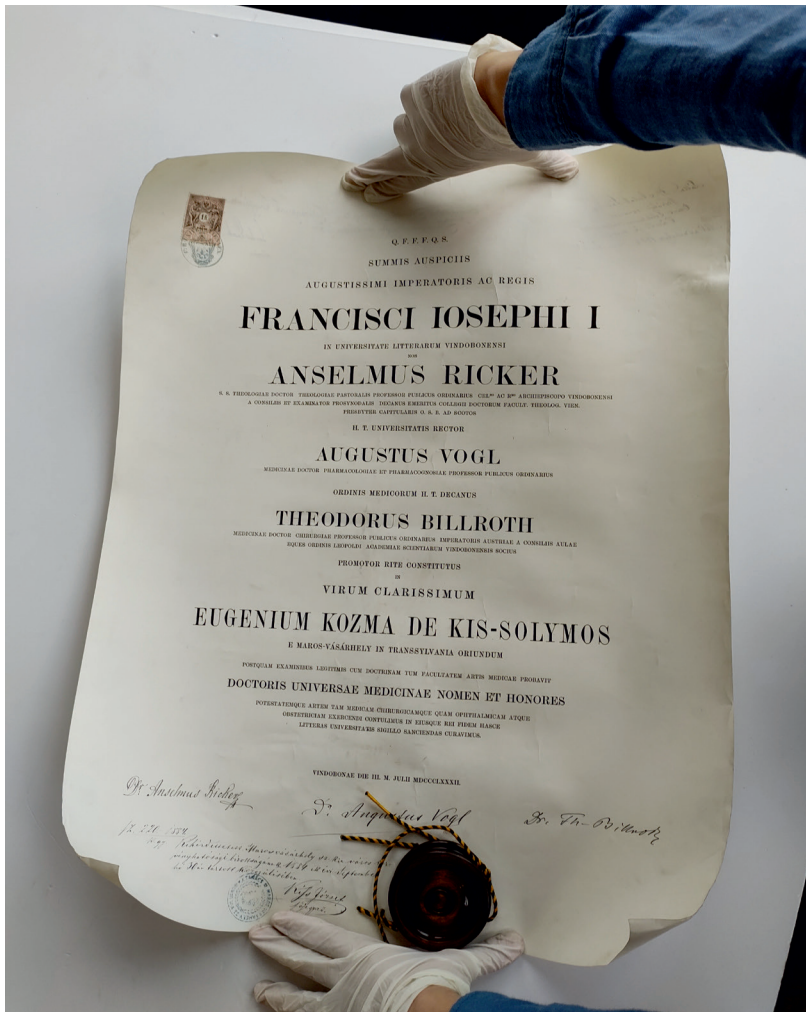
Fig. 7. Cornelia Rotariu restoring a lot of apothecary containers made of glass and pottery.



Fig. 6. Radu Cordoș conserving an apothecary laboratory vessel made of metal.



**Fig. 8.** Lot of druggist glass bottle recently uncovered on Iuliu Maniu Street in Cluj-Napoca (archaeological rescue excavation coordinated by Ph.D. Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț in 2020).



**Fig. 9.** Medicine doctor diploma issued by the University in Vienna in 1882, without an inventory number.





**Fig. 10.** Baroque apothecary furniture from the White Unicorn Pharmacy Museum in Klatovy, The Czech Republic (visited in July 2021).