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PLANTS IN FUNERAL CEREMONIES IN POLAND AND EUROPE NORTH OF THE ALPS (13th-18th CENTURIES)

WROCŁAW 2023

3. PLANTS AS DECORATION – FLOWERS, BRANCHES, BOUQUETS, WREATHS AND CROWNS

3.1. Natural and artificial flowers

Funerary customs and ceremonies to commemorate the dead have for centuries involved the use of flowers. A Neanderthal burial in the Shanidar cave in Iraq is sometimes considered to be the oldest manifestation of mourning rituals combined with the placement of flowers with the deceased (Girard 1986: 143, 144). Flowers played an important role in funeral ceremonies and celebrations in honour of the dead by people from ancient cultures in the Mediterranean basin. In ancient Egypt, bouquets of lotus flowers were placed in graves. In Greece and Rome, wreaths of flowers were worn during ceremonies and were used to decorate statues, altars and tombs (Cirlot 2001: 100).

Cut flowers probably did not appear as an independent ornament in the Middle Ages and do not appear in iconography until the end of this era (Goody 1993: 185, 186). In the modern period, natural and artificial flowers were used to decorate the bodies of the dead which were displayed to the public before burial.

The remains of natural flowers serving as independent decorations are difficult to identify in the archaeological material. Fragments found on robes, cushions or in the coffin linings may come from both cut flowers placed on the body of the deceased and other grave furnishings. The use of this type of decoration from natural plants is suggested by post-mortem portraits and by the remains of artificial flowers placed independently in burials which could be sometimes used instead of the natural ones. The set of plants featured in the visual representations included cultivated flowers which fall within the range of the most prevalent symbols in European culture. These include, above all, plants known through the literature derived from the heritage of Greco-Roman Antiquity and the Holy Bible. Among the plants whose remains have been excavated from graves using archaeological methods, on the other hand, there are numerous herbs that have visually attractive flowers, but were not represented in sepulchral art.

The range of species that formerly fell under the term 'flower' may have differed from that of today. A flower according to the botanical definition is a shortened shoot serving the sexual reproduction of plants. A flower as defined by biology is a broader term than in common parlance. Among flower-producing plants in different cultures, a distinction is made between plants grown for decoration and those that are edible, utilitarian and have other purposes. When describing a funeral ceremony in the past, it is possible to identify 'ornamental' flowers such as roses, anemones, carnations, lilies, tulips and other flowers in a biological, but perhaps not in a cultural sense.

Posthumous portraits, although not free from idealisation, can be considered a useful source of information on how corpses were decorated before burial. A good example is the post-mortem portrait of Caspar von Uchtenhagen, who died in 1603 (Cat. H35, Fig. 4). His coffin, located

in the parish church of Bad Freienwalde in Brandenburg, was opened in the 18th century. According to the account of those events, the young Caspar looked in the coffin just as portrayed in the painting which is kept inside the same church (Fontane 1959: 76-90). The portrait presents the boy in ceremonial white robes, resting in a richly padded casket. Arranged over his body are rosebuds and sprigs of herbs which, based on the leaves, can be identified as rosemary or myrtle. A wreath composed of leaves and small pink flowers – probably rosemary, is shown on the boy's head. In the child's right hand is a rose[1].

To some extent, the choice between natural and artificial plants was determined by the season in which the funeral took place. However, artificial and natural flowers were sometimes joined in a single burial. Dried flowers were also presumably used. Characteristic is also the use of only parts of natural plants in combination with artificial flowers. In the portrait kept at Rysum Castle (Cat. H112), the deceased child rests on a cushion sprinkled with laurel leaves, conifer twigs, a few red roses and carnations. In his folded hands is an artificial flower of red and white colour, and on his head is a green wreath with a bicolour amulet.

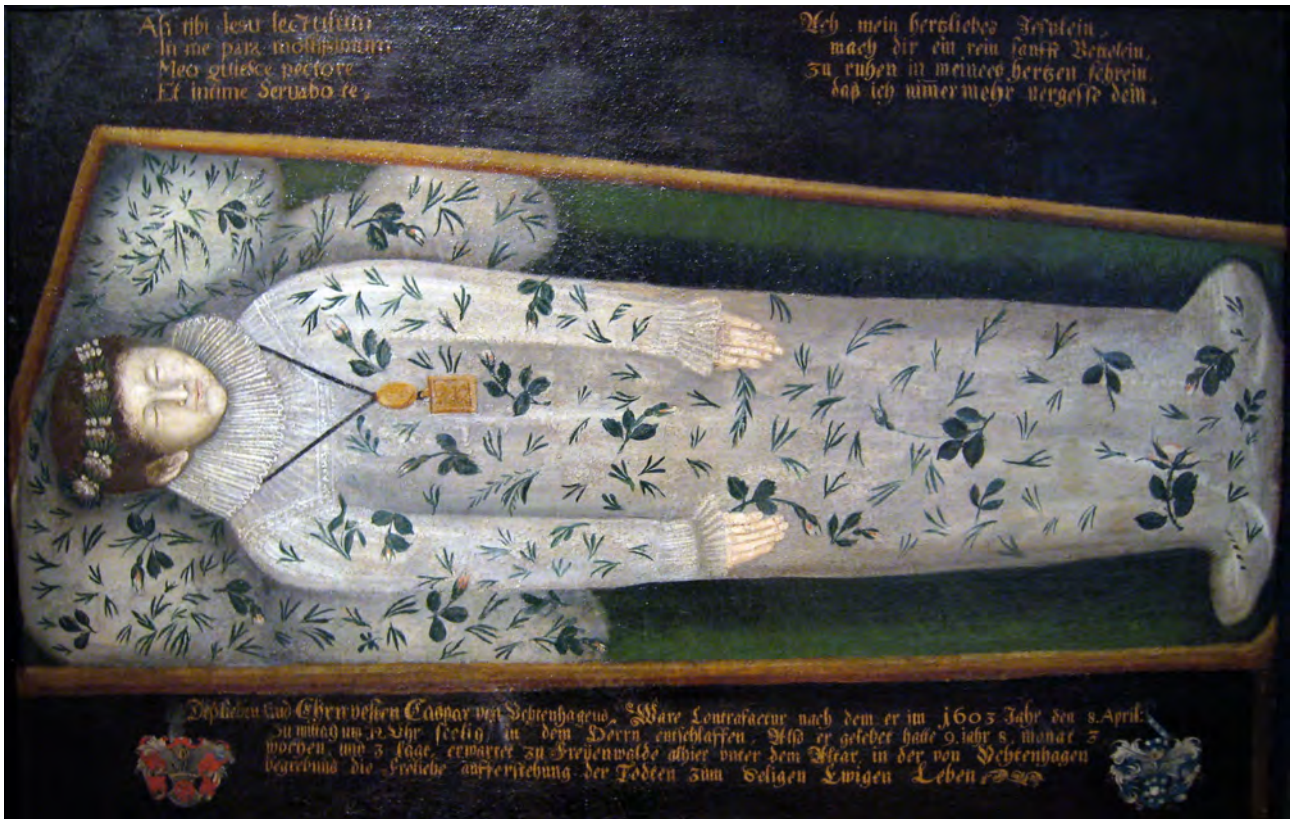

Fig. 4. *Representation of the body of Caspar von Uchtenhagen who died in 1603, in a coffin*, Bad Freienwalde, St Nicholas church

The opulence of the decorations led many cities to pass sumptuary laws regulating among other issues, also the selection of flowers for the coffin. In the second half of the 17th century in Gdańsk, sprinkling the bodies of the deceased with flowers was forbidden, except for adult, unmarried women. Only fresh seasonal flowers which were widely regarded as more modest than artificial ones, were considered acceptable (Kizik 2001: 201).

Natural and artificial flowers were strewn over the body of a child found in the crypt of the Church of the Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szczuczyn (Cat. J204; Grupa *et al.* 2013: 105). Artificial flowers may have been sewn onto clothing or fabric covering the body. An example of such a coffin arrangement is known from the crypt under the church in Sura, Sweden (Cat. N21). In Gdańsk, flower buds provided decoration for the interior of the coffin (Cat. J241), while in Gniew they were arranged along the length of the deceased child's robe (Cat. J244). In some regions of

[1] The plants with which Caspar's body was covered have a decorative value, emit a strong fragrance, and are also associated with marital symbolism.

Northern and Western Europe, artificial flowers for funerals were prepared by members of the family or community who were thus bidding farewell to the deceased member. This event was initiated, according to tradition, by the godmother of the deceased. Usually, remnants of everyday fabrics and worn-out clothing were used to make the flowers (Lipkin *et al.* 2020: 219). There were also specialised workshops in towns and monasteries (Lippok 2007: 257).

Artificial flowers may have been modelled on species existing in nature, but in most cases, it is not possible to determine their actual prototype due to their poor state of preservation and the lack of distinctive features that would allow diagnosis. Equally, on tombstones, the most common image is an archetypal representation of an unspecified flower. A slight hint is provided by the colour of the textile petals; however, textiles are rarely able to survive in a grave. In the burial of a child in St John's Church in Gdańsk (Cat. J241), flowers made from paper were discovered. They resembled a white lily (*Lilium candidum*, Fig. 5) and a dog rose (*Rosa canina*, Fig. 6). Blue flowers made of textiles were also found there, imitating the common chicory (*Cichorium intybus* L.) or cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus* L.). The flowers were attached to the inside of the coffin and placed on the body of the deceased (Trawicka 2010: 37-39). Artificial flowers resembling white lilies, dog roses, forget-me-nots or violets, and carnations were discovered in the burial of a young child in the northern crypt under the chapel of St Catherine in the church of St Nicholas in Gniew (Cat. J244). In another of the burials from this church, flowers reminiscent of tulips or carnations were preserved (Cat. J242). In a burial of 3-years old Antonina Bronisława Zaolzicka from Radzyń Podlaski, who died in 1838, a red staining of the skull might indicate the presence of unpreserved wreath made of artificial flowers. Such flowers fixed to iron stems were found in girl's coffin (Dabralet *et al.* 2022, 95).

The blue flowers were also depicted on painted tombstones. On a gravestone preserved in Żelowice, a young girl, Margareth von Schindel (Cat. J99) who died in 1601, holds in her hand a bouquet made of blue coloured flowers, the species of which cannot be identified (cornflowers? violets? forget-me-nots?) (Stankiewicz 2015: 99).

It seems that the loose placement of flowers on the body was appropriate for the funerals of children and young people. The flowers and sprigs of plants that appear in representations of women or men who have died at a mature age are usually arranged in the form of a floral decoration of a cross, garland or wreath (Cat. H5, H7, H150, J274, Figs. 6, 7, 8, 14, 29), although various forms of organised decoration also appear on portraits of dead children. Cut flowers were also used to decorate the parade bed and bedding, on which the body was presented (Cat. A1, H4, H9, H151, H166, H169, H170, H171, O1, Figs. 9, 13, 26).

Fig. 5. White lily (*Lilium candidum* L.)

Among the flowers most frequently depicted in sepulchral art in the early modern period was the rose. In archaeological research, the remains of natural cultivated roses used as independent decorations have not yet been

reported in burials (or these finds have not been published). Artificial roses made of wire, leather, textiles or paper have been found in burial crowns and wreaths preserved in Germany[2]. However, they are mainly traced in more recent artefacts. Rose remains have been identified in the filling of pillows or mattresses found in a church in Brahe in Sweden, Visingsö (Cat. N8; Tagesson 2015: 30) and in the Church of Our Saviour in Copenhagen (Cat. C17, C18).

Fig. 6. Dog rose (*Rosa canina* L.)

The rose flower was depicted on tombstone representations on the heads and in the hands of the dead, as a symbol of the material world passing away. The ancient tradition of sacrificing roses to the dead continued into the Middle Ages. A wreath of wild roses was found in the monastery church of Marienmünster on the chest of a bishop who died in 1136 or 1137 (Cat. H128). The strong symbolic status of the rose in the early modern period may also have contributed to its more frequent appearance in sepulchral images.

In the culture of the early modern Netherlands, rose symbolised the impermanence of human life. It also functioned as a symbol of carnality, with which are linked sensual love and the pain of desire (Zasławska 2002: 168-169).

In a positive meanig, it became a sign of innocence. In Europe north of the Alps, in the modern period, it was often depicted on the tombstones of people who had ended their lives at a young age. It was also used to represent the deceased person. In German tombstone inscriptions, deceased girls were sometimes referred to as 'roses' (Stankiewicz 2015: 34).

Fig. 7. Emblem *Ogni fiore/ al fin perde l'odore – Every flower at the end loses its fragrance*, in: Jacob Cats, *Spiegel van den Ouden ende Nieuwe Tijd*

The rose flower is most often found in emblems exploring the motif of the passing of temporal beauty. An emblem by Jacob Cats featuring a scene in which an elderly woman hands a withering rose blossom to a young woman (Fig. 7) was accompanied by the motto: "Ogni fiore/ al fin perde l'odore" – "Every flower at the end loses its fragrance" (Rotelband 1712: 546)[3].

[2] Roses were used much more frequently in the 19th-20th century as parts of wreaths commemorating fallen soldiers.

[3] Own translation.

The deceased child in the 1658 portrait kept in the Rubenshuis Museum in Antwerp holds a branch with a drooping rose bud in his left hand, while in his right a sprig of laurel is triumphantly clasped (Cat. G14, Fig. 8). A wilting rose blossom with falling petals is grasped in her left hand by Sophia Juliana von Bibra, who died in 1690, on her gravestone (Cat. H65, Fig. 9). In the background, on both sides of the girl, tall tulips grow which similarly to roses are known for rapidly losing freshness. Dorothea Maria, the Duchess of Sachsen-Zeitz who died on 11th June 1675 at the age of 33 (Cat. H151, Fig. 10), was depicted in the portrait in an open coffin, sprinkled with light purple rose flowers. A rose flower is also found in the woman's folded hands.

Fig. 8. Mathijs van den Bergh, *Little boy on his deathbed*, 1658, Alkmaar (?), currently: Antwerp, Rubenshuis

The tombstone of Anna Maria Schönaich (Cat. J173) from Bytom Odrzański, dated 1696, depicts a fully narrative scene, in which a girl reaches for a flower from a rose bush, while a hand extends from the clouds and pulls her by the hair to heaven. The inscription explaining the meaning of the image includes both a comparison of the young person to the flower and a belief in the short-lived nature of material beauty:

> „Besser Zeitig angebrochen
> als verwelckt früh und verrochen
> Jesu! Jesu hielfst Du mir
> bald sein glücklich hin zu Dir"[4].

[4] "It is better to be plucked young / than to die withered and old. / Jesus! Jesus, help me / so that [I can] go happily to you" (Stankiewicz 2015: 98).

Fig. 9. *Tombstone of Sophia Juliana von Bibra*, 1690, Bibra, Evangelical church

In the modern period, allegorical portraits of young women dressed as the goddess of spring and flowers – Flora, became fashionable. A tombstone from Bytom Odrzański and possibly a burial from St John's Church in Gdańsk (Cat. J241), can be assumed to be linked to this aesthetic trend. Archaeological excavations of the burials of the Schönaich family in Bytom Odrzański have also resulted in the discovery of artificial flowers employed as grave cushion decorations (Grupa 2015: 51).

The attributes of Flora were roses and lilies. Young girls were shown surrounded by flowers, wearing wreaths on their heads, holding a rose flower or plucking one from a bush. Lech Brusewicz, in the catalogue for an exhibition of Dutch paintings in Warsaw National Museum, analysing a painting by Gerard van Honthorst, *Portrait of Maria van Nassau-Oranje as Goddess Flora* from around 1653 (Fig. 11), quotes a claim by Carel van Mander. This

17th-century painter and art theoretician believed that Flora reminds mortals of the necessity of enjoying their youth, because: "old roses are known only by their thorns" (Brusewicz 1981: 74).

Fig. 10. Christian Schäffer, *Dorothea Maria von Sachsen-Zeitz who died on the 11th of June 1675*, Zeitz, Museum Castle Moritzburg

Fig. 11. Gerard van Honthorst (workshop), *Portrait of Maria van Nassau-Oranje as the goddess Flora*, after 1653, Olsztyn, Museum of Warmia and Masuria

Under natural conditions, the flowering period of roses was very short and did not occur every year. Artists painting floral bouquets from nature were sometimes unable to obtain roses of the chosen species or of the desired colour, forcing them to postpone their work until the following year (Zasławska 2002: 161). The desiccation of roses probably did not have satisfactory results due to the fact that the flowers lost their distinctive features – colour, fragrance and sometimes volume. The perishable flower was often depicted in still lifes illustrating the idea of futility.

