

# DODONÆUS: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

REMBERTO DODONÆO Mechlij-  
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ACCESSIT Appendix variarū & quidem rarissimarum  
nonnullarum stirpium, ac florum quorundam peccatorum,  
elegantissimarumq; icones omnino novas nec antea editas,  
singulorumq; breues descriptiones continens cuius aliter pagis  
umbellifera exhibentur non pauca, eodem Auctore.



ANTVERPIÆ,  
Ex officina Christophori Plantini  
Architypographi Regij.  
M. D. LXXIIII.



Rembert Dodoens was born on 29 June of either 1516 or 1517 in Mechelen, a Flemish town in what was then the Spanish Netherlands. His original name was Rembert van Joenckema, a name that testifies to his Frisian ancestry. His father was physician in ordinary to the town government. At the age of thirteen Rembert went to the University of Leuven, where he studied cosmography with the famous Gemma Frisius, as well as physiology and medicine. He graduated as a medical doctor in 1535. From 1541 to 1575 he succeeded his father as physician in his native town. In the sack of Mechelen by the Spanish troops in 1572 Dodoens lost most of his possessions. Between 1574 and 1577 he served as physician in ordinary to the Holy Roman emperor Maximilian II and his successor Rudolph II. He was offered a position as professor of medicine at the University of Leuven, but he declined the honour. In 1578 he also declined an invitation to become physician in ordinary to Philip II, king of Spain. Between 1578 and 1581 he lived as a religious exile in Cologne. In 1582 he stayed in Antwerp at the printing house of Christopher Plantin, preparing the publication of his new edition of the *Cruijdeboeck*. In the meantime he had been appointed professor of medicine at the University of Leiden, where he died in 1585.

In 1533, at the age of sixteen, he published his first book entitled *Nederlands Herbarium*, published by Claes de Graeve of Antwerp. Soon after that, he published three botanical atlases at the printing house of Jan van der Loe in the same city. In the field of cosmography, he composed a work entitled *Cosmographica in astronomiam et geographiam isagoge*, equally published by Van der Loe in Antwerp (1548). Before long, he turned his attention to pharmacology and medicine, two sciences to which he was to devote the rest of his life. In 1554 he published the first edition of the *Cruijdeboeck*, which includes the first scientific description ever of the cauliflower, the Jerusalem

artichoke and the potato. For his description of the potato he relied on data collected by his friend Karel van der Sluis, alias Charles de l'és)cluse, alias Carolus Clusius (1526-1609). The book also contains the first description of the ailment *peritonitis*. Prior to the publication of the *Cruijdeboeck* he had published two botanical atlases, entitled *Trium priorum de stirpium historia commentariorum imagines* (1553) and *Posteriorium trium historia commentariorum imagines* (1554) resp., which contained the illustrations that were subsequently used in the *Cruijdeboeck*. The book was originally intended as a Dutch adaptation of Leonhart Fuchs's *De historia stirpium* (1542), but it surpassed its model both in the rationale of its arrangement and the number of plants described. The printer had purchased the wood-blocks of Fuchs's book, but for the 200 new descriptions that Dodoens added, he commissioned the Mechelen artist Peeter vander Borcht with the drawings and Arnold Nicolai with the cutting of the wood-blocks. While Fuchs used an alphabetical arrangement, Dodoens adopted a systematic classification, largely based on medicinal criteria. Subsequently he would further expand and refine his knowledge and elaborate a new classificatory system more explicitly based on botanical criteria, which he published in *Stirpium historiae pemptades sex. Sive libri XXX* (1583), his undisputed masterpiece.

The *Cruijdeboeck* consists of six parts. The first part contains a number of plants that have no clear relationship with one another. The second part contains descriptions of flowers and odoriferous herbs; the third is devoted to medicinal and harmful plants, the fourth to cereals, vegetables and fodder plants. The fifth part deals with herbs, roots and fruits that are used in cooking, while the sixth and last part present descriptions of trees and other ligneous plants. In the preface the author deplors that medical practitioners tend to slight herbarism and leave it to "dispensers and other unschooled persons".

#### OVERVIEW OF DODOENS'S MAJOR HERBALIST AND MEDICAL WRITINGS, ARRANGED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER.

*De frugum historia liber unus.: Ejusdem Epistolae duae, una de farre, chondro, trago, ptisana, crimino et alica. Altera de zytho et cerevisia.* Antverpiae: ex officina Ioannis Loei, 1552.

