



ti·sane ti-'zan, -'zân, *n.*

Etymology: Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin *ptisana*, from Greek *ptisanē*, literally, crushed barley, from *ptissein* to crush – Date: 14th century : an infusion (as of dried herbs) used as a beverage or for medicinal effects

To get on our mailing list, e-mail to newbrg@aol.com or drop an old-fashioned note to the return address on the mailer. Once our mailing list is set up, sample issues will be available for a stamp or SASE. (Yes, that is subject to change, too!)

If you are on line, join us on the sca-herbalist mailing list (go to www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist to sign up).

While you're on line, take a look at our website at

www.eastkingdom.org/guilds/herb

Do you have a favorite herb, gardening tip, historical tidbit, or recipe? Maybe a book you think the world should share? That's perfect for this newsletter — send it to the Chronicler!

The quarterly
newsletter of the
Herbalists and Apothecaries' Guild
of the East Kingdom

Volume 4, Issue 1

March, 2003

Mission Statement:

The goal of the Eastern Kingdom Herbalist's and Apothecaries' Guild is to encourage study, teaching and practice of medieval herb uses, as well as study of medieval apothecary and pharmacy practice, in the East Kingdom. The Guild should serve as a conduit for herbalists and apothecaries in the kingdom to communicate with and learn from each other, and to disseminate knowledge about medieval herbalism and pharmacy to others.

Greetings from the Agitator!

Despite the biting cold, there's been some activity in the Guild.

A number of guild members did attend 12th Night and present our tithe to the queen. Unfortunately, we were not able to do so in court, as there were too many orders of business. The items were presented to Her Majesty during the dancing later in the evening.

I'm hoping that I remembered everything that went into those baskets but my memory is a little shaky, so if I missed someone, please know that the Queen got your name when we made the tithe and please also write to me and tell me so we can print a correction!

Tithe contributors

Johanna Le Mercer (comfit containers)

Ysabeau du St. Wandrielle and Tiecia O'Scanlan (rose sachets; Dodoen's sleep pillows, in embroidered sachets)

Carowyn SilverOak (etched boxes with 'a present from the East' in runes)

Jadwiga (fighter balm, Hungary water, comfits)

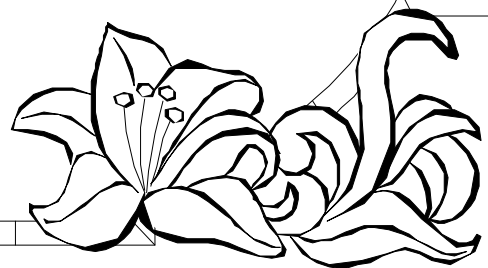
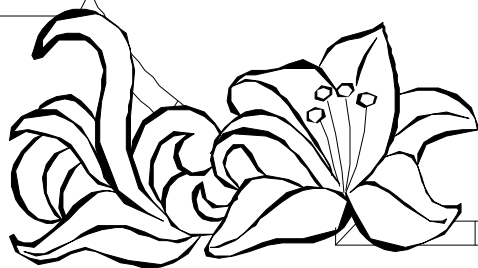
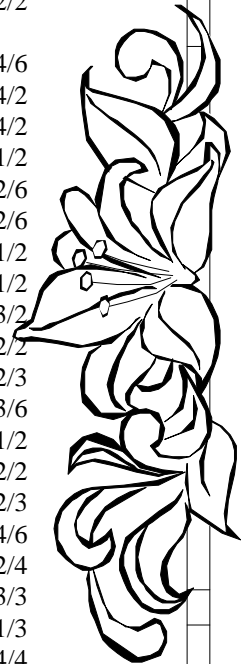
Gennevot du Lac (six bottles of herb mixture, two containers of fighter balm)

Briana MacBain (soaps)

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When is a weed?

Every gardener has a “favorite” weed — the nuisance you can never completely eradicate. The abundant plant you *wish* had some useful value. The plant that heaps your compost up to double size and *still* there are sprigs in the herb garden. And it’s only partly helpful to remember that “a weed is simply a plant growing in the wrong place.” Sometimes, it’s growing in the wrong *time*, too.

In my garden, the Resident Weed is ground elder. Also known as Bishop’s Weed and Goutweed, *Aegopodium podagraria* was a lot more popular in earlier times than it is now. In *All Good Things Around Us*, the book on which most of this article is based, Pamela Michael notes that while many sources “credit” (or debit) goutweed’s introduction into England to the Romans, it is more likely a Norman addition, being grown in monastery gardens as a medicinal to treat — what else? — gout.

