

The Art of Healing in Sumerian and Egyptian Antiquity

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the development of writing around 3200 BCE in Sumer and simultaneously in Egypt, enabled the collection, codification, and transmission of "recipes" for therapeutic purposes. Because there had been:

- . the birth of the first pharmacopoeias
- . the appearance of pharmaceutical forms (potions, lotions, enemas, ointments, poultices...)

"with the discovery of fire the first ^{galenic} forms made their appearance (decoction, infusion, etc.).

Therapeutic practices were represented during:

- *Mesopotamian civilization by clay tablets with cuneiform script in the Assyrian language**
- *Egyptian civilization by papyri and their hieroglyphs (Egyptian writing).**

1/ The art of healing in Mesopotamia

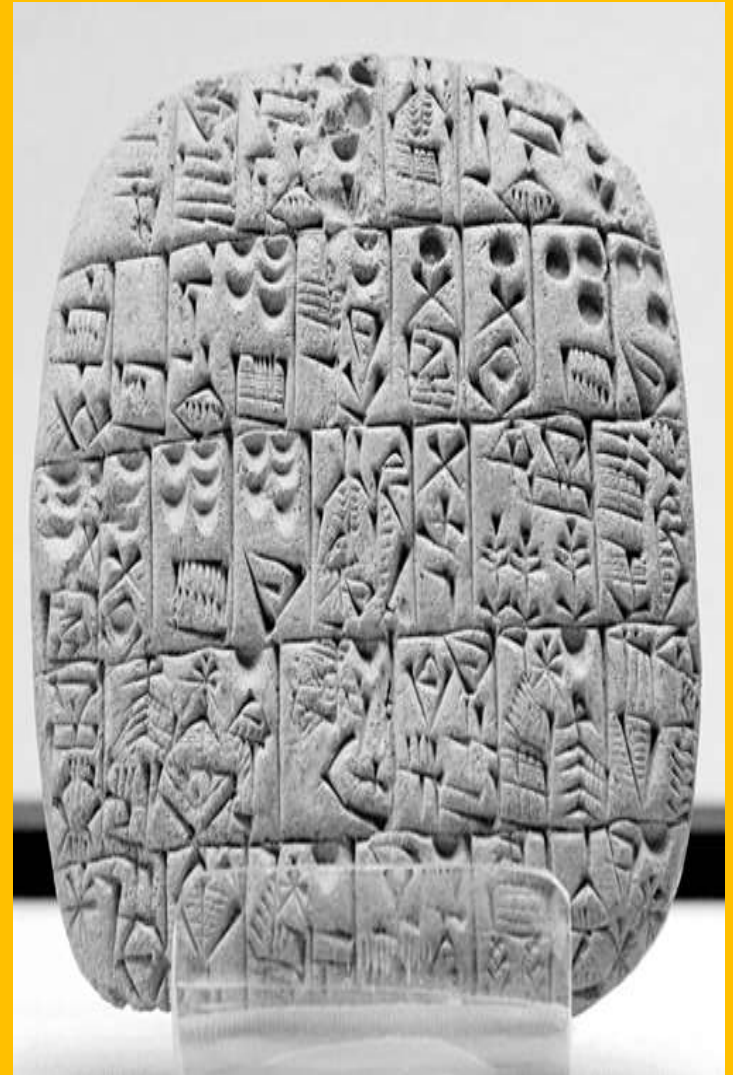
(2500-1000 BC)

About twenty cities including «NIPPUR»

Sumerian tablet, writing
Cuneiform (number 40)

The Sumerian pharmacopoeia:

- plants
- minerals
- animal substances
- various forms
medicinal



Sumerian clay tablets, the first pharmacopoeias
(cuneiform writing)

+ discovered in 1948 in the ruins of the city of Nippur (south of Baghdad)

a dozen remedies (preserved at the Istanbul Museum).

- **example remedies:**

Sea salt (sodium chloride), saltpeter (diuretic/
meat preservation); thyme, fig, and date palm...
seeds, roots, leaves, barks, and oils are
the basis of prescriptions.



Saltpeter:

Myrtle: (respiratory antiseptic)



Thyme:

respiratory disinfectant and antiseptic

willow:



1-henbane
Narcotic /
Toxic

3-oleander

2-black hellebore
Use: Black magic

preparation by decoction and filtration.

A pretreatment with alkaline ash to purify the ingredients before pulverizing them.

The treatment of fats (olive oil) with alkaline ashes (laurel ashes) ==> a disinfectant soap.

Compilations of medical practices are Divinatory or empirical treatises?

In reality, we do not know if it is the domain of an empiricist, an exorcist, or a diviner.

6th century BCE

-Tablets 35-40: deal with women and children

"If the baby's body is not feverish..., if its head is hot, if while nursing it cries out loudly, its teeth are coming in; for 13 or 20 days it will go through a period of distress, then it will recover."

Example of a disease: "If a man: his body is yellow, his face is yellow, he is losing more and more weight: the name of the disease is jaundice."

Medical practices:

Surgery:

injuries, tumor excision...

incision of a liver abscess or drainage of purulent pleural effusion (empyema).

Illness:

Jaundice, epilepsy, angina? Urinary stones....

2/ Pharmacy in Egypt (1600-1200 BCE)



The healing arts in ancient Egypt refer to the common practice of medicine in 13th-centuryth century BCE until the Persian invasion of 525 BCE.

- The preparation of remedies took place within the temples by "the pastophoroi priests."

-the "**Houses of Life**": places for storing papyri and training priests.

The "papyrus" documents were discovered in the second half of the 19th^e century.

The Ebers Papyrus (1550

BC), « The book concerning the preparation of medicines for all parts of the body ».

A pharmacopoeia: more than 900 recipes

700 drugs listed





Egyptian lead-based makeup allowing for the prevention of ophthalmia



Kohl case and its stick to apply makeup to the eyes



Bottle Egypt) medicinal(Ancient

-**the papyri of Berlin** written during the reign of **Ramesses II** (1350 BC) but some parts date back much further.

-**papyrus of Ebers** It is the oldest and most complete therapeutic manual and materia medica of Egyptian medicine.

These manuscripts show the use in remedies: religious elements, and magical incantations intended to chase away the evil spirit, then the remedy that must repair the disorders caused by the demon.

Most of the 1,740 recipes documented from these papyrus are complex preparations: eye washes, gargles, potions and infusions, pills, suppositories, inhalations...

Among the minerals: alabaster (lime), yellow ochre (clay), galena(1), antimony(2), malachite(3), gypsum(4).

Among the plants: squill (purifying and rat poison), bryony (a strongly purgative root) and juniper seeds are found in preparations intended for diuretic purposes.

Aloe, castor oil plant, fig, and colocynth appear as laxatives.





squill



bryony



Aloe



juniper



colocynth

A decoction of willow leaves is recommended (Smith papyrus) on an infected chest wound, may be as an antiseptic, but with an astringent effect, antipyretic and analgesic more likely.

Opium and Indian hemp (cannabis) (sedative effect).

Substances of animal or human origin are present in nearly half of Egyptian remedies:

liver for ophthalmological remedies, very judiciously as it is rich in vitamin A, fats and animal meats, milk, blood... To these are added ingredients of excremental therapy, urine...





Indian hemp



Opium



willow

Finally, we know how skilled the Egyptians were in the art of embalming processes where antiseptic and preservative substances achieved the astonishing results that we can observe through the discovery of their **mummies**.



**Thank you
for
your
attention.**