*Cruijdeboeck: in den welcken die ghebeele historie, dat es Tgheslacht, tfatsoen, naem, natuere, cracht ende werckinghe van den Cruyden, niet*

*alleen hier te lande wassende, maer oock van den anderen vremden in der Medecijnen oorboorlijck, met grooter neersticheyt begrepen ende verclaert es, met der selver Cruyden natuerlick naar dat leven conterfeytsel daer by ghestelt.* Antwerpen: J. van der Loe, 1554.

The title page has a dedication to Mary of Hungary, Governess of the Low Countries.

*Histoire des plantes, en laquelle est contenue la description entière des herbes, c'est à dire, leurs espèces, forme, noms, tempérament, vertus & operations: non seulement de celles qui croissent en ce païs, mais aussi des autres estrangères qui viennent en usage de medecine/ Nouvellement traduite de bas Aleman en François par Charles de l'Escluse.* En Anvers: De l'imprimeris de Iean Loë, 1557.

The French translation of the *Cruijdeboeck*.

*Cruijdeboeck. In den welcken die gheele historie, dat es tgheslacht, tfatsoen, nae[m], natuere, cracht ende werckinghe, van den cruyden, niet allen hier te lande wassende, maer oock van de[n] andere[n] vremde[n] in der Medecynen oorboorlijck, met grooter neersticheyt begrepen ende verclaert es, met der selver Cruyden natuerlijck naer dat leven conterfeytsel daer by ghestelt ... Van nieuws oversien, ende met seer veel schoone nieuwe figueren vermeerdert.* Geprint Thantwerpen: by Jan vander Loe, 1563.

A revised and enlarged edition of the 1554 edition.

*Frumentorum, leguminum, palustrium, et aquatiliu herbarum, ac eorum, quae eo pertinent, historia ... Additae sunt imagines vivae ... quarum pleraeque novae, et hactenus non editae.* Antverpiae: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1566.

This work superseded *De frugum historia* (1552). It contains descriptions of grains, leguminous plants and marsh and water plants. Peeter vander Borch drew the illustrations, while Cornelis Muller, Arnold Nicolai and Gerard Jansen van Kampen cut the wood-blocks. 800 copies were printed of this edition. In 1569 a second edition was printed from the same wood-blocks.

*Florum et coronariarum odoratarumque nonnullarum herbarum historia/ Remberto Dodonaeo Mechliniensi Medico auctore.* Antverpiae: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1568.

This book contains descriptions of remarkable floriferous and odoriferous plants. In it the author describes the sunflower, which had been

imported into the Low Countries from South America via Spain. The first specimen grown in the Low Countries could be admired in the garden of a Mechelen plant-breeder. The drawings for the illustrations were made by Peeter vander Borcht and the wood-blocks were cut by Arnold Nicolai and Gerard Jansen van Kampen.

*Florum et coronariarum odoratarumque nonnullarum herbarum historia/ Remberto Dodonaeo Mechliniensi Medico auctore. Altera Editio.* Antverpiae: ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1569.

This is a revised edition of the preceding work.

*Purgantium aliarumque eo facientium, tum et Radicum, Convolvulorum ac deleteriarum herbarum historiae Libri IIII, Remberto Dodonaeo Mechliniensi Medico auctore. Accessit Appendix variarum et quidem rarissimarum nonnullarum stirpium, ac florum quorundam peregrinorum, elegantissimorumque icones omnino novas nec antea editas, singulorumque breves descriptiones continens. Cuius altera parte Umbelliferae exhibentur non paucae, eodem auctore.* Antverpiae: Ex Officina Christophori Plantini, Architypographi Regii, 1574.

*A nievve herball, or Historie of plantes: Wherein is Contayned the Whole Discourse and Perfect Description of All Sortes of Herbes and Plantes, Their Divers & Sundry Kindes ... and That Not Onely of Those Whiche are Here Growyng in This Our Countrie of Englande, but of All Others Also of Forrayne Realmes Commonly Used in Physicke/ First set forth in the Doutche or Almaigne Tongue ... and nowe first Translated out of French into English by Henry Lyte.* Antwerp: Hendrik van der Loe for Gerard Dewes, 1578.