Besides its participation in *vanitas* symbolism which developed notably north of the Alps, meanings of the rose, rooted in ancient mythology, the Holy Bible and the Christian Middle Ages, have been still valid in the modern period.

Roses accompanied the representations of mythological figures. They adorned images of the goddess of love – Aphrodite/Venus. Rose wreaths were depicted on the heads of the goddess Flora and the muse of dance Terpsichore. The ancient connection between flowers and mourning, especially those of a red colour, is retained in the story of Adonis being torn apart by a boar, out of whose blood roses (or anemones) sprouted.

Early Christianity adapted ancient iconographic motifs, transforming the rose into a symbol of the Virgin Mary. In Catholic art, roses became attributes of the Virgin Mary and Christ (Forstner 1990: 191-193). They symbolised the love, mercy, beauty, virtues and purity of Mary, who was described as a rose without thorns (Forstner 1990: 153; Michniewska 2014: 56)[5], the Annunciation (Zasławska 2002: 173-174), and were also symbols of the Passion, with five petals representing the five wounds of Christ[6] (Zasławska 2002: 175). The comparison of the rose or lily flowers to Mary and Christ occurs in some of the oldest polish texts from 14th-early 15th century (Nowakowska 2001: 20).

For Christians, white flowers signified virginity, while red flowers stood for love. By association with blood, they were related to Christ's Passion and Mary's co-suffering (Michniewska 2014: 57). Red flowers, especially five-petalled flowers, were also adopted as a symbol of martyrs.

[5] "A rose without thorns" by St Ambrose – roses before the fall of Adam and Eve lacked thorns (Michniewska 2014: 56).

[6] The comparison by St Bernard and St Peter of Capua.

Roses in portraits of deceased nuns are usually a reference to specific Christian virtues. The rose, as a symbol of both the virtues of the deceased and the transience, is depicted in the posthumous portrait of a nun from the Order of Poor Clares in Trnava, Catharina Margaritha Fregách de Ghyms (Cat. L4), who died in 1750 (Bieńko de Peralta and Kubiak 2016: 15). The nun's body was decorated with cut roses of a light colour. Upon the woman's head is a wreath, on either side of her head, on a silk cushion, two floral bouquets have been placed, and a third one below the hidden hands folded on her abdomen. To the right of the painting, the artist has inserted a small still life composed of symbols of transience: an overturned hourglass, a skull, a broken candle and a rose with its petals falling.

Flowers also adorn the body of Beata Konstancja (Konstancja née Myszkowska Bużeńska) in a painting originating from the Carmelite convent at the Church of St Martin in Kraków (Cat. J19). The nun who died on 14 May 1627, has been exhumed, and her mortal remains have been observed not to decompose. The portrait depicts Konstancja on a catafalque before the funeral, or after the body has been retrieved from its burial place, dressed and ceremonially displayed for adoration in the church (Dziubkowa 1996; Bieńko de Peralta and Kubiak 2016: 28).

In the Middle Ages, the flowers belonging to other species, such as hollyhock (*Alcea rosea* L.), marsh mallow (*Althaea officinalis* L.), or the peony (*Paeonia* sp.) were considered roses (Michniewska 2014: 58). Marcin of Urzędów in his *Polish Herbarium* listed three species of roses – a red one called the 'Paradise' rose, a white rose and a field rose, with five-petaled flowers. The white rose was only supposed to be suitable for wreaths. The scholar's claim that white roses are like a dead man, while red represent the living, is somewhat enigmatic (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 266). In Gothic paintings, the most common roses depicted were those with a multiplied number of petals, belonging to cultivated plants. Wild plants, on the other hand, in artistic representations usually had only five petals each (Michniewska 2014: 56). The six- or eight-petalled rosette appeared on everyday objects, as a popular ornament, a legal mark and a heraldic charge.

The five-petalled white rose with a black cross, presented on a blue background in a golden border, was taken by Martin Luther as the emblem of the Reformation. On Protestant tombstones, the rose can symbolise the confession that the deceased belonged to (Stankiewicz 2015: 34).

Equally as important as the rose, the lily flower, and in particular the white lily (*Lilium candidum*, Fig. 5), is one of the most significant symbols of the Virgin Mary. The white lily is native to the Middle East. It has probably been cultivated since Antiquity and was associated with royal symbolism (Forstner 1990: 187-188). Depictions of lily flowers can be seen in Minoan Frescoes and Assyrian reliefs. The plant was spread in the Middle Ages by the Crusaders, who brought its bulbs to Europe (Szczepanowicz 2013: 143). Fuchs, in his herbarium, distinguished between the cultivated white lily and the orange lily (*Lilium bulbiferum* L.), with golden-red calyxes, which in Northern Europe was the only one occurring wild (Fuchs 2016: 205-206). The white lily symbolised innocence and purity of soul and body. A reason for its association with virginity, among others, is that the white lily does not set seed in wild (Szczepanowicz 2013: 144). The phrase: "a lily in the midst of thorns" from the *Song of Songs* (So. 2:2) alludes to the natural habitat of these flowers. The lily from the Song of Songs was identified with Mary who was surrounded by sinful mankind. In another passage in the text, the lily symbolises the bridegroom, or Christ (Forstner 1990: 187-189).

Lilies in the Middle Ages were shown in scenes of the Annunciation, as a foreshadowing of Christ's birth, his innocence and hidden virtuous nature. In Central European paintings from the 15-early 16th centuries, in religious scenes, the more locally encountered lily of the valley (Convallaria majalis L., Fig. 12), appears as a substitute for the lily. The name of the plant, which in medieval Latin was *Lilium convalium*, comes from the synonymising of the lily of the valley with the "lily of the valleys" from the *Song of Songs* ("Ego flos campi et lilium convalium", So. 2:1) (Michniewska 2014: 76-77). Since it contains glycosides, in the early modern period, it was used for medicinal purposes, especially to regulate the functioning of the heart (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 190). On late medieval portraits, the lily of the valley in the hand was a symbol of the physician.

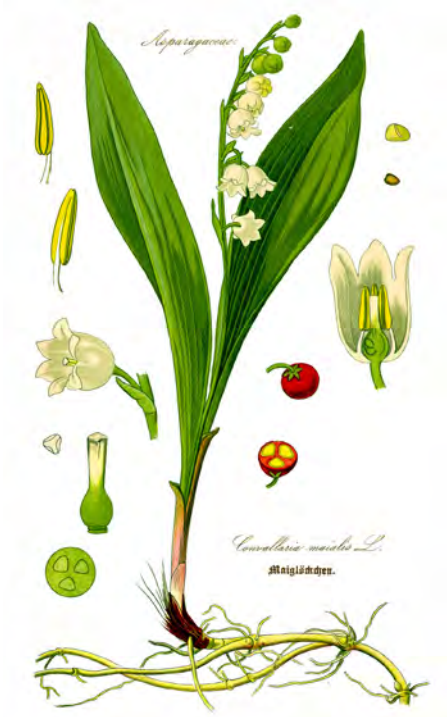

Fig. 12. Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis* L.)

The chief floral symbol of the *Songs* — the lily, was formerly equated with similar-looking flowers: narcissi, hyacinths, irises, lily of the valley and even crocuses. Doubts about the plant's systematics are not resolved by compendia and modern herbaria, in which these flowers appear under many names and are often included in a single species.

A narcissus (Fig. 13) by Pliny and Dioscorides was included in the category of lilies (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 217).

A substitute for the lily in the Middle Ages was also the yellow iris (*Iris pseudacrocus*). The heraldic lily (in French 'fleur-de-lis') is in fact a representation of the yellow iris. It is likely that the flowers described in the Bible as lilies should also be identified with irises. The remains of yellow irises have been found in Gdańsk, in the north of Poland, in archaeological strata dated to the 12th-14th centuries (Badura 2011: Tab. 25). Yellow and black dye were extracted from the flowers and rhizomes of irises. Similar as lily and lily of the valley, iris is also one of the plants that can cause poisoning or irritation. Lilies, lilies of the valley and irises were cultivated in the Middle Ages as ornamental plants. These flowers usually grew in so-called flower meadows, i.e., areas of green grass covered with flowers, which were a characteristic for medieval gardens (Michniewska 2014: 45).

Fig. 13. *Narcissus poeticus* L.

There is quite a lot of inconsistency among the names of flowers and the species attributed to them in early modern scientific texts. All plants with similar looking calyxes, growing from a bulb, may have been termed lilies. However, Marcin of Urzędów, analysing the texts of ancient naturalists from a critical point of view, distinguishes between narcissus, lily of the valley and iris, although he writes that these plants bear a considerable resemblance to lilies. The *Polish Herbarium* by Marcin of Urzędów includes a note on the hyacinth, whom the author identifies as a 'March flower', i.e. a violet (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 169). He points out that the name 'hyacinth' was also used for the white lily and the iris. The crocus, classified as a lily by the ancients, is for him a separate species. Fuchs, on the other hand, among the hyacinths includes also the tassel hyacinth (*Muscari comosum*) (Fuchs 2016: 827) and the alpine squill (*Scilla bifolia*) (Fuchs 2016: 830).

Hyacinth, crocus, anemone and tulip began to appear in European gardens in the early modern period as a result of a number of factors, including the spread of printed herbaria, the development of trade and botanical interest (Goody 1993: 184). In the herbaria, flowers were associated with mythological figures whose deaths contributed to their creation. Although the identification of flower species was problematic for Northern European naturalists, the myths of Narcissus, Crocus, Adonis or Hyacinth were still familiar to them. Efforts were also made to find a match between familiar plants and those appearing in myths and works of Antiquity, popularised at the time also by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In the Franciscan monastery in Güssing, Austria, the posthumous portrait of Aurora Katharina von Formentini zu Talmein (Cat. A1, Fig. 14), the wife of the Hungarian magnate Ádám Batthyány, is preserved. She died on 5 April 1653. The woman's funeral ceremony took place in June of the same year. The *castrum doloris*, on which the deceased was laid to rest, decorated with flowers, candles and coat-of-arms shields, began to be erected on 29 May, and probably around this time the depiction of Catherine's body was made (Koltai 2002: 122-125). The flowers shown on the cushion, under the head and on the sides of the body are white rose, white tulip, narcissus, lily of the valley, anemone, carnation and on the right side of the body two multicoloured tulips. The blooming period of the flowers shown in the painting is in spring, until the end of June. It is therefore likely that the species depicted in the portrait really embellished Catherine Aurora's body a few days before her funeral. Each of the flowers chosen can be attributed an emblematic function. It is possible that the exquisite species were included in the portrait for prestige reasons, in particular the costly, multicoloured tulips.

Tulips appeared in sepulchral art because of the prevailing trend. Tulip bulbs were first brought from Constantinople to Augsburg in 1557 by the merchant Johann Heinrich Herwart (Jagiełło-Kołaczyk and Brzezowski 2014: 104) or Ogier Giselin de Busbecq, the ambassador of Archduke Ferdinand I at the court of Suleiman the Magnificent. Their dissemination was prompted by Jules Charles de L'Écluse ('Clusius'), a French humanist and botanist who succeeded in breeding a tulip cultivar that could tolerate the harsh climate of Northern Europe. In 1573, Clusius was invited to the imperial court in Vienna where he supervised the development of a botanical garden. He experimented with cross-breeding of tulips, resulting in blossoms with multi-coloured petals. In the 17th century, European tulips were attacked by tulip breaking virus (Fig. 15). The disease caused the development of flower and leaf deformities, leading to the formation of anomalies. The infection was transmitted through the bulbs in a way that was unpredictable for flower growers. In addition, the virus weakened the plant, creating a serious danger of not sprouting. Flowers with an unusual appearance deformed by the disease became most desirable, leading to an increase in demand for tulips and the so-called 'tulip fever' in the Netherlands between 1634 and 1637 (Goody 1993: 188, 189)[7].

The ephemeral tulip, like the rose, symbolised transience. Because the tulip wilts and regrows from its bulb every year, it became a symbol of immortality. Tulips were depicted on tombstones and epitaphs in Western and Central Europe in the 17th century. One of the most original funerary monuments is a stoneware sculpture depicting the bust of the girl Lydia Dwight (Cat. O11), who died on 3 March 1674. She was the daughter of the sculptor and founder of the Fulham stoneware manufactory, John Dwight. Lydia rests on a cushion, wearing a cap and a veil on her head. In her folded hands she holds a bouquet of natural flowers, among which tulips and anemones can be identified (Litten 1991: 49). Dwight also executed a parallel sculpture showing Lydia after she has been resurrected. The girl stands in a flowered meadow, and at her feet is a symbol of rebirth – a skull in a wreath of cereal ears (Dwight 1674, *Lydia Dwight Resurrected*).

[7] In the first half of the 17th century, tulips began to achieve high prices. Bulbs were sold in the summer together with documents certifying their weight. The customer could inspect the plant in bloom in June and, after it had flowered, see the bulbs extracted from the ground, which, if accepted, were not delivered until the autumn. In 1634, the bulbs still stuck in the ground began to be traded which encouraged monetary speculation. They were sold with a document certifying the weight before planting. Usually, the following year the bulb weighed significantly more, by up to 100 per cent, or the plant produced a second or even a third bulb. In 1637, the market for tulips collapsed due to inflated prices, but the fashion for the exotic flowers did not wane, and the range of their buyers widened.

Fig. 14. *Aurora Katharina Formentini zu Talmein*, 1653, Güssing, Franciscan monastery

Fig. 15. Flower of a tulip of the cultivar „Semper Augustus" infected with the tulip breaking virus

The anemone also functioned as a symbol of transience in art. It appeared in emblem collections with mottoes referring to the short life of the flower ('Brevis est usus' – 'Short is useful') (de la Feuille 1691). It also signified death and blood shed for the faith, and was shown in scenes of the Crucifixion. Marcin of Urzędów mentions, following Pliny the Elder, that the ancients wove wreaths from anemones. These flowers were also allegedly used by wreath makers in early modern Kraków (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 27). In Europe north of the Alps, the anemone was sometimes identified with native species of flowers (Fig. 16), such as buttercups and poppies. Despite the poppy's important status in funerary symbolism, it is rarely discovered in graves. It was recently identified in burials beneath St Francis Church in Kraków (Cat. J30, J45).

Another species with extensive symbolic meanings was the carnation. Carnations whose name is derived in most European languages from nails, had been cultivated in Central Europe since the 15th century (Michniewska 2014: 63). The fragrant flower was associated with an aromatic spice – clove. The carnation was an attribute of the saints, one of the symbols of the Virgin Mary and the Passion of Christ, as cloves resembled the nails that were used to pound Christ to the cross. In fact, cloves are the dried buds of a tree from the family *Myrtaceae* (*Syzygium aromaticum)* which occurs naturally in Asia.

Fig. 16. Wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa* L.)

The name of the flower in English comes from 'incarnation'. The carnation in the hand of the baby Jesus was a symbol referring to the mystery of Christ's incarnation. It was also believed to be a remedy to help women get pregnant (Michniewska 2014: 74). In the 15th-16th centuries it was particularly associated with love and marriage symbolism. It appeared in the hands of young people, portrayed for their nuptials or engagements.

Natural carnation flowers as a body decoration or bouquet are rarely discovered, and have recently been described in burials in Toruń (Cat. J13) and Kraków (Cat. J43, J45). The remains of carnations (*Dianthus* sp.) have been found in the filling of a pillow in the Church of the Church of Our Saviour in Copenhagen (Cat. C17) and inside the abdominal cavity of a man from the crypt in St John the Baptist Archcathedral in Warsaw (Cat. J184). Artificial carnations were discovered in a burial in the church of St Nicholas in Gniew (Cat. J242), woven into a maiden wreath (Nowak 2013-2014). They should probably be interpreted as a symbol of being betrothed during a funeral. Much more commonly, the cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*) were used to create grave decorations.