Gerard, indeed, wrote that it “is so fruitful in his increase that where it hath once taken roote, it will hardly be gotten out again, spoiling and getting every yeere more ground, to the annoying of better herbes.” (There is another “Bishop’s Weed,” which is *Ammi majus*, an annual.) This rather tells us that it wasn’t wildly popular with Gerard, either. He doesn’t mention whether it annoyed him that one alternative name was “Herb Gerard,” for the St. Gerard who was invoked for gout cures, but he gives directions for making a poultice to ease the symptoms of gout.

Culpeper was more positive, recommending it for sciatica and arthritis besides gout. And, to get slightly out of period, *The Family Herbal* of Sir John Hill said that the root and young leaves, used as a poultice for gout, “should not be confined to this pain alone: it will succeed in others.”

Linnaeus considered it a spring vegetable, and it still so considered in Russia and Lithuania. As Michael concludes, “*we can eat the pest!*”



Ground Elder Greens

Pick off stalks and wash leaves. Cook gently for ten minutes, season with butter, salt and pepper. (Michaels warns that the pungent smell disappears during cooking.)

Ground Elder Soup

1 heaped colander of spring ground elder leaves
2 T butter
1 small onion
1½ T flour
2½ C stock
1¼ milk
salt and pepper

Strip out the heavier stalks and wash the leaves well. Cook in a little boiling, salted water for five minutes and drain.

Melt the butter, chop the onion and cook it until soft; stir in flour, add stock and bring slowly to a boil., Season. Add the leaves, cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Rub the soup through a sieve (or blender) then add the milk and reheat. Serves 4

Ground Elder Rice Cakes

½ colander leaves
½ C uncooked long grain rice
3 slices bacon
1 medium onion, chopped
4 T flour
½ t baking powder
pepper
1 egg

Remove stalks and wash leaves. Cook rice for 12 minutes and drain. Chop bacon into small pieces and fry until brown; remove bacon and fry onion in the bacon fat until soft. Shred leaves and add to bacon, with rice and onion. Shake in flour and pepper and mix with a fork. Add the egg, mix, and shape mixture into small cakes. Roll them in flour and fry in butter to make eight fritters.

Other names for this plant are: Jack-jump-about, Goatweed, Ashweed, English Masterwort, Pigweed, Eltroot, Bishop's Elder, Weyl Ash, White Ash, Ground Ash.

Michael, Pamela, *All Good Things Around Us*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980.
Grieve, Mrs. M., *A Modern Herbal*. www.botanical.com



The Historical Herbalist

One of the projects of the Guild is to produce an introductory publication for SCA herbalists. This booklet, modelled after the well-known *Forward Into the Past*, will include basic information, a bibliography, and contact information. Rather than getting into the business of publishing, we plan to put this work on the World Wide Web in pdf format so local groups or individuals can download it and make as many copies as they need.

A committee has been formed and is busily writing (and drawing). For information on the project, e-mail the Chronicler at newbrg@aol.com.

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Submitted by Sulis ban Drui

From a class presented at the
EK Herbalists' and Apothecaries' Symposium
in Settmour Swamp, October 12, 2002

Just as the Chinese language is based on pictographs and not linear bits of information, so the philosophy underlying TCM requires use of the right brain and not the left. The first stretch for the western mind, then, is to think intuitively and symbolically, not rationally in a linear fashion.

The circle is our starting point, and to the ancient Chinese, it represented the limitless potential energy of the universe. It symbolizes both fullness and emptiness, endless motion and complete tranquility. The cyclic nature of life on earth is easily recognized by those of us in tune with the natural world.

The seed or the ovum can also be expressed by a circle. It is full of vitality, potential life, ready to begin the intense transformational process of growth.

But in order to do that, a force is required, a change in the energy. This is the sperm entering the egg, the differentiation of the undifferentiated, the activation of the potential, the division of the circle into two—the yin and the yang.

The **yin** and the **yang** are the two fundamental energies of the universe, rather like the force fields of a magnet, attracting each other, acting upon each other, initiating movement. The process is much like cellular division, where genetic material migrates on spindles to create two (cells) out of one.