When Jan van der Loe died in 1563, his son Hendrik inherited the wood-blocks that his father had used for the illustration of Dodoens's *Crujdeboeck*. When Hendrik was commissioned by the English publisher Gerard Dewes to print the English translation of Dodoens's herbal, he used the same wood-blocks. Henry Lyte's English translation was based on Carolus Clusius' French version (1557) and the second Dutch edition (1563). The English edition, which went through several re-editions up to 1619, contained no less than 872 woodcuts, which made it the most richly illustrated edition of all versions published up to then. Dodoens's herbal exerted a considerable influence on English botany. John Gerarde's *The Herball* (London, 1597), the best-known English herbal of its time, owes a great deal to the *Crujdeboeck*. The illustrations of the 1633 and 1636 editions of Gerarde's herbal were

printed from the several hundreds of wood-blocks of Dodoens's herbal, which had been shipped from Antwerp to London for the purpose.

*Historia vitis viniq̄ue et stirpium nonnullarum aliarum; item Medicinalium observationum exempla.* Coloniae: Apud Maternum Cholinum, 1580.

*Remberti Dodonaei Medici Caesarei Medicinalium Observationum exempla rara, recognita et aucta: Accessere et alia quaedam ...* Coloniae: Apud Maternum Cholinum, 1581.

*Tractatus de magno animali, quod Alcen nonnulli vocant, Germani vero Elend, et de ipsius partium in re medica facultatibus. Item historia cervi rangiferi et gulonis Filfros vocati/ ... Accessit Remb. Dodonaei ... de Alce epistola.* Coloniae: Apud Maternum Cholinum, 1581.

*Stirpium historiae pemptades sex. Sive libri XXX.* Antverpiae: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1583.

*Medicinalium observationum exempla rara, Accessere et alia quaedam.* Lugduni Batavorum: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1585.

*A nieuwe herball or historie of plantes: wherein is contayned the whole discourse and perfect description of all sortes of herbes and plantes: their divers&sundry kindes: their straunge figures, fashions, and shapes: their names, natures, operations, and vertues: and that not onely of those which are here growing in this our countrie of Englande, but of all others also of forrayne realmes, commonly used in Physicke / First set foorth in the Doutche or Almaigne tongue, by that learned D. Rembert Dodoens ... and nowe first translated out of French into English by Henry Lyte.* London: Edm. Bollifant, 1595.

*Cruydt-Boeck van Rembertus Dodonæus, volgens sijne laetste verbeteringe met biivoegsels achter elck capittel, uut verscheyden cruydtbeschrijvers: item in 't laetste een beschrijvinge vande Indiaensche gewassen, meest getrockenuut de schriften van Carolus Clusius.* Leyden: Fr. van Ravelingen, 1608.

*Remberti Dodonaei Mechliniensis Medici Caesarei Stirpium Historiae Pemptades Sex Sive Libri XXX. Varie ab auctore paullo ante mortem, aucti et emendati.* Antverpiae: ex Officina Plantiniana, Apud Balthasarem et Ioannem Moretos, 1616.

*Praxis medica Remberti Dodonaei Mechliniensis*. Amsterdami: Impensis Henrici Laurentij, 1616.

*Cruydt-Boeck van Rembertus Dodonæus, volgens sijne laetste verbeteringe Met Biivoegsels achter elck Capittel, uut verscheyden Cruydtbeschrijvers: Item in 't laetste een Beschrijvinge vande Indiaensche Gewassen, meest getrocken uut de Schriften van Carolus Clusius*. Tot Leyden: Inde plantijnsche druckerije van François van Ravelingen, 1618.

*Medicinalium observationum exempla rara, Accessere et alia quaedam*. Hardervici: Apud viduam Thomae Henrici, impensis Henrici Laurentii, 1521 [i.e. 1621].

*In D. Remberti Dodonaei praxim artis medicae / ... Sebastiani Egberti Cos. scholia, cum auctario annotationum Nicolai Fontani ...* Amstelodami: Sumptibus Hendrici Laurentii, 1640.

*Cruydt-Boeck Remberti Dodonaei, volghens sijne laetste verbeteringhe met bijvoeghsels achter elck capitel, uyt verscheyden cruydtbeschrijvers Item, in'tlaetste een beschrijvinghe vande Indiaensche ghewassen, meest ghetrocken uyt de schriften van Carolus Clusius. Nu wederom van nieuws oversien ende verbetert*. Antwerpen: Inde Plantijnsche Druckerije van Balthasar Moretus, 1644.