Carnations in early modern sepulchral art appear especially in representations of children. Red carnations are shown in the hands of Magdalena Sybilla von Sachsen-Zeitz who died in 1672 (Cat. H149, Fig. 17). Next to the coffin, in a vase, there are carnations in a shade of pink. The vase of carnation flowers is embraced by 14-year-old Sophia Charlotta Weigbers (Cat. C15), whose portrait was published in a printed eulogy for her funeral in Copenhagen in 1681 (Stankiewicz 2015: 99). Karl Zdeněk of Žerotín who died in 1620, whose portrait is preserved at Velké Losiny Castle, is wearing a wreath of myrtle flowers and carnations on his head. The boy is holding a bouquet of three carnation flowers in his hands (Cat. K7, Fig. 18). A carnation is also shown in the hand of little Carolus Horn in a portrait in the collection of the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm (Neiman 1662, Cat. N13).

Fig. 17. Christian Schäffer, *Magdalena Sybilla von Sachsen-Zeitz – portrait in a coffin*, 1672, Zeitz, Museum Castle Moritzburg

Fig. 18. *Post-mortem portrait of Karl Zdeněk of Žerotín*, 1620, Státní zámek Velké Losiny

An interesting set of flowers is presented in the posthumous portrait of Princess Antonia von Württemberg (Cat. H6, Fig. 19) held in the Landesmuseum Württemberg in Stuttgart. Prior to her death on 1 October 1679, she expressed her wish not to have her body embalmed. The funeral therefore took place on the 9th day after her death. In the meantime, a whole-figure posthumous portrait was created. In the painting, the deceased is lying in a coffin lined with silk bedding, surrounded by flowers, among which are carnations, crocuses, narcissi, daffodils, hyacinths and irises. A flowering branch (of an apple tree?) has been stuck behind the headrest. Red roses, lily of the valley and perhaps anemones (?) are woven into a wreath made of green rosemary. Near the Princess's temple is an orange (or apple?). A decoration of rosemary leaves and rose, hyacinth and anemone flowers has been arranged on the body, from chest to knee height.

According to the authors of the exhibition in Stuttgart, the body of Antonia who was buried in October, may have been decorated with artificial flowers[8]. It is also likely that the flowers shown in the painting were not used during the funeral and are purely the artist's vision. Antonia, known by her contemporaries as Minerva, was renowned for her education and passion for the study of the Scripture. It is particularly noteworthy that the flowers depicted in the portrait are known from ancient mythology. They also appear in the pages of the Holy Bible. The letters painted above the coffin: 'E.(wige) L.(icht)' which refer to the light of the forthcoming resurrection, indicate that the decorations were inspired by the Christian faith.

[8] Olaf Siart – oral information.

Fig. 19. *Coffin portrait of Antonia von Württemberg who died on the 1st of October 1679*, Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum

The arrangement of Antonia von Württemberg's coffin is an illustration of the verses of the *Song of Songs*. The set of plants in the portrait can be related to the scene of the betrothal, which in older translations of the Bible from *Vulgate*, unlike modern translations, contains much more detail drawn from the world of flora:

> "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.
> As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.
> As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.
> He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.
> Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.
> His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.
> I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please."
>
> *King James Bible* (So. 2:1-7)

Antonia is depicted as the bride in virgin dress, with her hair loose and wearing a wreath on her head[9]. On the symbolic layer, the portrait shows the scene of Antonia's posthumous betrothal to Christ.

In later translations of the Scripture, a rose and other flower species were sometimes substituted for the lily. The bridegroom describes himself as a rose/narcissus/lily of Saron (So. 2:1), each flower's symbolic meanings being interpreted as Christ characteristics. In another passage, the comparison "as the lily among thorns" is a reference to the purity of the Bride. Saffron (*Crocus sativus*) is mentioned among other fragrances in the description of the enclosed garden symbolising the Bride (So. 4:14).

[9] Dying unmarried, the duchess was 66 years old.

The apple branch above the head of the deceased Antonia refers to the passage: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (So. 2:3). It symbolises Christ the Bridegroom in whose "shadow" the deceased is sheltered. At the same time, it signifies his sacrifice, represented by the fruit ("his fruit was sweet to my taste"), through which the deceased can await resurrection.

Near Antonia's head is visible a large reddish fruit – an apple or an orange which in the early modern period was included among the symbols of marriage. Citrus, apples and pomegranates, were considered a sign of femininity, abundance, fertility, but also virginity. It seems that the verse translated from the *Vulgate*: "Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo" – "Cover me with flowers, sprinkle me with apples, for I faint from love" was literally transferred into a painting. The tree of paradise was considered a prefiguration of Christ's sacrifice. This metaphor was developed by Saint Bonaventure in the 13th century. Under its influence, the cross began to be depicted in art as a living tree with branches, leaves and fruit. The infant Jesus was often shown holding a fruit in his hand, as a sign of his future Passion and Resurrection. It could have been an apple, a pomegranate, a grape or an apricot. The fruit in the hand of little Jesus indicates that he stands for the Second Adam who overcomes original sin. Mary, by giving birth to Christ, became the Second Eve[10] (Kobielus 2006: 91). The Latin word *malum* without the second part – the species name − used to mean any fruit. Because *Genesis* did not specify, what kind of fruit bore the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the early Christians identified it as the well-known to them figs, oranges, lemons, quinces, pomegranates or grapes. For Europeans, the tree of Eden became an apple tree which is common in temperate climate. The last verse of the cited *Song of Songs* passage contains an exhortation to not interrupt the sleep of the Bride. It refers to the belief in the transitory nature of death and the resurrection from the dead in the future.

By the end of the 16th century in the Netherlands, flower and fruit compositions had achieved the status of a separate painting genre. A new type of allegory developed, in which flowers serve as emblematic figures. Early modern floral still lifes were characterised by a realism of representation, derived from scientific illustration. They carried a wide range of symbolic content, in which the motif of praise of the material world, by showing the beauty of nature, was combined with a moral, religious or philosophical message. Floral bouquets were intended to stimulate the viewer to intellectual reflection on the world of matter (Zasławska 2002: 164-165).

It is likely that natural flowers were not of very practical use in funeral ceremonies, as they lost their freshness too quickly. They were also, except for a few months of the year, unavailable. Perhaps for this reason, artificial imitations of flowers were used. Posthumous portraits present a broader range of plant species. A more limited set of flowers is found in tombstone representations and on epitaphs. In sepulchral sculpture, the reduction to the most obvious associations was a result of to the need to capture the abundance of *vanitas* symbolism in a synthesised form.

On tombstones, the deceased were most often depicted with flowers or bouquets in their hands. It is somewhat less common to see floral wreaths on the heads of figures. Flowers are also found in the area surrounding the deceased figure. Sometimes placing of flowers in vases or flowers hanging from the branches served to build up the illusion of depth. Very seldom a gravestone scene is narrative and includes the interaction of the deceased with the plants placed around them. Usually, the flowers themselves fill the background in isolation from the main scene or form its borders. Tombstone images were often made many years after the death of the person depicted. Rigid conventions of portrayal were followed, for instance children a few years old, were often shown as much older. Therefore, it can certainly be ruled out that they were documentary in nature, apart from images created on the basis of portraits taken shortly after death. The paintings or drawings of decorated bodies before burial are probably more realistic than the figures on the gravestones, but also contain elements of idealisation.

[10] "Eve through the fruit of the tree doomed us to condemnation, Mary through the gift of the tree obtained forgiveness because Christ hung on the cross like fruit" (St Ambrose; Kobielus 2006: 91).

The portraits practically lack species that are irrelevant in early modern plant symbolism. Meanwhile, as demonstrated by detailed botanical research, inside modern burials plants that are important from a medicinal point of view, but less frequently (or even never) exploited as symbols, dominate. This is probably related to the representational function of the portraits. They were commissioned by people, who could certainly afford to buy expensive funerary decorations, with access to fashionable flowers, the display of which emphasised their high material position. These portraits were keepsakes for the family, fellow believers and subsequent generations, so perhaps attention was paid to ensuring that the floral symbols brought didactic messages and references to the social identification of the deceased. The utility plants that provided aroma and aided the preservation of the corpse, hidden in pillows, pouches and mattresses, were not intended to be seen by mourners. It is therefore inappropriate to attribute a symbolic function to them.

The portraits of the wealthy women of the upper classes, the Princess Antonia von Württemberg and the wife of the Central European magnate Aurora Katharina Formentini zu Talmein, mainly feature flowers that were made famous by ancient myths. This may indicate that the posthumous portraits are allegorical representations, composed for those with the right level of intellectual training, rather than documenting reality. At the same time, it is known that the arrangements of the *castrum doloris* were rich in symbols and various kinds of props to illustrate messages understandable to an educated audience.

It is possible that the natural plants placed in the burials were only the equivalent of desirable, prestigious and more highly valued species, such as the rose, lily, iris, tulip, anemone, carnation, narcissus, daffodil, hyacinth, crocus, lily of the valley, forget-me-not or poppy. Access to flowers beyond their blooming season was limited and the drying was not always possible to carry out. Difficulties in the classification and species identification of flowers revealed in early modern herbaria suggest that these flowers were rather rarely seen in nature in Europe north of the Alps.

It can be assumed that in the production of tomb decorations only the green parts of natural plants were used, to which artificial flowers were added, thus the scarcity of remains of symbolically significant, living flowers in the archaeological finds. A fragment of a green plant sufficiently fulfilled its role, providing a fragrance and, as a part of the nature, reminding of mortality, the passing of the world and the hope of seeing the Garden of Eden. It is also possible that the plants featured in the post-mortem portraits adorned the body before the funeral ceremonies, but that they did not end up with it in the grave. The most likely reason, however, seems to be that the subject is still insufficiently recognised through archaeological research.

The flowers as symbols in tombstone art served the viewer, allowing reflection to be transferred to his or her own status. They became one of the tombstone symbols as they illustrated man's precarious fate through the analogy of the plant's fragile life. Support for these associations is found in words from the Scripture, including the *Book of Psalms*: "As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more" (Psalm 103:15--16) and Isaiah: "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field" (Is 40:6).

Plants placed in burials (especially floral decorations) can be interpreted individually or treated as symbols to recall the futility of the material world. In that case, precision in the choice of species in botanical terms would be a peripheral issue.

As Christina Jonsson suggests, the manner in which modern burials were furnished was characterised more by concern for the deceased than by the need to manifest the status of the family (Jonsson 2009: 179). However, it is likely that the reasons for the extension of the early modern ceremony with furnishings containing plants combine both social and representational purposes, along with intimate emotions and the individual experience of mourning by those closest to the deceased, who were responsible for the funeral organisation. Beautiful and fragrant flowers placed in graves, regardless of species, could therefore be a personal expression of private mourning and feelings towards a lost family member.

3.2. Twigs and sprigs

Green sprigs of herbs in the early modern period were supposed to be placed in the folded hands of the deceased. They were also arranged around the body on the bedding and along the body – on the robe, individually, or gathered in small bundles.

As it seems, this act was not always of only decorative value. The aroma of the herbs helped to camouflage the unpleasant smell of the corpse during the funeral. Probably for hygienic reasons, green sprigs of natural plants were used for this purpose.

For Hanseatic towns the early modern custom of placing twigs in folded hands is reported in source texts, where they appear under the name of 'Kreutchen' (from German). According to Edmund Kizik, these were twigs of evergreen shrubs: myrtle, cypress or laurel (Kizik 1998: 88).

In tombstone iconography, twigs were usually shown in the hands of the deceased. In contrast, on portraits depicting bodies before burial and in archaeologically explored graves, sprigs of herbs are usually found arranged on the body or bedding.

As is the case for flowers, it is difficult to attribute the function of independent decoration to the remains found on robes and grave linen. Garlands, bouquets, maiden wreaths and other decorative, floral constructions were also built from the herbaceous parts of evergreen plants.

The motif of a twig, or a flower in the hand, is often recurring on tombstone images showing the deceased as living persons in a standing position. However, determining the species of plant is sometimes problematic due to the considerable degree of stylisation of the depictions and, in most cases, the poor state of preservation of the stone plates.

In Silesian grave art, the twig appears as a realistic attribute of the deceased. Unlike flowers, its symbolic role is declined due to the clearly portrayal nature of the images. Most often represented were sprigs of rosemary. The twigs can be found on children's tombstones created probably on the basis of post-mortem portraits that have not survived to the present day. Such depictions include the tombstone of 8-month-old Anna Maria von Brösick from the church in Ketzür in Brandenburg from 1620 (Cat. H54). Rosemary branches are placed in the hands of the child, who is portrayed as dead, resting in a coffin. A similar sepulchral representation was placed in the monastery church of Barsinghausen in Lower Saxony for the 2-year-old Magdalena Dorothea von Windheim who died in 1658 (Cat. H102). The sprigs of herbs are shown on the pillow, under her head and in the girl's folded hands (Stankiewicz 2015: 105).

Catherina (Cat. G1, Fig. 20), daughter of the artist Gerard ter Borch, is portrayed in a realistic manner with a sprig in her hand in the coffin (Morel 2003: 27). A sprig of rosemary is also held by a child in a posthumous portrait from 1654, kept at the Groningen Museum (Netherlands; Cat. G17, Fig. 21). The deceased toddler is dressed in a mortal shirt tied at the neck with an embroidered inscription. The child's head, wearing a bonnet and a green wreath interspersed with white flowers, rests supported on a cushion. With poignant realism, a delicate sprig of rosemary is depicted in the hand of the Hungarian aristocrat Catherine Horvath-Stansith, née Kissová, in a posthumous portrait from around 1680 (Cat. L2, Fig. 23).

Fig. 20. *Catherina ter Borch, daughter of the painter Gerard ter Borch*, 1633, Zwolle, currently: Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

In the already described portrait of Aurora Katharina Formentini zu Talmein (Cat. A1, Fig. 14), in addition to numerous flowers on the mattress and coffin pillow, a sprig of rosemary or juniper is displayed near her feet. A rosemary sprig is also depicted in the folded hands of Duke Friedrich III. von Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp in a posthumous portrait from 1659 (Cat. H164, Fig. 24; Kügler 2003: 440). Probably a more common practice

than placing a branch in the hand was to cover the surroundings of the body – a cushion, mattress or robe of the deceased – with aromatic herbs.

Fig. 21. Jan Jansz de Stomme, *Portrait of the dead child*, 1654, Museum Groningen

The portrait of Hannibal Gustaf Wrangel (Cat. N19, Fig. 25), housed at Skokloster Castle near Stockholm, shows the deceased boy wearing white silk lace clothing and a pearl cap on his head. Hannibal in his folded hands holds a bouquet of artificial red flowers interwoven with green branches and pearls. The body was draped with green sprigs, possibly of rosemary (?), which were arranged in the shape of a Latin cross on the chest. Rosemary was also placed on the pillow and clothing of an unknown child from the Dobai family who died in 1737 and is depicted in a portrait from Bratislava (Cat. L1, Fig. 26). Rosemary sprigs on a pillow, around the corpse, on clothing, and in folded hands, are shown in a portrait of Boldizsár Horvath-Stansith (Cat. L3). Sprigs of rosemary and myrtle can be found on coffin pillows and the beddings of children of Duke Eberhard III. von Württemberg, Dorothea Amalia and Carl Christoph[11], who died in 1650 (Cat. H4; Knöll 2009: 257). Rosemary on a cushion was also laid by the 9-year-old Christian von Sachsen-Altenburg who died in 1663 (Cat. H165, Figs. 2, 3; Kügler 2003: 441). In the already mentioned portrait of a child from Rysum Castle (Cat. H112), the coffin cushion was covered with laurel leaves, conifer branches and flowers. In the grave of a young child buried in the cemetery at the Dominican monastery in Prenzlau (Cat. H47), a fragment of a boxwood branch was found near the head. The cemetery dates between the 2nd half of the 16th century and the 2nd half of the 18th century (Ungerath, n.d.). In Riesa Cloister Church yew branches were observed (Alterauge and Hofmann 2020: 81)

Among archaeological finds, in iconographic sources and literature, only sprigs of evergreen plants appear, whose symbolism relating to the funerary sphere is very extensive and well documented. Evergreen plants played an important role in funerary rites in Antiquity. In the early modern period, they were linked to the resurrection. They combined characteristics such as freshness, aroma and greenery, indicating healing and life-prolonging properties. Because they do not wither away for the winter, sprigs of evergreen herbs in the hands of the dead signified hope for eternal life. It is likely that analogy was formerly recognised between evergreen plants and people who died before reaching maturity. The underlying metaphor was that evergreen plants do not perish for the winter, and therefore do not go through the full annual cycle, such as people who passed away too early can not complete the life cycle. The meaning of the green funeral branches can be summarised as referring to resurrection and triumph at the same time.