This model of the universe is quite similar to modern physics which states that matter and energy are primarily the same; they are two different expressions of a fundamental universal energy, capable of transforming into each other. This is not the Newtonian model of the universe, which most of us grew up on, which divides the known world into smaller and smaller parts and sees life in mechanistic terms. The Newtonian theory forms the basis of Western medicine, which treats the human body in its parts rather than as an integrated whole. While a health system based on the body's biochemistry is quite sophisticated, a healing system based on biophysics is far more comprehensive. Observing the person's state of harmony in body, mind and spirit, and the interplay of imbalances in those areas, gives a truly holistic overview of disease. Chemically treating symptoms of certain organ systems too often creates side-effects elsewhere in that human organism. Chinese medicine fascinates us because it considers correspondences of seasons, weather, directions, colors, tastes, smells and emotional states to illnesses.



Observation of the patient has always been important in Chinese Medicine, because the external appearance has always been regarded as a reflection of the internal conditions. The doctor observes the gait, posture, tone of voice, mannerisms, emotions, smell and many other qualities while performing the medical history and examination to create the "pattern of disharmony" rather than to name a disease. How much vitality does the patient have? This fundamental force, called **qi**, is an energy current that flows through channels in the body called **meridians**. While it is helpful to think of qi as electrical current, it also has properties of vapour. Highly complex, here one moment and there the next, qi is that which can change and cause change at the same time, and for the chemists among us, it much resembles the behavior of the electron.

Acupuncture points are precise sites along these meridians, or highways of energy, where the flow of qi can be fine-tuned. While needling points on the meridian channels to disperse, cool, warm or tonify is commonly practiced, herbs are used to regulate the flow of qi as well.

Before one can treat anyone with Chinese Medicine, one must learn **Five Element Theory**.

It is important to keep in mind that individual organs are not the focus of treatment in Chinese Medicine as they are in the West. Rather, Chinese Medicine is based on an energetic perspective of the body/mind/spirit. There is no separation. TCM links the action in the organs with actions elsewhere in the body and the pathways along which these actions occur are the meridians. Each meridian is a highway with many interlinks to other roads. Qi zips along the meridians and gets stuck, overheats, diverts to another road, gets tired and goes to sleep, goes over bridges (diverts to the surface), goes into tunnels (goes deep), speeds along too fast and has accidents, and is subject to the conditions such as heat, cold, dampness, and dryness, not to mention being spooked by an empty road or overwhelmed by the relentless nature of others on the same highway. Nature's highways also have dams, floods, fires, meltdowns and sharp cutting objects along their ways. The moving energy has natural direction and rhythm, therefore if a person acts in a way that is contrary to their own or universal rhythm, she/he is likely to become ill because her/his natural immunity is compromised by acting in a way that is out of harmony.

It is not only external factors that make one ill. Not becoming consumed by one's desires, attachments and emotions allows one to have jing (rest, quietness) which promotes health and long life. Too much tension, work, too much or too little sleep and too much or too little sex, as well as the way we eat and what we eat all contribute to our energetic equilibrium or harmony. Disease gains no foothold where harmony lives.

Since TCM stresses the influences of climate and weather on health, treatment is harmonized with the weather. If a person has a heat condition, such as skin rashes, they will receive more cooling herbs when it is hot outside than if they began their treatment in the colder months. Different seasons and climates are known to create different conditions, and some types are more sensitive to seasonal variations.

There are twelve primary meridians in acupuncture, and eight extraordinary meridians which are beyond the scope of this discussion. Each meridian has a pair of organ systems that it represents, known as the **zang** and the **fu**. The zang organ of each meridian is the hollow, yin organ, the fu is the solid, yang organ. The correspondences between our western concepts of the various organs and the Chinese concept of the same-named meridians are loose and not literal, with the Chinese far less narrow and more descriptive of function and energetic movement.

Basics of TCM include the **Eight Therapeutic Principles**, (yin/yang, hot/cold, empty/full, interior/exterior). These eight parameters supply the first level of diagnosis. "Interior/exterior" refers to the location and origin of the illness, i.e., chronic illness is more interior and a cold or sprain is more exterior. "Empty and full" are also known as deficient and excess. A weak, tired invalid is easily seen as deficient in qi or other qualities, a vigorous athletic type who is ill may be excess or full in nature. Redness, rashes, itch, etc. indicate a heat condition, chronic phlegm, pale tongue, and slow movements indicate internal coldness.

The Six Energetic Layers and the Four Stages, as well as **qi** and **xue** patterns, will not be discussed today. For an understanding of **jing**, **ling** and other concepts, please refer to *The Web That Has No Weaver*, by Ted Kapchuk. This is an excellent book to further your knowledge of TCM.