Dodoens published his *Stirpium historiae pemptades sex* in 1583, two years before his death. It presents a comprehensive arrangement of the plant world known in his time from a utilitarian perspective. It was the synthesis of all his preceding herbalist publications. The book is divided in six *pemptades*, which consist of five 'books' ('pemptas' refers to 'pente', the Greek word for 'five') each. The first *pemptas* contains an introduction and five 'books' about miscellaneous plants that do not fit any of his classes. The second *pemptas* deals with flowers, odoriferous and umbelliferous plants. The third *pemptas* is devoted to descriptions of medicinal herbs, the fourth deals with cereals, leguminous plants, marsh and water plants, the fifth with vegetables and the sixth with fruit-bearing plants and trees. In all there are 26 groups of plants. The plants are illustrated in no less than 1306 woodcuts. Plantin re-used the wood-blocks that had been cut for illustrating earlier works of Dodoens's, as well as those that he had used for the books of Carolus Clusius and Mathias Lobelius. In 1581 Plantin had purchased the

wood-blocks that Jan van der Loe had owned from the latter's widow. This Latin version was translated into Dutch and published in 1608 under the title *Cruydt-Boeck van Rembertus Dodonæus, volgens sijne laetste verbeteringe ... etc.*, which also includes the revisions made by Joost van Rafelingen, brother of the printer François, grandson of Christopher Plantin, and a competent physician in his own right. The Latin version was reprinted in 1616. The Dutch editions of 1618 and 1644 are reprints of the 1608 edition. The 1644 edition is 1492 pages long and contains 1367 woodcuts.

As is testified to by the various editions it went through for over a century, Dodoens's *Cruijdeboek* remained a standard reference for a long time, and in Flanders even until the beginning of the nineteenth century. He wrote his works both in what was called then *Nederduytsch* (Dutch or Flemish) and Latin. The list of his publications known today includes twenty-five titles on botany, eight on medicine, two on geography and astronomy and numerous almanacs. In his plant descriptions he included the name in Dutch (Flemish), German, "Bohemian", Hungarian, Slovenian, Croatian, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, Latin and Greek, "Indian" and "a few other foreign languages". The wood-blocks used for printing the woodcuts in the *Cruijdeboek* are still preserved in the Plantin Moretus Museum in Antwerp. Dodoens's memory lives on in two statues: one in the *Kruidtuin* (botanical garden) of Mechelen and one in the *Kleine Zavel*, a little public garden in the centre of Brussels. Busts of him are found in several universities and museums throughout the Benelux.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Louis, Armand. *Geschiedenis van de plantkunde: de plantkennis in dienst van farmacie en landbouw*. Gent: Story-Scientia, 1977.
- 2 Nissen, Claus. *Die botanische Buchillustration: ihre Geschichte und Bibliographie*. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1951.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- ILL 1 Portrait of Rembertus Dodonæus. Engraving by Esme de Boulonnois, 1682, 186 x 138 mm. From: Isaac Bullart (1599-1672), *Académie des sciences et arts*, ed. Jacques-Ignace Bullart, Brussel, 1682, subsequently reproduced in Jan Frans Foppens, *Bibliotheca Belgica, sive Virorum in Belgio vita, scriptisque illustrium catalogus, librorumque nomenclatura*, Brussel, 1739. Collection Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Central Library, Prentenkabinet PA 2909.
- ILL 2 Autograph dedication and signature of Dodoens in the *Album amicorum* of Wilhelm Helbig of Würzburg,



fol. 204. The dedication reads: "Nobili ac generoso domino Dño Gulielmo Helbich scribebat Rembertus Dodoneus medicus ad Caesarem maiestatem profiscens. A° DM LXXIII. XVIII Septembris" (i.e. Dodonæus, physician, on his way his Imperial Majesty, wrote this for the noble and magnanimous Lord Wilhem Helbig, 18 September of the year 1574). Collection Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Central Library, Tabularium, BATAB.