The important function of evergreen herbs in funerary ceremonies can be seen from the long tradition of their use. However, as in the case of grave wreaths, evidence of the use of evergreens of Mediterranean origin in the form of twigs in the Middle Ages is scarce and limited to the wealthier strata of society. Few proofs of the use of evergreen plants in funerary ceremonies are provided by iconography.

[11] The memorial of children from Landesmuseum Württemberg shows two sarcophagi surrounded by growing plants, among which are the rose of Jericho, symbolising the Resurrection, and the passion flower. Passiflora which Europeans recognised around 1550, just a century before the painting was made, was regarded as a sign of Christ's Passion, due to physical structures of this plant (Fig. 27).

Fig. 22. Common myrtle (*Myrtus communis*)

One of the oldest tomb portraits showing the deceased with evergreen plant twig is a statue of count Heinrich III. von Sayn, stored in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, coming from the Premonstratensian church in Sayn near Koblenz (Cat. H16, Fig.28).

The wooden sculpture, dating from around 1247/48, is most likely a double portrait of the count and his daughter, who died a year before him. The man is standing under a baldachin. Beside him is a female figure with a lemon or pomegranate in her right hand. The girl originally held a partially preserved, carved rosemary branch, which the man grasps in his right hand (Neurath-Sippel 2011: 121-122).

A scene from the panel of a stained-glass window from a medieval house in Leicester from around 1500, depicting the laying of a corpse in the tomb, shows the priest sprinkling the body with holy water using a sprig of hys-

Fig. 23. *Katharina Horvath-Stansith, rod. Kissová – postmortem portrait*, 1670-1700, Bratislava, Slovak National Gallery

Fig. 24. *Friedrich III. von Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp – portrait in funeral oration*, 1659, Schleswig, currently: Darmstadt, Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek

sop. The custom of using plant springs as an aspergillum derives from the Book of Psalms' description of the Jewish ritual of purification: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:9). In Western Europe it continued at least into the early modern period (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005b: 181). Boxwood was also used as an aspergillum at funerals until contemporary times.

Native to the Mediterranean, hyssop made its appearance in Europe north of the Alps in the early Middle Ages. It was cultivated in monastery gardens as one of the medic-

Fig. 25. *Posthumous portrait of Hannibal Gustaf Wrangel af Lindeberg who died on the 8th of January 1643*, Skokloster Castle (painting made in Lüneburg)

Fig. 26. *Posthumous portrait of a child from the Dobai family*, after 1737, Bratislava City Gallery

inal herbs (Fijałkowski and Chojnacka-Fijałkowska 2009: 178-179). Many varieties of the plant were used in Antiquity. The species *Hyssopus officinalis* was used in European medicine from the early Middle Ages. Hyssop symbolised not only physical, but also moral purification. It was recommended by authors of medical texts for treating of oral diseases, coughs, parasites and toothache. It probably did not arrive on the territory of Poland until the 15th or 16th century (Kawałko 1986: 265-266). Hyssop has been identified in late Gothic paintings created in Poland and

in a portrait by Christopher Suchten from 1507 stored in the National Museum in Gdańsk. Hyssop-based remedies which were widespread in the 16th century, gradually lost popularity. By the 19th century the herb was already used very rarely as an expectorant medicine. Hyssop was identified as an intense aromatic herb; thus, its sprigs were kept in prayer books to stimulate the focus of worshippers during long sermons (Kawałko 1986: 269-271). In Central Europe, hyssop is present in cultivated and feral forms. It was one of the herbs consecrated during the octave of Corpus Christi and Feast of the Assumption of Mary (Paluch 1984: 124). The consecrated herb was hidden under the thatch and the rooms were fumigated with it to keep away evil. A garland of consecrated hyssop was hung outside the hut to protect it from lightning strikes (Fischer and Kujawska 2016: 379).

In the Cathedral of Basel, the remains of Bishop Johann II. Senn von Münsingen (Cat. M1) were discovered deposited in a coffin and covered with sprigs of sage (*Salvia officnalis*). Sage contains essential oils, about half of which is thujone. Historically, it was a consumption plant (as tea or food ingredient) and had numerous medicinal uses (Nowiński 1983: 49; Fischer and Kujawska 2016: 476). Above all, it was used for treatment of oral, dental and throat conditions. It was believed that sage in the garden was the hiding place of reptiles or amphibians, and that supernatural creatures could be born from it spontaneously. In Central Europe, it may have been known already in the early Middle Ages. It is one of the most frequently mentioned therapeutic plants in medieval texts on medicine and horticulture. It was also thought to protect against plague (Nowiński 1983: 49-50). In the 18th-20th centuries, sage was used in numerous magical procedures of a protective nature. It was burnt during St John's Day rituals, leaves with spells written on them were ingested, and consecrated sprigs were plugged into the thatch of a hut (Nowiński 1983: 49; Fischer and Kujawska, 2016: 477). Sage remains have been discovered in the cushions and linings of coffins at Trendelburg (Cat. H94, at Nassau (Cat. H131) and Kraków (Cat. J30).

Fig. 27. *Memorial for Dorothea Amalia and Carl Christoph, the children of Duke Eberhard III. von Württemberg*, 1650, Landesmuseum Württemberg

PI.O. 2299 © Germanisches Nationalmuseum

Fig. 28. *Tomb sculpture of Count Heinrich III. von Sayn with his daughter (?)*, circa 1247/48, Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum

A particular symbol since the beginning of Christianity was the palm branch. According to the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voraigne, St John the Evangelist brought a palm leaf from the Garden of Eden to Virgin Mary's funeral, which she had received from an angel three days before her death (Michniewska 2014: 65). In art, the palm leaf or tree is primarily a reference to paradise.

Palm branches, ordained on the Palm Sunday, refer to Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, foreshadowing the Resurrection. The custom of blessing branches at Easter developed among Christians in Jerusalem, from where it was adopted by the Western Church around the 5th-6th centuries. From the 11th century, it became part of the Palm Sunday liturgy. The palm symbolises victory, which originates from the ancient Romans' custom of entering the conquered settlements with its branches (Szczepanowicz 2013: 55-56). It is also depicted in art in the hands of martyrs who have remained firm in their faith (Kucia 2011: 100).

Fig. 29. Catnip (*Nepeta cataria* L.)

The meanings usually attributed to the palm branch, referring to triumph and Resurrection, was extended in Europe north of the Alps to locally occurring botanical specimens. Treated as 'palms' became species of plants that would become green in early spring and with clearly distinguishable, small leaves. On Polish soil, the willow, a tree that is among the first to develop leaves in spring, was used to produce 'palms'. In Western and Central Europe, the evergreen boxwood was also identified with the palm and

used during Easter. In Northern Europe, these were willow or birch branches too, brought home from religious ceremonies, and stored thereafter for medicinal and magical purposes (Jonsson 2007: 5).

A sprig of willow was placed in a burial at Bordesley, England which dates broadly to the medieval period (Cat. O61). Sprigs of laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) and willow (*Salix*) formed the grave pit lining in a 'pilgrim burial' (Cat. O63) of c. 1480-1510 revealed in the south aisle of Worcester Cathedral Church (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005b: 146). Willow branches were used to create the bases of wreaths discovered in Thaldorf cemetery (Cat. H141), in Zeitz Cathedral (Cat. H145), and in the cemetery at St Elizabeth's Church in Wrocław (Cat. J138). In Thaldorf, a vessel containing a medicine made most likely from willow was found in a child's grave (Cat. H137; Schafberg 2006: 254).

In Scandinavia, Britain, France and Germany, tree branches, primarily hazel, referred to as 'pilgrim's staffs', can be found in graves. These were usually placed under the coffin, and less often inside or above the coffin. They also occur in graves without a coffin. They have been discovered in burials dating to the medieval and early modern periods. As most of these finds would not have been able to fulfil the role of a walking stick by being too small in size, it is presumed that they only served as symbols of pilgrim staffs (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005b: 175). They have also been interpreted as crutches to facilitate the mobility of the disabled, rods used to carry the coffin or ceremonial staffs, which are depicted in the hands of mourners in late medieval iconography. Kristina Jonsson believes that these may be rods used to take the measure off the corpse before the casket is made or the grave pit dug. The earliest evidence of coffin or grave pit measuring rituals in Western Europe dates back to the 15th century (Jonsson 2007: 47-51). From the information gathered through ethnographic interviews, it appears that in the Polish lands the measurement was taken with rods usually made of wild elderberry branch. The custom of throwing branches, brushwood or sticks on graves among the Slavs, on the other hand, was considered to be a remnant of pre-Christian funerals (Labudda 1983, 56).

Sprigs of herbs, as well as citrus fruit, were carried in the hands or attached to robes of corpse-bearers at funerals to protect them from the stench rising from the dead body. Passing a green sprig to each other was a way of announcing the death to family members. Pronouncement of death was also done from the Middle Ages onwards by sending a special rod from house to house. Later, in the villages, the sign of death could be a piece of corrugated wood, a twig, a 'mourning baton', a rod or the root of a young tree (Biegeleisen 1930: 197-199).

Fig. 30. Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*)

The twigs forming a thick layer over the entire body, also covering the head, certainly did not serve a decorative function in burials. A corpse prepared in this manner was discovered in the crypt of Helsingør Cathedral in Denmark (Cat. C13). The body of Anna Belfour, wrapped in a shroud, was covered on the outside with branches of boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* L.). Besides boxwood, the remains of the plants forming the bouquet were discovered inside the shroud (Karg 2001: 137). While the plants forming the bouquet can be categorised as burial decoration, the boxwood on the outside of the shroud had a purely utilitarian function. Covered in a very similar manner with boxwood branches was one of the children buried in the crypt at the Church of the Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szczuczyn, who died in 1718 (Cat. J220). The branches were placed along the sides of the coffin and partially on the body of the deceased (Grupa *et al.* 2014: photo 63).

In the Church of St Wenceslas in Mikulov, the burial of Marketa Františka Lobkowicz, née von Dietrichstein (Cat. K8) was revealed. The girl died at the age of 17 in 1617. She was buried in a silk dress, with her face covered by a silk veil. Her body was covered with sprigs of myrtle (Drozdová 2006, 97).

The tight coverage with fragrant twigs protected the corpse from quick deterioration and insects. The effects of this treatment were probably expected to be long-lasting, in contrast to the *ad hoc* use of small sprigs or bouquets during the corpse presentation. Herbs were believed to combat the vapour of decay (*miasma*), which was believed to be the cause of infectious diseases. The accumulation of coffins inside churches was not only a nuisance, but also raised concerns over the spread of contagion. On feast days, the floors in churches and homes, were sprinkled with the fragrant cut sprigs of fresh plants for sanitary reasons. In England in the 18t^{h} century, the most popular for this purpose was mugwort. In Finland, spruce and juniper were most commonly used (Kallio-Seppä and Tranberg, 2020: 7).

In Northern Europe, characteristic was the use of fragments of wood, shavings, twigs and bark from conifers and birch trees, which are the main components of the local flora, to cover the bodies of the dead. In Northern Europe, corpses were covered using mainly conifer branches. In Finland (Ostrobothnia), the custom continued from the 17th/18th - 19th century. According to the ethnographers, spruce branches (*Picea*) placed in the coffin were supposed to prevent the deceased from moving and leaving the grave (Tranberg 2015: 194).

In Polish lands, conifers were also ascribed apotropaic properties. Conifer branches were used before, and also during funeral ceremonies. In Pomerania, messengers informing people of a funeral would hit the doors with conifer branches. Conifer twigs were also scattered around the deceased's house and on the road leading from the cemetery in order to confuse a wandering spirit, which, if it returned, could cause harm to the living (Bonowska 2004: 51).

Conifer and thuja branches are still used today to compose funeral garlands, bouquets and cemetery decorations. Conifers and shrubs of the genus *Thuja* are the most widespread plants in the flora of today's graveyards in Poland. The modern custom of decorating graves and commemorating the dead with green branches probably dates back to the end of the 19th century, but its roots can be traced back to the early modern period.

Sprigs of pine (*Pinus* L.) and *Thuja* L. were found on the lower thigh of the deceased Frederick Rehren, who was buried in the crypt located in St Michael's cemetery in Lüneburg at the end of the 19th century (Ströbl and Vick 2008: 75-78). Garlands made of fir branches (*Abies* Mill.) covered the body of Bishop Robert Herzog buried in the cathedral of Wrocław (Cat. J136).

Among the plants that began to be placed in tombs in Europe at the end of the modern era is the palm. The reason for this is mainly the limited availability and the symbolic unification of the Biblical palm branch with other plants widespread in Europe north of the Alps. In modern post-mortem portraits and epitaphs, the palm branch does not appear as a realistic attribute, but instead occurs within the operating sphere of the supernatural figures, for example in the hands of angels emerging from the clouds carrying a crown of glory. The palm branch motif on objects used during a funeral appeared more frequently towards the end of the modern period. It featured in coffin decorations, coffin portrait frames and grave crowns.

In the Church of the Virgin Mary's Ascension in Toruń, a funerary gown made of silk with a date palm motif was discovered in one of the 18th-century patrician burials (Grupa 2005, 173-174).

From the 19th century onwards, the palm branch became one of the most widely used symbols in sepulchral sculpture, which can be linked to a change in the semantics of symbols at the dawn of modernity and the establishment of a new approach to the heritage of Antiquity (Seib 2007: 149).

A palm branch was discovered in the burial of Antonina Skórzewska, who died in 1824 and was buried in a private crypt in Łabiszyn (Cat. J17). It was probably placed in the woman's folded hands on her stomach before burial (Kochman 2012: 31). Twigs possibly of date palm (*Phoenix*) are found next to a coffin placed in 1877 or 1878 in the crypt at St Nicholas Cemetery in Görlitz (Cat. H106; Ströbl and Vick 2010: 49).

3.3. Bouquets in burials

Bouquets in the modern period were placed on the body or in the folded hands of the deceased, on the grave linen, attached to clothing or furnishings and also put on the coffin lid.

Similar to grave wreaths, they were constructed partly from natural plants, supported by a wire frame, and interlaced with artificial flowers, metal ornaments and natural or artificial pearls.

There is little information in the literature about the natural flowers, from which bouquets were composed. Usually, only the stems of natural plants are preserved in graves, due to saturation with ions from metal decomposition.

Metal or wooden bouquet holders which are called *Blumenhalter* (from German), have also been discovered in graves. Holders have been found in the Salvator cemetery in Wrocław (Wojcieszak 2015: 35), in St John's Church in Gdańsk (Drążkowska 2007a: 491), the castle chapel in Brzeg, and in the castle crypt in Szczecin (Wachowski 2015: 237).

The location of bouquets within a burial can vary widely. The bouquets were placed on the garments of the nuns buried in the crypt beneath the Chapel of Saint Barbara in Lüne Abbey in Lüneburg. Equipped with the bouquet was Sister Dorothea von Meding (Cat. H107) who died in 1634, in whose coffin numerous botanical remains were found. Unfortunately, the plant composition of the bouquet is unknown (Ströbl and Vick 2007: 53). The burial of nun Catharina Margaretha von Estorff (Cat. H108), who died on 13 January 1659, contained stems of unidentified plants tied with a black ribbon and a bow. The bouquet was placed on the right arm of the deceased (Wiethold 2005: 32, Ströbl and Vick, 2005: 24, 2007: 53).

A bouquet may also have been located on the right shoulder of a woman, who died at the age of 30-35 and was buried in the cemetery at St Elizabeth's Church in Wrocław (Cat. J137, Fig. 31). This is evidenced by the green staining observed on the right humerus. The bouquet was made of copper alloy wires entwined with silk thread with a metal braiding. Twigs of natural plants, the stalks of which were partially preserved, were woven into the metal wire frame of the bouquet.

Fig. 31. Remains of a bouquet from the cemetery at St Elizabeth Church in Wrocław, photog. T. Gąsior

A burial of 18-year-old Thomas Craven (Cat. F13) has been discovered in Saint-Maurice, Val-de-Marne in France. The young man died on 20 November 1636. His embalmed body was deposited in the ground in a lead sarcophagus. A bouquet of unspecified plants with long stems was found near his feet (Hadjouis and Corbineau 2008).

