

Field Museum of Natural History

Founded by Marshall Field, 1893

Roosevelt Road and Lake Michigan, Chicago

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

SEWELL L. AVERY	WILLIAM H. MITCHELL
JOHN BORDEN	FREDERICK H. RAWSON
WILLIAM J. CHALMERS	GEORGE A. RICHARDSON
MARSHALL FIELD	FRED W. SARGENT
STANLEY FIELD	STEPHEN C. SIMMS
ERNEST R. GRAHAM	JAMES SIMPSON
ALBERT W. HARRIS	SOLOMON A. SMITH
SAMUEL INSULL, JR.	ALBERT A. SPRAGUE
CYRUS H. MCCORMICK	SILAS H. STRAWN
JOHN P. WILSON	

OFFICERS

STANLEY FIELD	.....President
ALBERT A. SPRAGUE	.....First Vice-President
JAMES SIMPSON	.....Second Vice-President
ALBERT W. HARRIS	.....Third Vice-President
STEPHEN C. SIMMS	.....Director and Secretary
SOLOMON A. SMITH	.....Treasurer and Assistant Secretary

FIELD MUSEUM NEWS

STEPHEN C. SIMMS, *Director of the Museum*.....Editor

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

BERTHOLD LAUFER	.....Curator of Anthropology
B. E. DAHLGREN	.....Acting Curator of Botany
HENRY W. NICHOLS	.....Acting Curator of Geology
WILFRED H. OSGOOD	.....Curator of Zoology
H. B. HARTE	.....Managing Editor

Field Museum is open every day of the year during the hours indicated below:

Nov., Dec., Jan., Feb., Mar.	9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
April, September, October	9 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
May, June, July, August	9 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.

Admission is free to Members on all days. Other adults are admitted free on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays; non-members pay 25 cents on other days. Children are admitted free on all days. Students and faculty members of educational institutions are admitted free any day upon presentation of credentials.

The Museum's natural history Library is open for reference daily except Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

Traveling exhibits are circulated in the schools of Chicago by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension Department of the Museum.

Lectures for schools, and special entertainments and tours for children at the Museum, are provided by the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures.

Announcements of free illustrated lectures for the public, and special lectures for Members of the Museum, will appear in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS.

A cafeteria in the Museum serves visitors. Rooms are provided for those bringing their lunches.

Chicago Motor Coach Company No. 26 buses go direct to the Museum.

Members are requested to inform the Museum promptly of changes of address.

MEMBERSHIP IN FIELD MUSEUM

Field Museum has several classes of Members. Benefactors give or devise \$100,000 or more. Contributors give or devise \$1,000 to \$100,000. Life Members give \$500; Non-Resident Life and Associate Members pay \$100; Non-Resident Associate Members pay \$50. All the above classes are exempt from dues. Sustaining Members contribute \$25 annually. After six years they become Associate Members. Annual Members contribute \$10 annually. Other memberships are Corporate, Honorary, Patron, and Corresponding, additions under these classifications being made by special action of the Board of Trustees.

Each Member, in all classes, is entitled to free admission to the Museum for himself, his family and house guests, and to two reserved seats for Museum lectures provided for Members. Subscription to FIELD MUSEUM NEWS is included with all memberships. The courtesies of every museum of note in the United States and Canada are extended to all Members of Field Museum. A Member may give his personal card to non-residents of Chicago, upon presentation of which they will be admitted to the Museum without charge. Further information about memberships will be sent on request.

BEQUESTS AND ENDOWMENTS

Bequests to Field Museum of Natural History may be made in securities, money, books or collections. They may, if desired, take the form of a memorial to a person or cause, named by the giver.

Cash contributions made within the taxable year not exceeding 15 per cent of the taxpayer's net income are allowable as deductions in computing net income under Article 251 of Regulation 69 relating to the income tax under the Revenue Act of 1926.

Endowments may be made to the Museum with the provision that an annuity be paid to the patron for life. These annuities are tax-free and are guaranteed against fluctuation in amount.

BUCKWHEAT CAKES ORIGINATED IN ANCIENT TIBET

BY BERTHOLD LAUFER

Curator, Department of Anthropology

Buckwheat, although popularly conceived as a cereal all over the world because in every way it is used like wheat, is a polygonaceous plant, and one of the most graceful plants created by nature. Like our American Indians, the ancient Chinese assigned one of the five principal colors to each of the five "quarters" (counting the center as the fifth quarter) of the earth, and their botanists rejoiced in finding the five cardinal colors combined in the buckwheat plant: leaves green, flower white, stalk red, seeds black, root yellow. Therefore they regarded it reverentially as symbolic of the five quarters—as a symbol of the world. With their deep interest in plant life and agriculture the Chinese have produced an immense number of valuable books on botanical and agronomic subjects. If we want to study the early history, origin, and distribution of our cultivated and useful plants, we must consult, first of all, the records of the Chinese, which for many plants are the earliest extant. The history of buckwheat can be reconstructed only on the basis of Chinese sources. The oldest description of buckwheat is contained in a work on husbandry of the fifth century A.D., which gives sensible rules for the cultivation of the plant.