The first known herbal practitioner of TCM was Shen Nung in 3494 BC. Chinese Medicine is thought to be 4,000 to 5,000 years old, practiced somewhat differently by the warring tribes who fought each other in those centuries. Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor was born in 2674 BC and his unified treatise on TCM is still required reading today. The compilation of knowledge that is Chinese Medicine is literally the observation of millions of doctors on billions of patients over thousands of years. It has had great influence on the Japanese and Korean systems, but it was second to Ayurveda, the Indian system, which is known to be the oldest healing system in the world. In 1593, the 16 volume herbal materia medica was published, written over a period of 45 years by the great herbalist Li Shi-zhen. With the influx of Western culture early in the 20th century, the traditional of Chinese clinical practice was nearly lost. It was revived by Chairman Mao in the 1950's during the "Long March" when his troops were cut off from their western medical supplies for several years. Mao and his staff were amazed with the efficacy of their own TCM which was outlawed at the time and Mao endeavored to create a new national hero in his "Barfoot Doctor" campaign. The hospitals today are often divided into Western and TCM wings, and some hospitals are solely devoted to TCM treatment methods.

Chinese herbalists were ardent naturalists. They studied the properties of each herb in its environment. What kind of conditions favored growth of the plant? What time of year did it bloom, what shape was it,



what color were the fruits and flowers, what part of the plant was used? What were its thermal properties? The Chinese herbal pharmacopeia also includes animal parts, i.e., testicles of bears, ox hide, snake venom, tiger bone, deer antlers, oyster shells, etc. All objects in nature can have ascribed to them qualities of yin and yang, hot and cold, deficient and excess, etc.

Cooling herbs are divided into cool through pronouncedly cold, warming herbs are gently warming through blatantly hot. There are herbs that raise energy and herbs that draw energy down.

Basics of Herbal Formulary include the **Six Interactions**, **The Four Roles**, and the **Seven Recipes**.

The Six Interactions:

1. **Synergy-** two herbs with mutual common action
2. **Support-** a secondary, lesser herb supports the action of the emperor herb
3. **Antagonism-** the second herb interferes with the action of the first and vice versa
4. **Inhibition-** one herb control the action of the other
5. **Antidote-** one herb decrease the toxic effects of the other
6. **Opposition-** mutual production of toxicity by two herbs

The Four Roles:

1. **The Empress or Emperor Herb-** the main ingredient
2. **The Minister-** supports the main herb
3. **The Assistant-** reduces side effects; restricts actions of other herbs in formula
4. **The Messenger-** directs the herbal formula to a specific meridian target

The Seven Recipes:

1. **Odd-** an odd number of herbs in the formula treats yang conditions
2. **Even -** even number of herbs in the formula treats yin conditions
3. **Large-** for treating acute and chronic in one formula
4. **Small-** acute OR chronic, single action formulas
5. **Slow-** the formulas take weeks or months to take effect and are used for tonification of deficiencies
6. **Fast-** first-aid, trauma, etc.
7. **Repeating-** two herbs are alternately repeated, this is used for collapsed and progressed conditions

Like many other esoteric sciences, TCM takes years of study to successfully navigate, and true mastery is rare. It is said that the brilliant doctor has mastery of acupuncture, tuina and herbs, but it is also said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step!



Agitator's Report, Continued from Page 1

The guild was also very active in the two East Kingdom Universities held in January and February. Briana McBain taught her "Make your own Medieval Gardens" class at both events; in January, Genevieve du Lac taught a Basic Herbalism class, Lady Grania taught a cosmetics class.

There is a demo scheduled in Buckland Cross (Bristol PA) on May 17th, 2003, and guild members are encouraged to attend. For information, contact the autocrat: Baroness Genevieve de Charbonneau, aka Michelle Elinsky via phone (215) 831-0766 (please no calls after 10 pm) or email (gryffon@aol.com)

The East Kingdom Herbalists' and Apothecaries' Guild meeting at Pennsic is set for Monday, August 11, in A&S tent 4, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. This time we have two hours so we can spend an hour on business and news and an hour just talking herbs!

Admire the new website design at: <http://www.eastkingdom.org/guilds/herb/>

Many thanks to Shannon Gallowglass who did the redesign for us.

Keep Growing!

— in love and in service
Pani Iadwiga Zaiaczkowa, Agitatrix