In Breslau, in the cemetery at the Church of Saint Mary Magdalene, the remains of a bouquet made of artificial flowers were discovered in the grave of a child, who died

as infant (Cat. J141). The parts of bouquet included metal flowers and a loose substance, possibly the remains of paper petals, observed on the child's leg bones. Analogous to the bouquet from St Elisabeth's Church in Wrocław, the handle was formed by a bunch of plant stems, each wrapped in thread with a metal braiding. It was tied with a textile ribbon (Wojcieszak 2010a: 160).

In Keminmaa (northern Finland), in the crypt of St Michael's Church, a bouquet of artificial flowers was placed in the hands of a child of the Frosterius family (Cat. E2), who died in 1763 (Lipkin *et al.* 2020: 219).

In the Salvator cemetery in Wrocław, three small bouquets (in German *Handstraußchen*) were discovered in a child's grave. They were arranged on the right side of the skull, by the left femur and on the left tibia. In the same cemetery in another burial, a bouquet in the form of a garland was found on the coffin lid. The remains of bouquets made of organic and inorganic elements were further recorded in 16 other graves in this cemetery (Wojcieszak 2015, 35-36).

In cemetery at the St James Church in Toruń, the slow shift away from the use of wreaths at this time in favour of bouquets in burials dated from the 18th century, may indicate changes occurring in funeral ceremony (Sulkowska-Tuszyńska 2022: 115).In the Spitalkirche in Bad Windsheim, bouquets were found in the burials of members of the von Reitzenstein family (Cat. H10, H11, H12, H13). They all died between 1632 and 1634. Under the right hand of Johann Christian von Reitzenstein (Cat. H13), at the chest level, were the remains of a prayer book and a bouquet made of boxwood with partially gilded leaves, metal foil and metal ornaments (*Flitter*; Steeger 2003: 31). The eldest daughter, Maria Barbara von Reitzenstein (Cat. H12), died on 6 September 1634 at the age of 16. Her burial was furnished with the most varied ornaments. Remnants of the coffin decoration in the form of two garlands have survived. On the girl's head was an elaborate hairstyle composed of several little braids interwoven with ribbon, each pinned to her head. In these were inserted bunches of flowers. The coffin contained a bouquet of boxwood branches with partially gilded leaves, metal ornaments and rosemary (Steeger 2003: 30). Heinrich von Reitzenstein (Cat. H10) who died in 1632 at the age of 5, was buried amidst bouquets of boxwood, silk flowers, rosemary sprigs, combined with gold-covered oak galls and tin ornaments. Surrounding the coffin were a large number of boxwood bouquets with partially gilded leaves, strips of non-ferrous metals and sequins (*Pailleten*) (Steeger 2003: 28). The youngest of the children, just a year-old Eva Rosina von Reitzenstein (Cat. H11), died on 26 August 1633. On the right side of her body, at her chest, there was a bouquet in a metal holder, made of rosemary sprigs combined with gilded oak galls. On the girl's head was a sepulchral crown (Steeger 2003: 28-32).

Oak galls covered with gold foil, juniper berries and cloves in the bouquets were probably intended to imitate pearls or expensive jewels and to add the aroma. An adult woman in the cemetery at the Dominican church in Prenzlau (Cat. H48) was buried with four bouquets: one in her folded hands, two at chest level and one near her knees. The preserved stems were wrapped in red ribbon and interwoven with juniper berries strung on copper wire (Ungerath, n.d.). In Thaldorf, a bouquet of artificial flowers combined with cloves was found in a child's burial (Cat. H141; Schafberg 2006: 256). A bouquet with cloves was also discovered in the Collegiate Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of the World in Stargard (Cat. J271; *Dziennik pisany z krypty*, 2019).

Similar to the wreaths, the bouquets were thought as most suitable for funerals of younger deceased, symbolically becoming brides and grooms, as they were made from plants associated with the marriage. In the Salvator cemetery in Wrocław the bouquets have been discovered predominantly in the burials of children who died before the age of 7 (Wojcieszak 2015: 35-36). Ethnographer Henryk Biegeleisen mentions that in European villages in the 19th-20th centuries, girls were buried with wreaths on their heads, while bouquets were gifted to deceased boys (Biegeleisen 1930: 154). However, a small bouquet of artificial flowers can also be seen in the hands of Johann Casimir Wittelsbach, Count Palatine of Simmern, who died on 16 January 1592 at the age of 49, in his post-mortem portrait (Cat. H3, Fig. 32).

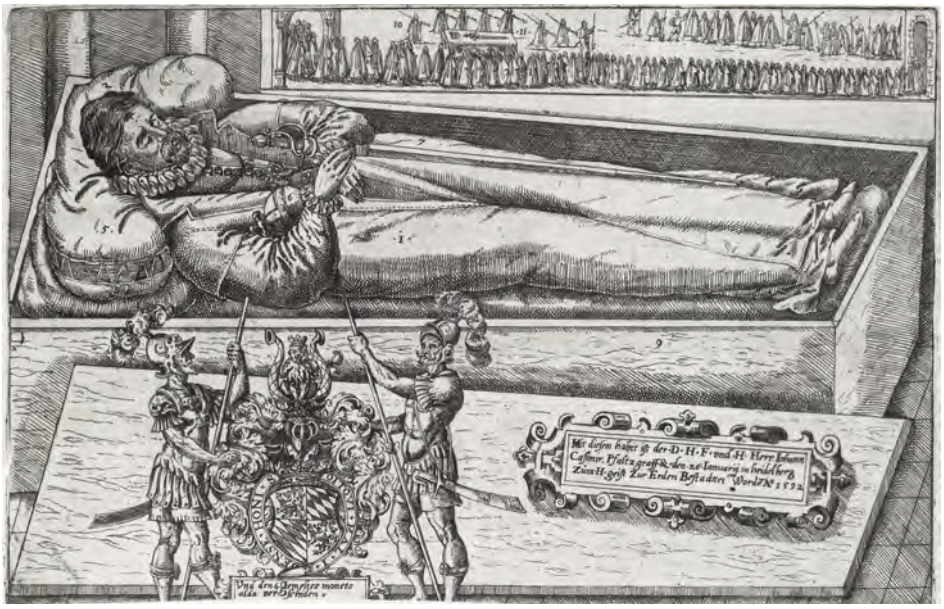

Fig. 32. *Coffin portrait of Johann Casimir Wittelsbach who died on the 16th of January 1592*, Heidelberg, currently: Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden

Bouquets of rosemary tied with silk ribbons in pink are shown in the portrait of Anna Johanna von Württemberg (Cat. H5, Fig. 33), who died on 5 March 1679. The woman is portrayed wearing a maiden wreath on her head, made of green leaves interspersed with white beads (Neumann (ed.) 2007: 208). Hanibal Gustaf who died in January (Cat. N19, Fig. 25), whose portrait is kept in Skokloster Castle, holds in his hands a bouquet of probably artificial red flowers supplemented with white pearls. These images can be categorised as representations of the funeral nuptial (in German *Totenhochzeit*), as indicated by the festive white attire of the portrayed persons and the presence of maiden wreaths. The arrangement of the bodies emphasised the innocence of the deceased and referred to the marital symbolism.

There are few cases of well-preserved, botanically examined bouquets that were made entirely of natural plants. As in the grave wreaths, the bouquets mainly featured evergreen plants such as boxwood, rosemary, hyssop, myrtle, sprigs of orange tree and oregano. Bouquets of rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* L.) were discovered in the crypts of the Church of St Francis of Assisi in Kraków (Cat. J41, J42).

In the hands of an anonymous child buried in the bishops' crypt beneath the Archcathedral in Przemyśl (Cat. J258) was a bouquet made almost entirely from shoots of oregano (*Origanum vulgare* L.). The botanical sample from bouquet contained seeds, fruits, flowers and four fragments of flowered shoots of oregano, and a plant that could not be identified. The sample also contained a single seed of ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea* L.). It may have been displaced from a cushion in which a significant number of remains of this plant were recognised, or the ragwort may have been collected incidentally along with *Origanum vulgare*. The bouquet was tied with string (Pińska 2012: 8).

Remains of five bouquets of natural plants were found, arranged around the body and on the corpse, in the coffin of Hans Andreas Nordborg (Cat. C2), who died in April 1694, and is buried in the crypts of St Olaf Cathedral in Helsingør. The first sample contained mainly stems without leaves and wood shavings, possibly from the filling of the coffin. Furthermore, the plant remains included common hop (*Humulus lupulus*), numerous fruits of common mallow (*Malva silvestris*), flowers and seeds of oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) and seeds of hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*). The second of the bouquets was probably made of the stems and flowers of oregano (*Origanum vulgare*). Another of the bouquets consisted of hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*). A single *Sonchus* seed was also found in the sample which possibly was an accidental inclusion. Although finds of various *Sonchus* species are relatively common in modern burials. The fourth sample contained flowers and seeds of hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*) and flowers of oregano (*Origanum vulgare*). The last sample which was the most diverse, contained wood shavings, hop cones (*Humulus lupulus*), three grains of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), pea seed (*Pisum sativum* L.), capsule and seeds of common rue

Fig. 33. *Anna Johanna von Württemberg – posthumous portrait*, 1679, Stuttgart Württembergisches Landesmuseum

(*Ruta graveolens* L.), juniper berry (*Juniperus communis* L.) and flower of hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*). The plants in sample five most likely came from the lining, apart from hyssop, which also occurred as a component of the other bouquets in this burial, and could be displaced from one as well (Karg 2001: 134-135). Ann Belfour (Cat. C13) who died in November 1793, was buried in the same crypt. The remains of bouquets were found beside her body, on the bottom of the sawdust-covered coffin and on the corpse. Identified among the plants were twigs of boxwood (*Buxus sempiverins*) with which the corpse had been covered, two grains of common rye (*Secale cereale*) and a seed fragment of common corn-cockle (*Agrostemma githago* L.). The rye and common cockle which is a weed that grows in winter crops, came from the lining of the coffin. Inside the shroud was a bouquet of plants from the cabbage family (*Cruciferae*), probably madwort (*Alyssum* L.). The genus name *Alyssum*, comes from the Greek – 'a' meaning negation and 'lyssa' meaning madness. The name is the result of a belief that these plants are a cure for insanity, serving as a sedative and soothing anger (Karg 2001: 135).

A bouquet containing hop (*Humulus lupulus* L.), lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis* L., Fig. 34), field sowthistle (*Sonchus arvensis* L., Fig. 35) and chickweed (*Stellaria media* (L.) Vill.) was discovered in the coffin of a child in the Church of Our Saviour in Copenhagen (Cat. C16).In another of the burials explored at the same site (Cat. C19), the bouquet deposited at the chest level of the adult person consisted of plants from the Labiatae (*Lamiaceae*) family and brassica (*Brassica* sp.) genus.In Finland, a grave bouquet made of blueberry, lingonberry or heather branches was discovered in a church in Espoo (Cat. E11). Remains of bouquets composed of violets (*Viola* L.), saltbush (*Atriplex* L., Fig. 36) and agrimony (*Agrimonia* L., Fig. 37) were identified in the Grote Kerk in Alkmaar (Cat. G15, G16). The bouquet shown in the hands of Gulovia Olai in her posthumous portrait from the Revsund parish church in Sweden (Cat. N6) may also have been composed of wildflowers. The only archaeological find confirming the use of 'ornamental' flowers to create bouquets is probably the finding from the church of St James in Toruń (Cat. J13), made of poppies and carnations (Noryśkiewicz 2020: 131--143; Sulkowska-Tuszyńska 2022: 117).

Fig. 34. Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

Fig. 35. Field milk thistle (*Sonchus arvensis* L.)

Bouquets of natural plants were also discovered in the private crypt of the Schlabrendorff family in the cathedral in Brandenburg an der Havel. The burial of an unknown by name, 5.5-month-old girl from the von Oppen family (Cat. H37), buried in September 1707, contained a bouquet of the blossoms, fruit and branches of unspecified citrus and myrtle. The unspecified flowering plant and myrtle were identified also in the bouquet from the coffin of Karoline Louise Adolphine Freiin von Danckelmann (Cat. H39), who died at the age of 11 in April 1794. It was deposited on the right side of the body, on the girl's chest. The most diverse floral composition characterises the bouquet from the coffin of the 72-year-old Karoline Friederike Wilhelmine von Schlabrendorff, née Ehrenberg (Cat. H41), who died in January 1835. The bouquet was made of bitter orange leaves (*Citrus ef. aurantium* L.), sweet orange leaves and fruit (*Citrus ef. sinensis* (L.) Osbeck), oak leaves (*Quercus* sp.), a sprig of myrtle or olive and the blossoms of the globe amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa* L.).

Globe amaranth is a cultivated ornamental plant native to Central America. It was valued for the vivid colours of its flowers, which it retains when dried. Flowers of globe amaranth have also beeb used in medicine. Perhaps it was the dried gomphrena blossom that was incorporated into the bouquet, as Karoline Friederike's funeral took place in January. Citrus, olive trees or myrtle could be grown in private conservatories. Oak leaves, on the other hand, used to be collected for household, culinary or medicinal purposes (Diane 2004: 101-104).

A bouquet of roses and orange blossoms is depicted in a posthumous portrait of the son of the Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, Christopher Sigismund Pac and Clara de Mailly-Laskaris, made after 1661 (Cat. I1, Fig. 38). The child who died after surviving for a day, is shown on a red velvet cushion and mattress, with a bouquet in a vase at his side.

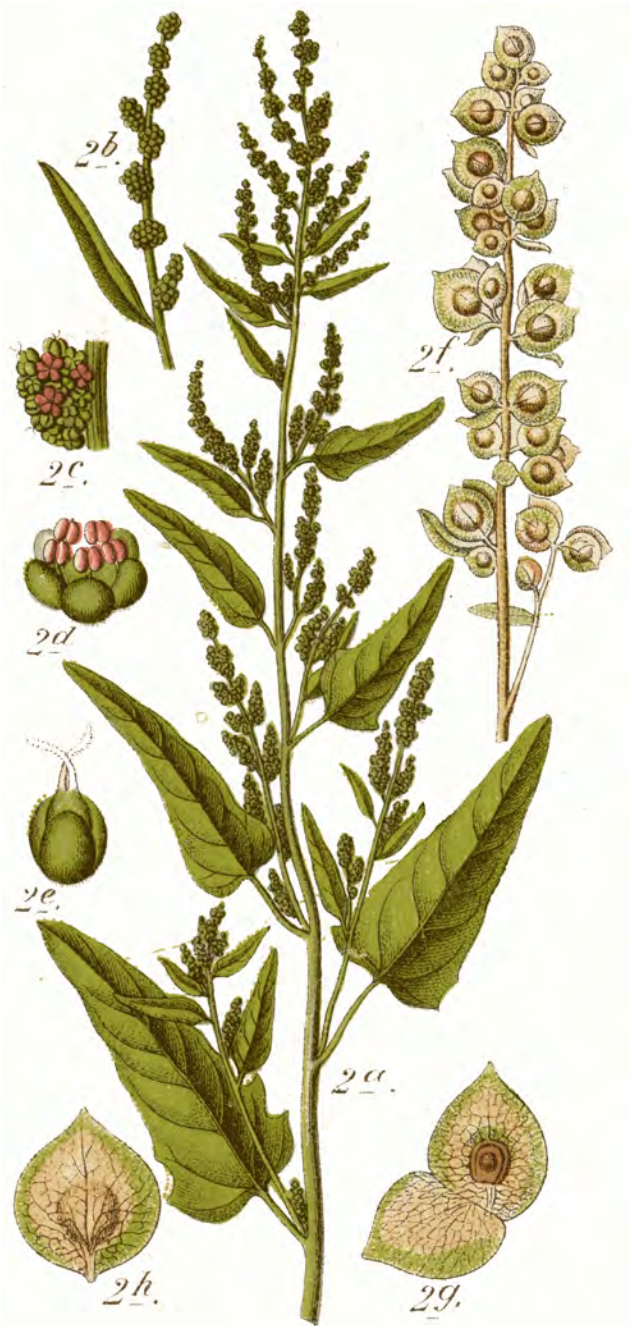

Fig. 36. *Saltbush (Atriplex L.)*

A bouquet of medicinal and aromatic plants had a protective function, helping to mask the smell of decay. Small bouquets have been part of clothing since the Middle Ages. In Western European languages, the names of bouquets worn as 'ornament to the nostrils' (nosegay) date back to the 15th century. They served to combat bad smells in everyday life and for protection during epidemics.

