



COCA - ERYTHROXYLON COCA LAM. - IN POLISH MEDICINE AND PHARMACY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

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Epoch of oversea voyages in the 15th and 16th century made it possible to know many new exotic stocks - among others, coca - that brought about to the development of phytochemistry and many other significant medical discoveries.

The paper is to make an attempt at tracing out a historical outline and state of knowledge of coca on the grounds of Polish literature of the second half of the 19th century. Erythroxyton Coca Lam. - a plant of South America - indicates a strong pharmacological and stuporous efficacy. A medicinal staple are the leaves of coca - Folium Coca.

The stock drew a great attention of the scientists in Poland in the second half of the 19th century. It was connected with isolation of the main active component - cocaine - in 1860. Polish research workers participated in the world scientific research actively, and it had its reflection in works and studies on natural science that were published in the described period.

Initially, these were mainly botanical descriptions of the staple and reports on its use in folk medicine of Central America. In the University of Vilna is located a manuscript of 1862 written by J. Awecki, which tells about Erythroxyton Coca and has not been published yet. Subsequent works concerned chemical searches on cocaine, its pharmacological efficacy, and healing injunctions. A significant role for research works was played by the issue concerning toxicology and intoxications' descriptions.

To sum up, one can note that late in the 19th century cocaine was widely used as a curative agent in Polish medicine, and first of all as a partly and insensibilizing remedy in oculistic and dental operations.