The Chinese, however, were not the first who brought the plant under cultivation. Buckwheat is a denizen of the highest mountain regions and, being able to withstand greater extremes of heat and cold than any other crop and being contented with the poorest soil, it occurs in the Himalaya Mountains in altitudes up to 11,000 feet. In the western Himalaya, including Kashmir, the bitter variety of buckwheat reaches altitudes even up to 15,000 feet, where no other crop is able to thrive, and it constitutes the only food of the inhabitants. The Tibetans and other mountain tribes related to them were the original buckwheat cultivators and the first buckwheat cake eaters; they produced a complete buckwheat culture complex, grinding the fruit into flour and making the flour into cakes, gruel, and beer, even utilizing the straw as fodder in the winter. Among some of these hill tribes buckwheat still forms the principal crop and the staff of life, as it has for at least 2,000 years. The Ordos Mongols and many tribes of northern Manchuria also subsist a great deal on buckwheat. The Chinese extol in particular the buckwheat of the province Hei-lung-kiang in Manchuria, saying that its flour is pure white, and furnishes the finest buckwheat cakes in the world. Besides cakes, the Chinese prepare noodles and dumplings from buckwheat flour.

Buckwheat first appeared in Europe as late as the latter part of the fifteenth century under a bewildering variety of popular names which point to a foreign origin but are too vague to assist us in determining the real country of origin. Thus the Spaniards and Portuguese called it "Moorish wheat," the Italians "Saracen grain"; hence French *sarrasin*. The Osmons dubbed it "Albanian millet," the Greeks "Arabic corn," and the Russians "Greek wheat," while Poles, Czechs, and Germans spoke of "Tartar" or "heathen corn." The English botanist John Gerard, in his famous *Herbal* of 1597, describes the plant under the names "French wheat" and "buckwheat," the latter being derived from Low German and Dutch

boekwete, that is, beech wheat, from a certain resemblance of the fruits to beech-nuts. The botanical term *Fagopyrum* is a translation of this name (Latin *fagus*, "beech"; Greek *pyros*, "wheat").

A generation ago it was believed that the Mongols on their invasion of Europe had carried buckwheat out of the interior of Asia into Europe. There is no evidence whatever for this speculation, especially as buckwheat made its appearance in Europe more than two hundred years after the Mongol invasion. New researches have led me to the conclusion that the plant spread from Kashmir into Persia, thence to Asia Minor and Greece, and from Greece to Italy, Russia, and on to the remaining countries of Europe.

Buckwheat was introduced from Europe into America in the sixteenth century. The Dutch colony of Manhattan Island sent buckwheat samples of American growth to Holland in 1626. J. Lawson, in his *History of Carolina*, wrote in 1714 that "buckwheat is of great increase in Carolina, but we make no other use of it than to feed hogs and poultry." Peter Kalm, who traveled in North America in 1748, observed that most farmers of New Jersey sowed the plant and made buckwheat cakes which, he writes, "are very good, and are likewise usual at Philadelphia and in other English colonies, especially in winter."

Specimens of buckwheat and other articles of food consumed by the Tibetans, as well as kitchen and household objects used in connection with these products, are shown in Case 44 in the West Gallery of the Museum.

Orchid Collected by Capt. Cook in 1769

Included in a collection of herbarium material received recently by Field Museum is a small orchid specimen of historic interest. It was collected in Tahiti in 1769 upon the occasion of the visit to that island of the famed explorer, Captain James Cook, in the course of the first of his three famous voyages of discovery. Two celebrated botanists, Banks and Solander, who accompanied Cook's first expedition, brought to Europe the first plants to reach that continent from Australia and many islands of the Pacific. For those unfamiliar with the condition of herbarium specimens preserved for so long a time, it may be stated that the present specimen is in quite as good condition as if it dated only to 1933.

While the Museum Herbarium has been formed during the past forty years, it has obtained through purchase and exchange many specimens collected more than a century ago. It is worthy of note that the Illinois Herbarium of the Museum, maintained as a separate unit, includes many plants collected before the Civil War, and later, on land then forested but now for many years covered by the pavements and buildings of Chicago.—P.C.S.

Cats of America

The six members of the cat family native to the United States—cougar or mountain lion, bay lynx (also known as bobcat and wildcat), Mexican jaguar, gray Yaguarundi cat, Canada lynx, and Mexican ocelot—are represented by specimens in the systematic mammal collection in Hall 15.

A model of the original petroleum refinery built by John D. Rockefeller, Sr., at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1863, is on exhibition in the Department of Geology.



Laufer, Berthold. 1934. "Buckwheat Cakes Originated in Ancient Tibet." *Field Museum news* 5(3), 2-2.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25721>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/350855>

Holding Institution

Field Museum of Natural History Library

Sponsored by

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.
For information contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu.

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.