Fig. 37. *Agrimony (Agrimonia L.)*

The symbolic significance of the bouquet in paintings is equal to that of the flowers, from which it was created. Bouquets were depicted in modern still lifes expressing the concept of vanitas, often surrounded by other symbols of transience, such as skulls, shells, musical instruments, notes, candles, soap bubbles, insects or mice. Bouquets were shown on tombstones, mainly of children, and also in these representations they appear as symbols of futility. In the posthumous portrait of nun Catharina Margaritha from Trnava (Cat. L4) in Slovakia, a symbolic bouquet with a still life containing vanitas motifs is shown in the background of the painting, alongside real coffin bouquets arranged on a cushion.

Fig. 38. *Posthumous portrait of the son of the Grand Chancellor of Lithuania Christopher Sigismund Pac and Clara de Mailly-Laskaris*, 1661, Kaunas, Pažaislis monastery, currently: National Museum in Warsaw

Plants tied in bundles or bunches, scattered unevenly over the dead bodies, are also discovered in coffins. The bundles of herbs were not likely to have had a decorative function. They probably served to preserve and aromatise the body or protect the dead against evil. The bundles of herbs were provided for the last Dukes of the Mazovian line of Piast dynasty buried in Warsaw (Cat. J182, J183). Both died at the age of 24, Stanisław in 1524, while his younger brother Janusz III 2 years later. Their bodies were covered profusely with herbs, some of which were bound together in bundles. Prince Stanisław was laid to rest on a layer of lime, which filled the bottom of the coffin. The Duke's head was supported on a cushion of herbs. A layer of organic matter about 5 cm thick was found on the corpse, consisting of the remains of thyme (*Thymus*), chamomile (*Matricaria*), mugwort (*Artemisia*) and, to a lesser extent, shepherd's purse (*Capsella*). Lime was also observed in the coffin of the second brother. The plants from Janusz's coffin included again thyme (*Thymus*), chamomile (*Matricaria*), mugwort (*Artemisia*), shepherd's purse (*Capsella*), plus hop (*Humulus*), lamb's-ear (*Stachys*) and plants of the umbelliferous family (*Apiaceae*) (Pela 1997: 24). The choice of aromatic plants which according to herbaria were drying and warming, considered medicinal or magical, along with use of lime, indicates the hygienic purpose of the coffin furnishings.

In the crypts of a church in Berlin-Mitte, bundle-bound shoots of running clubmoss (*Lycopodium clavatum* L., Fig. 39) were found. The find is dated to the 18th-19th century (Cat. H27). The clubmoss was called *Hexenkraut* ('witch-wort') in Germany, due to the fact that it was formerly used for protection against spells (Wittkopp 2015: 58; Ströbl and Vick 2014). Clubmoss is found in thickets and pine or mixed forests. It belongs to poisonous plants. Spores of the clubmoss were used to produce medicinal powders and pills ((Polakowska 1986: 186). It was also formerly used to decorate Easter palms prepared for Palm Sunday.

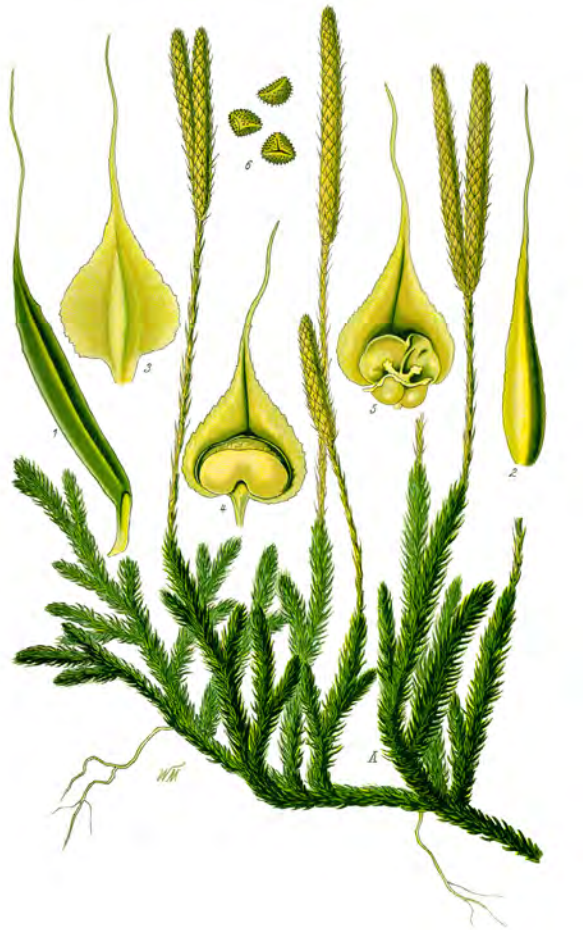

Fig. 39. Common club moss (*Lycopodium clavatum*)

3.4. Wreaths and grave crowns

Grave wreaths and crowns were placed in the coffins of children and unmarried adults of both sexes. Grave wreaths, the equivalent of which are wedding wreaths, were made mainly of evergreen plants associated with marriage. The funeral of a maiden or bachelor became an opportunity to complete his life's journey through symbolic nuptial which in German literature is referred to as *Totenhochzeit*.

Wreaths derive from ancient or medieval traditions, folk piety, the transformation of Catholic customs involving the decoration of churches and images of saints into private rituals developed after the Reformation, or the culture of modern cities, where they were an important identifier of social roles and an instrument of moral teaching. They could also serve as a substitute for Catholic rites for unbaptised children. According to the *Rituale Romanum*, reissued in 1614, decoration of the bodies of the bodies of deceased children with flowers, was allowed deceased children with flowers, was allowed. Baptism was a prerequisite for a deceased child to be buried with a wreath. In 1653, the Bishop of Regensburg, Franz Wilhelm von Wartemberg, in the instructions of the church synods on children's burials (*De Exequiis Parvulorum*), recorded: "If a young or newly born, baptised child dies, a wreath of flowers or fragrant and scented herbs is placed on his head as a sign of his bodily purity and youthful innocence [...]." A pastor from Friedersdorf near Görlitz stated that: "when a child dies, his godmother sends him a crown or money instead; besides, she gives her godchild a wreath for his head and a bouquet for his hands [...]" (Stankiewicz 2015: 126).

Clerics, nuns and priests were sometimes buried with grave crowns (or wreaths from First Mass). The crowns discovered in the crypt at St John's Benedictine Monastery in Müstair, Switzerland, were not dissimilar to the secular examples found at the same site. Most were constructed with a hoop of iron, wrapped with decorative elements of non-ferrous metals and fabrics, to which bouquets of artificial flowers and wire braids were vertically attached at equal intervals. The artificial flowers were made of iron wires and also of non-ferrous metals, fabrics, paper and glass beads (Cassitti 2018: 96-97). In the crypt of St Paul's Church in Antwerp, adults (presumably priests) and children were buried wearing wreaths (Veeckmann 1997).

Nuns were portrayed after death wearing a habit, a veil and a floral crown on their heads or with flowers arranged around their bodies. The tradition of depicting deceased nuns adorned with tall floral crowns also developed in Spain, during the Habsburg reign. From there, the custom spread beyond Europe to the female orders in the Americas: New Spain (now Mexico and the southern states of the USA), Peru, Chile, the New Kingdom of Granada (Colombia, Panama, Venezuela). The flowers in the portraits of deceased nuns can be linked to Catholic virtues – the red rose signifies extreme mortification and love of God, the jasmine stands for simplicity, the carnation for obedience and penance, the tuberose and lily for prayer and chastity (Gómez 2016).

The wreath could also be given to adults who had undergone prolonged suffering before death. Sometimes they wove a wreath for themselves, as did chronically ill Anna Vasa, sister of Sigismund Vasa, King of Poland (Stankie-

wicz 2015: 130). Placing a death crown on the head of the deceased was also a regular element of the funerals of members of guilds of certain professions, e.g., in Upper Austria this custom applied to blacksmiths (Sörries 2007a: 251).

In the literature, various forms of headgear are assumed to serve the same function. The wreath which is the simplest of these, consists of a decorated hoop. Grave crowns, on the other hand, are considered more spatially complex constructions (Drążkowska 2007a: 492). Julianne Lippok also distinguishes the diadem. Textile caps, onto which decorative elements were sewn, could have a similar function to grave crowns. However, the cap was part of the secular female attire and the examples discovered in cemeteries may not have been exclusively associated with burial (Lippok 2011: 117-119). The use of filigree wire and textile ornaments, which are also found in the construction of wreaths, can be taken as a criterion to distinguish burial caps (Lippok 2009: 44). Mixed forms also existed, for example, in some cases grave crown was fixed to the headpiece (Diane 2004: 101-104). The location of the wreath or crown could be arbitrary within the grave, they were not only placed on the head, but were also sometimes arranged on the body, bedding, inside pillows, on the coffin lid and even deposited in wooden boxes or ceramic vessels near the body (Kühtreiber *et al.* 2014: 125). In Riesa, wreaths were placed around wrists of the deceased child (Alterauge and Hofmann 2020: 85).

Wreaths and grave crowns were created from various materials of organic and inorganic origin, which were attached to a hoop made of metal, wood or string. Textiles, metal, glass, bone, wood, stones, shells, natural and artificial pearls which were usually formed into the shape of flowers and leaves, were attached to the rim. Parts of natural plants were also woven into wreaths. The remains of natural plants used to construct garlands are rarely preserved in a state that allows their identification. However, wooden bases of grave wreaths are occasionally examined for species identification. Artificial flowers, made from copper alloy wires, paper and fabric, are usually preserved residually and offer little opportunity for interpretation and comparison. In all probability, the grave wreaths would have to be considered as constructions densely built up with natural green branches, such as are depicted in the iconography, as fragments of natural, woody plant stems are often preserved inside the stalks of the metal flowers.

Grave wreaths were mainly widespread in German-speaking areas of Europe and in the Netherlands, but were also found in Britain, France, Scandinavia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Russia. In the European rural areas, at the turn of the 19th century, they were placed in the coffins of those, who died young – maidens and bachelors. The custom has been described by ethnographers, in addition to the areas mentioned above, also in Romania, Belarus, Ukraine, the Balkans, Moravia and Slovakia (Fischer 1921: 296; Biegeleisen 1930: 154).

Grave wreaths and crowns are preserved in some churches and museums, also in Poland – in Pomerania (Bonowska 2004: 69-71). They were commonly used at funerals from the second half of the 16th century to the mid-20th century. One of the youngest reports of a funeral of person with a wreath from Lower Lusatia in Central Europe dates from the 1950s (Lippok and Melisch 2012: 27). Wreaths and crowns were used by Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox worshippers. Raimund Sörries, in his introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition *Totenhochzeit mit Kranz und Krone* at the Museum of Sepulchral Culture in Kassel, noted that objects of this type were mainly preserved in areas of Germany where Protestant denominations were dominant – Hesse, Thuringia, Lower Saxony, Brandenburg and historic Franconia. In Catholic Bavaria and Austria, they were used much less frequently (Sörries 2007b: 9). In the lands of modern Poland, the disproportion is also apparent. Most relics of wreaths and grave crowns come from large and medium-sized towns in northern and western Poland and from Protestant cemeteries. However, few grave wreaths have been found in Catholic child burials from outside the area.

According to Juliane Lippok, the continuity of the custom between the Middle Ages and the modern era is not sufficiently documented (Lippok 2009: 79). In medieval sepulchral art, depictions of people with their heads crowned are well known, but this does not prove that wreaths were placed in graves at that time. Nevertheless, there are findings of medieval burials of young persons in Poland with head ornaments described as diadems or headbands, decorated with metal appliqués (Cat. J4, J6, J11, J16; Drążkowska 2012: 117-118).

Ernst Helmut Segschneider considered the relation on burial of 16-year-old Werner of Oberwesel as the earliest historical evidence for grave wreath use in Germany. The boy who was the murder victim in the 13th century, was buried with his head crowned in the chapel of St Kunibert in Bacharach. The wreath from the story of Werner von Oberwesel's burial can be considered related to the martyrdom crowns, while it is unlikely to be identical to the later *Totenkrone* (Segschneider 1976: 16).

In the early centuries of Christianity, wreaths became attributes of martyrs. The crown of martyrdom is a symbol of triumph over sin and death, a reward for the observance of Christian duties, which is confirmed in the Scripture: "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him" (James 1:12). The wreath as a crown of virtue (German *Tugendkrone*) is also an attribute of the martyrs, whose physical virginity was particularly accentuated (Widmann 1987: 44-46).

Otto Lauffer, in the 1916 article on the subject of grave wreaths, pointed to the tombstone of the minnesinger Heinrich Frauenlob from Mainz Cathedral from the 14th century, as the oldest example of grave garland (Lauffer 1916: 230). The tombstone has deteriorated, but its 18th-century description reveals that it depicted the deceased with a crown or wreath on his head and his arms decorated with flowers: "*...in quo repraesentatur caput corona seu potius serto cinctum; collum et humeri floribus circumornati*" (Bourdon 1727: 243). The burial representation of Heinrich Frauenlob draws on the ancient tradition of honouring poets with a wreath, which was revived in the 13th century Europe.

The earliest grave crowns found in Europe are probably relics from the 15th century from the cemetery at the House of Beguines in Haarlem, the Netherlands (Williams 2016: 190). The earliest written reference to grave wreaths comes from Cologne in Germany, dating to the 16th century. The record specifies that it concerns wreaths deposited in the graves of girls buried "like virgins" (Segschneider 1976: 17). In the 16th century, tombstones with representations of the deceased wearing wreaths or crowns on their heads became increasingly common (Seib 2007: 137).

Wreaths and headbands were part of secular dress in the Middle Ages. Diadems in the form of metal or leather bands decorated with metal fittings were part of women's clothing. In the early Middle Ages, an uncovered head, headband or wreath were appropriate only for unmarried people. Married women usually hid their hair under linen veils (Drążkowska 2012: 26). From around the mid-13th century onwards, diadems appeared in art representations of young women, saints and biblical figures, also on tomb portraits. These images are associated with elite culture, but finds of tin and copper diadem fragments from the 13th-1st half of the 14th centuries in urban areas indicate their diffusion to the lower strata of society (Sawicki 2014a: 219-220).

In the 14th-15th centuries, young people of both sexes were allowed to wear garlands, diadems or decorative headbands (Drążkowska 2012: 116-117). The wreath, placed on the head as an element of costume, was reserved exclusively for virgins and bachelors. This was guaranteed by local laws (sumptuary laws, *Kleiderordnungen*), which forbade wearing such ornaments to those certainly not entitled to do so – when married and with children (Widmann 1987: 49). Crowns and diadems were gifts offered on the occasion of engagements, weddings or births. They are considered love gifts associated with courtly and chivalric culture (Wachowski 2013: 32). Diadems could be used during secular or religious ceremonies. Among many occasions, during which wreaths were used, were also carnival and harvest festival celebrations.

A headdress in the form of a headband, diadem or wreath in the Middle Ages became an attribute of people entering into marriage. A special type of wedding wreaths developed which were placed on the heads of the newlyweds (Widmann 1987: 44-46). The wedding ritual, despite the recommendation of marrying in the presence of a priest, usually consisted of an agreement between the newlyweds (matchmaking), who shook hands and exchanged green wreaths. They would then place the wreaths on their heads and wear them during the feast (Korczak 2015: 36).

So-called wedding crowns appeared in the 12th century in court circles and spread around the 14th century. Crowns and similar head ornaments, considered an indicator of higher social position, were imitated by the inhabitants of cities (Sawicki 2014b: 50).

The construction of the metal diadems was openwork, allowing the sprigs of natural herbs to be inserted easily, creating green constructions known from iconography. The decoration of the metal frames often alluded to floral motifs (e.g., rosettes, lime leaves). The herbs used to prepare wreaths worn on the head additionally served therapeutic and protective functions (Widmann 1987: 49-50).

The customs associated with the differentiation of the attire of the married and unmarried women in the Middle Ages, especially headdresses, are seen by researchers as the ideological origins of the early modern custom of crowning the heads of deceased virgins. The origins of the so-called 'nuptials during the funeral' (German *Totenhochzeit*) were seen in early medieval funeral ceremonies, also pre-Christian.