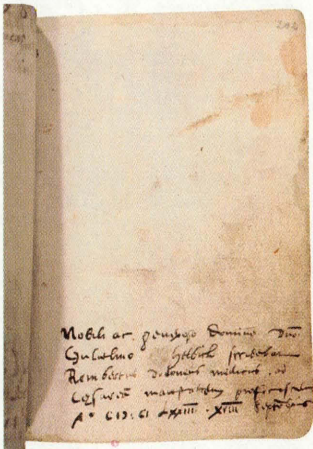
- ILL 3 Title page of *Cruydeboeck*, 1554. Collection Université catholique de Louvain, Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines.
- ILL 4 Title page of *Purgantium aliarumque eo facientium, tum et Radicum, Convulsorum ac deleteriarum herbarum historiae Libri IIII*, 1574. Collection Université catholique de Louvain, Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines.
- ILL 5 Title page of *Medicinalium Observationum exempla rara, recognita & aucta*, 1581. Collection Université catholique de Louvain, Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines.
- ILL 6 Title page of *Praxis medica Remberti Dodonaei Mechliniensis*, 1616. Collection Université catholique de Louvain, Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines.
- ILL 7 Title page of *Stirpium Historiae Pemptades Sex Sive Libri XXX*, 1616. Collection Université catholique de Louvain, Bibliothèque générale et de sciences humaines.
- ILL 8 Title page of *Cruydt-Boeck*, 1618. Collection Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Central Library, Tabularium, B 3998.
- ILL 9 Title page of *Cruydt-Boeck*, 1644. Collection Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Central Library, Tabularium C1827
- ILL 10 Title page of *Cruydt-Boeck*, 1644. Collection Albert Couvreur, Ecole de Pharmacie, Université catholique de Louvain, Bruxelles (Woluwe Saint-Lambert).



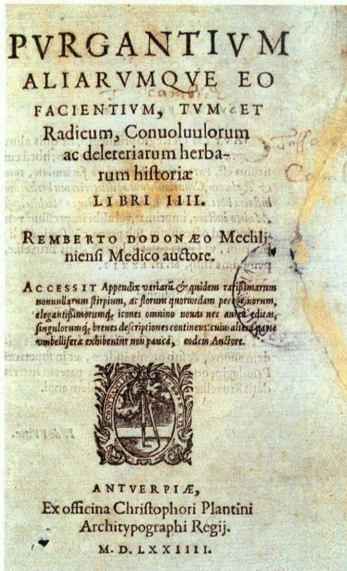
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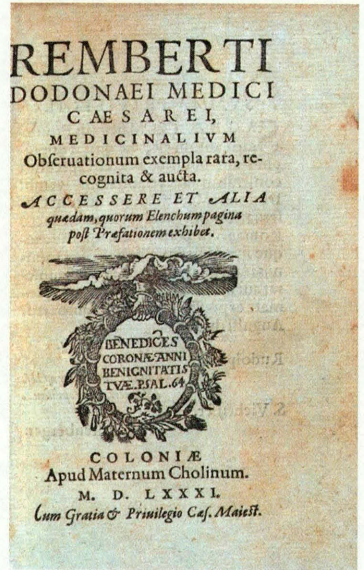
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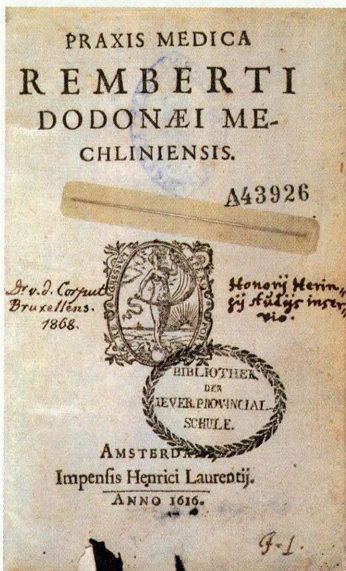
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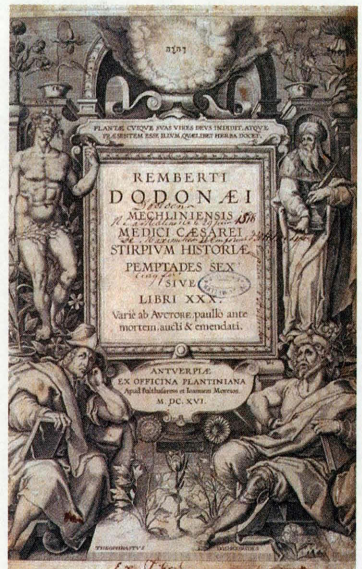
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