In the early modern period, wreaths were still an important element of weddings. They were placed on women's heads after the so-called 'unbraiding', in the last evening before wedding. Houses, in which the brides lived, were decorated with a green garland. Maidens sometimes grew the herbs for the wreaths themselves – rosemary, rue, lavender and myrtle. Maiden wreaths, and so-called wedding wands, were made by the brides before the wedding. During the wedding, the young exchanged wreaths or wedding rings. The latter replaced the use of bridal wreaths in the 18th century (Ferenc 2015: 136).

Religious images of the crowned Virgin Mary certainly played an important role in the formation of wedding crowns. In some regions of Europe, brides were given a crown of a statue of the Virgin Mary during the wedding ceremony (Widmann 1987: 71). In Germany, England and France, brides who did not keep chastity until marriage, were punished by being forced to wear a wreath of straw in public. A connection between the custom of wreathing heads as a sign of chastity and the cult of holy martyrs should also be considered probable (Lippok 2017: 94).

Grave wreaths and crowns were embellished with wares made of fine gold wire, silver wire, gold-plated, silver-plated or tin-plated copper alloy wires and threads braided with strips of metal (*Leonische Waren, Lyonische Waren, Leonisches Gold,* 'false haberdashery') (*Leonische Waren* 2005). Among the forms of wire ornaments, floral motifs predominate – flowers, leaves, flower stamens, fruit, and buds which form groups resembling bouquets or small branches. These are undoubtedly floral forms, but it is usually impossible to determine what plant species the wire products imitate.

An attempt to classify the ornaments was undertaken by Julianne Lippok. On the basis of an analysis of fragments of grave crowns from Brandenburg, she distinguished five basic patterns which were repeated in 90% of the material she examined. These include four-petalled flowers with slightly elongated oval petals, sometimes pointed. Each petal is constructed from a single wire forming a frame on which the fabric was originally stretched (ornament A). The second type, ornament B, are flowers with round petals, filled inside with a spiral of wire. The next type, ornament C, are oval or pointed flowers made of wire braided irregularly. Large holes can be seen between the loosely routed wires. The next type of ornament is a flower made of five to eight oval segments fastened around a single wire coiled in a circular shape (ornament D). The last type (ornament E) comprises flowers made of a flat wire, with pointed petals that are layered, so that each successive ornament is smaller than the previous one (Lippok 2009: 20-21).

Ornaments resembling the aforementioned types are also found in wreaths and crowns found in Poland (Grupa *et al.* 2015: 119). Crowns and grave wreaths that were created from standard ornamental motifs were rather not individualised creations (Lippok 2009: 20-24). They most likely could not have been made by the godparents, family or peers of the deceased. On the other hand, garlands plaited from natural plants or cut from cloth may have been created on an *ad hoc* basis by relatives or mourners.

The state of present research on death wreaths from the lands of Poland indicates their significantly higher concentration in areas inhabited in the past by German-speaking and Protestant populations in greater numbers. Research on wreaths found in the north of Poland reveals their similarity with such objects from north-western Germany (Nowak 2013-2014: 216).

The death crowns found in Toruń show a stylistic resemblance, suggesting their provenance in one workshop. On the other hand, the crowns discovered in the church of St Nicholas in Gniew are more similar to death crown

relics from Gdańsk (Grupa *et al.* 2015: 120). In Gniew, wire flowers from child's coffin in the central nave of the Church of St Nicholas, were representing two types – slender with ellipsoidal petals, and with round petals (Kolaska *et al.* 2020, 62, 63). Among the unpublished finds from the cemetery at St Elizabeth's Church in Wrocław, all wire ornaments are constructed in the same way (Fig. 40). Four-petalled flowers made of a spiral wire are topped with multi-petalled flowers of smaller diameter, along with a bundle of stamens, and tied into the form of a tall fleuron. Each is decorated with a glass pearl or metal pendant. Analogous in design petal details were applied to wreaths excavated in the cemetery at the Church of St Mary Magdalene in Wrocław (Wojcieszak 2010: 160). This suggests the presence of workshop for artificial flower decoration in the city.

Artificial flowers had been produced in monasteries since the Middle Ages. Filigree wire products, including flowers and borders, known as false haberdashery, were produced from the 15th century in monasteries in Western Europe. They were used for decoration of images of saints and altars. Unfortunately, it is uncertain which professional groups were involved in making artificial flowers in the cities, as the fields of activity of haberdashers, hat makers or manufacturers of gilded wires may have overlapped (Grupa 2015: 52). Over time, manufactures were established to produce artificial flowers on a major scale. In the 18th century, metal-textile bouquets became a fashionable wardrobe accessory. According to Gottlieb Corvinus Amaranthes, in the cities there were specialised manufacturers of wedding wreaths who also produced decorations intended for graves (Corvinus 1715: 386-387).

The modesty of burial wreaths was required by the funeral legislation of Protestant cities. In Szczecin, due to the high cost of acquiring them, artificial flowers at the funeral were only allowed in winter (Kizik 1998: 89).

Fig. 40. Artificial flowers from the cemetery at St Elizabeth Church in Wrocław, photog. T. Gąsior

In the 19th century, techniques for making ornaments from filigree wire were popularised in the countryside with the publication of manuals for their domestic production. From this moment on, folk art objects, such as picture borders, costume details, wedding garlands and grave crowns, began to be formed from false haberdashery (Lippok 2007: 257).

In the literature, attempts are made to determine the species of flowers discovered in graves and depicted on tombstones. Among these are depictions of plants, biological equivalents of which are representations in burials very rarely or never. In the construction of a wreath from Gniew (Cat. J242), the author of the study recognised artificial carnations or tulips (Nowak 2013: 214; Grupa and Nowak 2017: 164). Anna Drążkowska in her text on finds from St John's Church in Gdańsk (Cat. J241), mentioned several species. Flowers made of blue satin silk have been interpreted as blossoms of cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus* L;) or common chicory (*Cichorium intybus* L., Fig. 41). Smaller specimens with rounded blue petals were identified by the researcher as forget-me-nots (*Myosotis* L.; Drążkowska 2007a: 492-493). In a burial of 3-years old Antonina Bronisława Zaolzicka from Radzyń Podlaski, who died in 1838, a red staining of the skull might indicate the presence of unpreserved wreath made of artificial flowers. Such flowers fixed to iron stems were found in girl's coffin (Dabralet *et al.* 2022: 95).

Probably the artificial floral compositions, with which wreaths and crowns were decorated, were intended to be recognisable as flowers, but were not necessarily identifiable with particular species. It should also be remembered that the basis of the biological classification system used today was only introduced in the second half of the 18th century. From a modern perspective, the difference between plant species is based on their physiology and genetic structure. The users of the former nature symbolism did not operate with the same concepts and categories in the classification of plants. Furthermore, the research of plants had a different purpose, namely the pursuit of clues to divine mysteries and undisclosed relationships existing between elements of nature and cultural creations. It can be assumed that the symbolism of the form ('wreath/crown' – headdress) was superior to the symbolism of the plants from which it was made. It is also likely that the species of flowers were not as important as their colour and context of use. The daughters of King Philip III of Spain – Maria (who died in 1603) and Marguerite (who died in 1617) – were depicted on their posthumous portraits wearing wreaths on their heads made of green branches with red and white flowers (Morel 2003: 28). In the case of the older one these are red and white roses, while in the younger one it is red roses and white lilies. The symbolism of the white rose and the white lily is very similar, associated with Virgin Mary's virtues, especially chastity and modesty. This is probably why the white rose and white lily were treated as substitutes in the post-mortem portraits of the girls.

Fig. 41. Common chicory (*Cichorium intybus L.*)

On the basis of the available data, it can be concluded that natural flowers were rather not used for grave wreaths. Usually, artificial flowers that imitated natural plants or

represented fantastic designs were chosen. Among natural plants, twigs of evergreen and aromatic plants, mainly herbs of Mediterranean origin, were used to make wreaths. The recurrence of plant species used for wreaths and the similarity of the characteristics of the preferred plants are apparent. The probable reason for not using cut flowers for the construction of wreaths is their perishability and limited availability for most of the year. Wreaths and grave crowns in the 17th century certainly functioned as markers of prestige, as evidenced by the many restrictions of funeral law regulations (Kizik 1998, 89-90). An important feature of the artificial flowers has been the prolonged durability necessary when the body of a deceased person was exposed to public view.

Artificial flowers may have been considered to be superior to living flowers. Their use opened up the possibility of composing decorations freely, according to modern symbolism, without necessity to rely on seasonally available plants. Equally, on tombstones, the attributes and appearance of the deceased were subjected to stylisation, so that they conveyed specific symbolic content. In the 16th and 17th centuries, considerable fascination arose with nature which was perceived as a rational creation subordinate to man. European art of the period featured numerous depictions of animals and botanical specimens. They were a reaction to the trend to collect *naturalia* and their artistic representations that emerged at European courts. Menageries, aviaries, collections of curiosities and botanical gardens were established at the estates of the aristocracy and at universities. Court artists were tasked with documenting the animals and plants gathered, and often owned botanical gardens and nature collections themselves. Sketches and studies of nature were used to create larger painting compositions. Sometimes court painters travelled to enrich their collections with illustrations of rare botanical and zoological specimens. Rich bourgeoisie also decorated their homes with still lifes (Ziemba 2005: 123-126). Nature, however, gained value for people living in the 17th century if it was filtered by human experience and invention. Therefore, floral painting compositions could incorporate species that did not naturally occur together and flowered at different times of the year.

The most frequently mentioned plants used in wreaths include common myrtle (*Myrtus communis* L., Fig. 22). At Frauenkirche in Dresden, leaves of common myrtle and cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*) were found near a crown made of silver and iron wires, dating from 1714 (Sörries 2007a: 251). A myrtle wreath bound with a silk cap was placed on the head of a 5-month-old girl buried in 1707 in the crypt of von Schlabrendorff family in the cathedral of Brandenburg an der Havel (Cat. H37; Diane 2004: 101-104). A wreath of myrtle and carnations was depicted on the head of the deceased 1.5-year-old Karl Zdeněk of Žerotín whose posthumous portrait from around 1620 is kept at Velké Losiny Castle in Moravia (Cat. K7, Fig. 18; Stankiewicz 2015: 104).

Common myrtle (*Myrtus communis* L.) is a dense evergreen shrub characterised by small, single, ovoid-lanceolate, dark green leaves and small, white flowers. It is native to the Mediterranean region, North Africa and the Western part of Asia. Thanks to its essential oil content, myrtle shoots, flowers and leaves emit intense fragrance. Myrtle has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, besides repels and kills insects (Toauibia 2015: 151). The myrtle was first introduced to Central Europe in the 16th century. In early modern period Western Europeans also experienced a rediscovery of a plant that had been forgotten during the Middle Ages. Myrtle began being used in wedding ceremonies, probably gradually replacing the rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) which was previously preferred for this occasion. The myrtle wreath on the bride's head symbolised purity. To this day, in some religious orders, it is still placed on the head of the candidates during the rite of vesting – handing over of the religious habit to a new member of the community (Rotter 2015: 208). The cultivar (*Myrtus communis* L.) bears the customary German name *Brautmyrte*, as opposed to *Totenmyrte*, which was intended for wreaths for the dead (Bärnthol 2003: 51). A wedding myrtle wreath with the inscription: 'Brauth Kranz d: anno 1748 Mens: Maj: die 23' was deposited in the crypt under St Michael's Church in Vienna (Cat. A5). Myrtle wreaths were found on the heads of women buried in the Admiralty Church in Karlskrona (Cat. N1).

Common myrtle was also included in bouquets and coffin decorations. Myrtle in post-mortem portraits and

tombstones was sometimes depicted in a stylised form, making it indistinguishable from rosemary. In addition to myrtle, other popular wedding plants, such as rosemary and boxwood, were mainly used for grave wreaths (Kapeluś 1989: 57).

Fig. 42. *Prince Moritz von Sachsen-Zeitz*, 1653, Zeitz, Museum Castle Moritzburg

Probably the oldest early modern grave crowns, dating to the 15th century, have been discovered in the cemetery at the House of Beguines in Haarlem in the northern Netherlands (Cat. G14). They consist of metal hoops decorated with rosemary springs. Rosemary leaves with relics of metal hoops were also discovered in burials from the 17th--18th centuries (Cat. G12) in the cemetery at the Nieuwe Kerk in Haarlem (Williams 2016: 190). A simple wreath from the 18th century (Cat. J13) with probably rosemary branches attached to the rim by a string was found during excavations in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Toruń (Drążkowska 2006: 211). In the Church of St Michael in Vienna, a wreath made of an iron hoop with rosemary sprigs, paper flowers and decorations made of thin metal sheet was discovered (Cat. A7).

Rosemary wreaths appear in large numbers in paintings and sculptural representations from the 17th century. At that time, a type of post-mortem portrait of the deceased developed, in which wedding symbolism was particularly emphasised (Knöll 2009: 252). A wreath of myrtle or rosemary is worn on the head by nine-year-old Caspar von Uchtenhagen on his post-mortem portrait (Cat. H35, Fig. 4). The painting is the oldest representation in Brandenburg showing the deceased wearing a grave wreath of plants. It dates from 1603 (Schuchard 2007: 241). The branches in the wreath on the child's head were attached densely to a stable frame and interwoven with small flowers, perhaps rosemary or small rose blossoms. Similar stiffened constructions of green rosemary sprigs are shown in two post-mortem portraits of several-month-old boys of the von Sachsen-Zeitz family from the mid-17th century (Cat. H147, H148, Fig. 42).

More than thirty portraits of dead children dating from the 16th and 17th centuries are preserved in museums in Belgium and the Netherlands. Depictions of deceased children were also produced in Spain under the influence of Habsburg-dominated Flanders. Numerous portraits showing deceased children, wearing rosemary, boxwood or myrtle wreaths, date from the second half of the 17th century, for example a painting from the Groningen Museum (Cat. G17, Fig. 21). A simple rosemary wreath adorns the temple of a deceased newborn baby in a 17th-century quadruple portrait of the Costerus siblings (Cat. G19). Small rosemary wreaths were placed on the body of the child depicted in the portrait kept at Velké Losiny Castle in Czech Republic (Cat. K6). A small garland of myrtle or rosemary was depicted on the head of four-year-old Anna Eleonora Mielęcka in a coffin portrait from the Unity of the Brethren church in Jędrzychowice near Wschowa in Poland (Cat. J171). Green wreaths of rosemary or myrtle (?) can be seen on Silesian epitaphs, tombstones and in the family tree of the Piast dynasty in the castle in Brzeg (Cat. J187).

The association of rosemary with sepulchral symbolism can be assumed to date back to the Middle Ages. A sprig

of rosemary is held together in the hands of Count Heinrich von Sayn (Cat. H16, Fig. 28) and his daughter (?) depicted in a double grave sculpture from 1247/8 from the Premonstratensian church in Sayn near Koblenz (Neurath-Sippel 2011: 122). On early modern tombstones, rosemary sprigs are usually depicted in the hands of children and young adults.

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* L.) occurs naturally in the Mediterranean region where it can grow up to about 2 metres (Fig. 43). In Central Europe only a cultivated form is available, and reaches smaller sizes (Kawałko 1986: 35). It flowers in March and April. The rosemary flowers are light purple, light pink or white. The leaves of rosemary are narrow and lanceolate. The leaves contain essential oil which exhibits fungicidal and bactericidal properties (Bozin *et al.* 2007: 7881-7884). When taken in large doses, rosemary can be poisonous (Nowiński 1983: 260). It is used as a decongestant, digestive stimulant, sedative and disinfectant. It can be effective against streptococci, staphylococci, scabies or body louse (Fijałkowski, Chojnacka-Fijałkowska 2009 292-293). Fuchs reports that rosemary, which is a drying and warming herb, protects against plague (Fuchs 2016: 181).

Fig. 43. Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Rosemary arrived in Western and Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages. At that time, it was cultivated in castle and monastery gardens. It can be found on the plan of the Sankt Gallen Abbey and was also mentioned in Charlemagne's *Capitulare de Villis*. In the Middle Ages and early modern times, young people wore wreaths of rosemary. Fuchs cites *Rosmarinus coronaria* as alternative name for the plant due to the fact that it was used to make wreaths (Fuchs 2016: 181). In 16th-century Poland, rosemary was still considered to be a new plant that arrived from Italy.

The symbolism of rosemary is associated with love and marriage. Rosemary garlands were used at weddings. In Germany, rosemary wedding wreaths were made from the 16th century onwards (Lippok 2009: 30). In Poland, at the end of the 18th-19th centuries, rosemary wedding wreaths were mainly known in the Greater Poland and Kuyavia regions. The fashion for wedding wreaths spread *via* elites who, as Alicja Zemanek has demonstrated, contributed to the dissemination of plant knowledge from printed herbaria. In Greater Poland, German models were also followed. It is not known whether rosemary was cultivated in Polish villages. According to Polish ethnographer – Oskar Kolberg – brides and grooms would purchase rosemary sprigs for their wedding in the city (Kapeluś 1989: 57-58).

Boxwood (*Buxus* L.) was very often used to construct grave wreaths, its remains being one of the most abundant among grave archaeological finds. It is a fragrant evergreen shrub or a small tree. A cultivar of *Buxus sempervirens* was brought to Western Europe during the Roman period, around the 2nd century AD. Boxwood remains and wreaths have been found in Roman graves in Britain (Lodwick 2017: 145-146). Historically, boxwood was attributed with extraordinary resilience. For this reason, it was preferred to the more cold-sensitive myrtle in gardens. In Dutch, it is sometimes called palm, named for the fact that boxwood branches were blessed during the Palm Sunday celebrations. Boxwood symbolises life, vigour and faithful love which is why it was often planted in cemeteries (Szczepanowicz 2013: 75).

In a cemetery in Thaldorf (Saxony), an anonymous child was buried with a wreath made of boxwood branches. The branches were attached to a hoop made of willow twigs, tied with a silk ribbon. Boxwood garlands were

also found in two other graves in the same cemetery (Cat. H137, H138, H139; Hellmund 2006: 266).

In the grave of a child who died aged 7-10 years located in the cemetery at the former village church in Rüdersdorf-Tasdorf (Brandenburg), a wreath decorated with boxwood branches and leaves was discovered (Cat. H51; Lippok 2009: 31). In the burial of a young woman in Lublin Cathedral, boxwood wreaths were found arranged along the grave dress (Grupa *et al.* 2014: 99, fn. 274). Wreaths or bunches from boxwood, cloves, flowers and wood splinters were reported in the Cloister Church of Riesa (Alterauge and Hofmann 2020: 85).

The hoops of the wreaths were also made of boxwood, such as in the find from St Catherine's Monastery in Rostock (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern; Cat. H122; Lippok 2007: 260). At St Nicholas Church in Röbel (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), a burial crown was discovered in the form of a silk cap (?) to which copper wire elements and sprigs with boxwood flowers and leaves were attached (Cat. H121; Schmidt 2008: 225). Wreaths with boxwood branches have been discovered in the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lublin (Cat. J170), in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Friedland (Cat. H115), in the church cemetery in Penkun (Cat. H120), in the Cathedral of St Peter and Paul in Zeitz (Cat. H139), and in the Admiralty Church in Karlskrona (Cat. N1). Boxwood along with crown fragments have been discovered in the Netherlands in Oldenzaal (Cat. G22), in the cemetery at the Basilica of St John in Oosterhout (Cat. G7), and at the Carmelite monastery in Aalst, Belgium (Cat. B10; Williams 2016: 187-189). In Bad Windsheim (Bavaria), in the tomb of Barbara von Reitzenstein (Cat. H12), who died in 1634, a head ornament imitating a wreath was found, decorated with sprigs of boxwood and hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*) (Bärnthol 2003: 51). Small bouquets of plants wrapped with wire were placed vertically, directly in the hair of the deceased.

The wreath on the head of a child (Cat. J204) buried in the crypt of the Church of the Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Szczuczyn (Poland, Podlaskie Voivodeship) was also made from plants associated with marriage symbolism – common rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.) and southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum* L.) (Grupa *et al.* 2014: 102).

Southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum* L.) is a shrub that reaches up to 1.8 metres (Fig. 44). In Poland, it is either found in the cultivated or feral forms. The plant emits a strong fragrance, due to essential oil content. Southernwood contains also a poisonous alkaloid. It has been used since ancient times as a medicine and insect repellent (Siennik 1568: 4). Southernwood is a neophyte in the territory of Poland. Its name (Polish boże drzewko – 'God's tree') is derived from the fact that it was cultivated in monastery gardens (Wajda-Adamczykowa 1989: 70).

Fig. 44. Southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum*)

Common rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.) is a plant that grows wild in Southern Europe, while in Poland it is only found as a cultivated plant (Fig. 45). It contains significant amounts of essential oil, known for its antibacterial effects. In the 8th/9th century, rue spread to Central Europe with the monks (Waniakowa 2012: 51). Fuchs stated that a drink of rue seeds and wine counteracts every poison. He recommended using rue leaves against the plague, snakes and vipers (Fuchs 2016: 236). Similar opinions on the effects of rue are provided by the Polish herbaria of Marcin of Urzędów and Marcin Siennik. Marcin of Urzędów considered common rue to be a plant pungent, bitter and warming in the third degree, which removes exces-

sive moisture and air from the body (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 270- 271). Marcin Siennik recorded that in order to exterminate a basilisk, the entire body should be covered with rue for protection (Siennik 1568: 147). Rue may have served as a wedding plant before the rosemary became more popular in Poland (Kapeluś 1989: 58). An old Polish saying 'to sow rue', found in the Polish compendium of proverbs by Salomon Rysiński from 1618, meant waiting for a candidate for a husband (Kapeluś 1989: 56).

Fig. 45. Common rue (*Ruta graveolens* L.)

In the south aisle of the Cathedral of St Peter and St Paul in Zeitz (Saxony-Anhalt), a tomb containing the remains of a woman (H144), buried after 1601, was discovered. On the coffin lid a garland formed of boxwood and branches of a plant from the willow genus (*Salix*) was laid (Klamm and Schulz 2012: 418).

The most common species belonging to this genus is the white willow (*Salix alba*, Fig. 47). Willow bark contains salicin which has analgesic and antipyretic effects. The wood of willow was used to make everyday objects and the twigs served in basketry. In emblematics, representations of willow illustrated the concept of infertility. In the rural areas of Poland, willow twigs were employed in wedding ceremonies (Marczewska 2002: 213-214).

A burial crown from 1791, made of willow twigs, is preserved in the church in Langen (Brandenburg). Natural branches and artificial flowers were attached to a frame made of willow twig. The crown is topped with a rod combined with bouquets of artificial flowers and upturned poppy seed heads decorated with ribbons and gold foil (Müller 2007: 11).

Poppy in folk tradition found uses as a protective plant, also during the burial (Zemanek *et al.* 2009: 221). However, it does not occur frequently in archaeological grave contexts in Europe from the late Middle Ages onwards. The poppy flower may have been depicted on early modern children's tombstones, but the five-petaled rosette is most often interpreted as an anemone or a rose. The results of a palynological analysis of a wreath made of poppies and carnation, discovered in a female burial beneath the church of St Francis of Assisi in Kraków, have recently been published (Cat. J45).

Poppy seed heads (*Papaver* L.), or other small parts of natural plants, wrapped in shiny metal foil, perhaps served as an imitation of jewels made of precious metals, pearls or beads. In Pritzen, gilded cloves were used in the construction of the grave crown (Cat. H50). Partially gilded juniper berries (*Juniperus communis*) and cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*) were found in a crown uncovered at the Dominican monastery in Prenzlau (Cat. H49; Ungerath 2003: 131, n.d.; Lippok 2007: 259-260). Gilded cloves were also discovered in the cemetery at the cathedral in Freiberg (Cat. H104). Wreaths found in the cemetery at St Mary's Church in Neubrandenburg (Cat. H119) contained cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*), juniper berries (*Juniperus sp.*) and artificial flowers. In Berlin grave crowns consisting of wires into which were woven gilded pumpkin seeds (*Cucurbita* L.), were discovered in two cemeteries (Cat. H31, H32, H34; Lippok 2015: 86).

Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) is a shrub or tree belonging to the cypress family (Fig. 46). Juniper produces almost black, blue wax-covered, strongly scented berries. Dried juniper berries are applied in herbal medicine to assist treatment in diseases of the gastrointestinal and urinary tracts (Polakowska 1986: 120). Historically, juniper has been used as a condiment for beer, or medicinal, antiseptic and protective agent. Juniper oil has antibacterial and fungicidal properties. It was used to fumigate people, animals, premises, and corpses in times of epidemics (Nowiński 1983: 28). Juniper fumigation probably has origins in the Middle Ages. Chemical traces of juniper and pine tar have been identified through chromatographic analysis and mass spectrometry performed on ceramic censers deposited in burials in Belgium, dating from the 12th-14th centuries. Native aromatic plants were probably added to imported incense in order to reduce costs (Baeten *et al.* 2014). Juniper was associated with infertility and used for abortifacient purposes, but the name of the plant (Polish *jałowiec* is a cognate of *jałowy* – 'barren') rather derived from the fact that it often grows in barren wastelands (Kapeluś 1989: 58).

Fig. 46. Common juniper (*Juniperus communis* L.)

Cloves are flower buds of a tree (*Syzygium aromaticum*) that occurs in the wild in Indonesia. *Syzygium aromaticum* is cultivated in equatorial climates, mainly in Africa and Asia. Cloves contain oil with antiseptic and anaesthetic properties, based on eugenol (Nowiński 1983: 240). In the 16th century, cloves began to be shipped to Europe in larger quantities. They were treated as a luxury medicinal raw material. In herbarium of Marcin of Urzędów there is only a mention of cloves which were a novelty in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the time: "Indian cloves which at that time came to Poland" (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 32).

Pumpkin seeds woven into grave wreaths have been found in the former cemetery at Schlossplatz (Cat. H31, H32) and in the cemetery at St Peter's Church (Cat. H34) and St Hedwig's Church (Cat. H33) in Berlin (Lippok 2015: 85-86). The seeds used as an imitation of beads in the grave crowns discovered in Berlin are so far the only archaeologically confirmed cases of pumpkin use in early modern burials.

Native to South America, the pumpkin was brought to Europe just a few years after Europeans arrived on the continent. The oldest image of a pumpkin in Europe is found in the *Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne* created in Touraine in Loire region, France, between 1503 and 1508 (Paris *et al.* 2006: 44). Until recently, the first image of the pumpkin was considered to be included in Leonard Fuchs' herbarium of 1542 (Paris *et al.* 2006). The spread of the pumpkin in Europe occurred soon after its importation, as evidenced by numerous finds of its seeds in cities (Beneš *et al.* 2012: 111).

Pumpkin seeds were used by Native Americans for digestive disorders. Similar uses were presented by authors of Polish herbaria. Pumpkin seed powder was believed as being a remedy for diarrhoea, intestinal burning and liver disorders. It was considered to relieve thirst, act as a diuretic, fight colic, heal wounds and ulcers (Syreniusz 1613: 1177-1178). Oil or milk extracted from the seeds was also thought to be a cure for inflammations and fevers (Syreniusz 1613: 1179; Kluk 1805: 170). Pumpkin seeds were supposed to have been placed in rural graves in Poland in the 19th century to keep the dead from leaving them (Kurasiński *et al.* 2018: 188).

A depiction of a pumpkin, alluding to the Biblical story of Jonah, features a carved tombstone by Hans Christoph Schurtz from the Evangelical church in Hähnichen, Saxony, from around 1670 (Cat. 134). At the feet of the portrayed boy, a skull from which grows a stem with a flower and pumpkin leaves, is placed (Stankiewicz 2015: 117).

For the decoration of grave crowns, citrus fruit, such as lemons with cloves arranged in a sign of the cross, were also used (Seib 1979: 116). The orange-coloured fruit with green leaves is shown next to the wreath on the head of Princess Antonia von Württemberg who died as maiden (Cat. H6, Fig. 19), in her post-mortem portrait from 1679 (Schuchard 2007: 242). Leaves of bitter orange (*Citrus aurantium* L.) and rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) were discovered in the Cathedral of St Vitus, St Wenceslas and St Adalbert in Prague, in a wreath deposited in the tomb of Eleonora (Cat. K5), daughter of Maximilian II. of Habsburg, buried in March 1580 (Beneš *et al.* 2012: 108). Lemon and orange were symbols of virginity in the early modern period[12]. Citrus branches have also been found in the crypt of the von Schlabrendorff family in Brandenburg an der Havel in female graves from the 18th-19th century (Diane 2004: 101-104).

In the crypt of the parish church of Berlin-Mitte, under a child's coffin, a diadem decorated with tufts of the springy turf-moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*), was found (Cat. H29; Wittkopp 2015: 59). The springy turf-moss is called *Kranzmoos* in Germany because of the arrangement of the leaves at the top of the stalk. In the same crypt (Cat. H27), a bundle was also discovered which was made of the common club moss (*Lycopodium clavatum* L., Fig. 39). Unfortunately, due to the disturbed stratigraphy of the burials in crypt, it is not possible to determine whether the moss accessory could be the base of a grave wreath, and if the bundle of club moss could also be part of such an artifact. In the crypt at St Nicholas Cemetery in Görlitz, on the coffin, there are located garlands made of boxwood twigs (*Buxus sempervirens*), of fir twigs (*Abies* sp.), club moss (*Lycopodium clavatum*) and bank haircap moss (*Polytrichastrum formosum*) (Cat. H106).

Mosses were sometimes mentioned by Renaissance herbaria, but were not popular in medicine. Mosses occurring on the territory of Poland raised the interest of naturalists not until the 18th century (Drobnik and Stebel 2014: 682-683). Few of them were used in folk medicine of the 19th-20th centuries. They played a role in magical protective procedures and were used for curses breaking (Paluch 1989: 51-52).

A wreath of bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis* L.) was also found in the crypt of the Berlin-Mitte parish church. It was placed on a coffin cushion, next to a deceased adult male. However, it is uncertain whether the wreath was originally located in this spot (Cat. H24; Lippok 2007: 260). The crypts under the Berlin-Mitte church were the resting place of respected citizens of the city in the 18th-19th centuries. It is likely that the laurel wreath refers to the ancient custom of crowning the heads of honoured individuals.

Fig. 47. White willow (*Salix alba*)

[12] For more on citrus, see chapter 3.6.2. Fruit in burials.

Leaves of laurel as part of an unpreserved grave decoration were also discovered in the coffin of an adult male buried in the crypt beneath the cathedral in Brandenburg an der Havel, near his feet (Cat. H38). They were found in grave wreath structures in the crypt of the church in Pritzen (Cat. H50), in the parish church in Bützow (Cat. H114) and in the crypt of the Admiralty Church in Karslkrona (Cat. N1). A wreath of laurel was placed on the chest of Bishop Iver Munk buried in Ribe Cathedral in 1539 (Cat. C22). In St Cathrine Church Kr. Rendsburg-Eckernförde laurel, along with cardamom, cloves and rosemary, was part of grave crowns (Grüneberg-Wehner 2018: 159). A sprig of a laurel-like plant was placed in the hands of Eleonora of Habsburg buried in St Vitus Cathedral in Prague (Cat. K5).

Laurel leaves were used to preserve corpses, and were discovered in the coffin of Engelbrecht II von Nassau in Breda, who died in 1504 (Cat. G2), in the coffins at Trendelburg (Cat. H94), in the burial of prince Ludwig von Nassau (Cat. H131), and in the Archcathedral in Przemyśl, in the body of bishop Walenty Wężyk (Cat. J260). Covering the body with laurel leaves was noted in St Olaf's Cathedral in the burial of a person who died in the early 18th century (Cat. C6). Similar methods are depicted in child portraits, e.g.: from Rysum from around 1659, where laurel leaves were sprinkled over the body and pillow (Cat. H112), and also at 17th-century post-mortem portrait of an anonymous child from England, where they were placed on bed linen (Cat. O1).

The bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis* L.) in its native Mediterranean region is a tree that can grow up to 10 metres high. In Poland, it is only encountered as a pot plant. Dried bay laurel leaves are used as a culinary spice (Nowiński 1983: 225). Laurel contains an essential oil that inhibits bacterial growth. In antique Greece, it was dedicated to Apollo who sent and reversed plagues. Bay laurel was believed to have the power to ward off evil and disease. It also brought moral purification which is why laurel wreaths were used to decorate the heads of soldiers who shed blood during war. This is where the ancient tradition of crowning victors with laurel also originated. The laurel entered Christian art along with triumphal symbolism (Forstner 1990: 177-178).

The laurel wreath motif was often used in the decoration of coffins, frames of epitaphs and coffin portraits. The so-called crowns of victory or justice from the 18th/19th century are preserved in Lich-Bettenhausen and Butzbach in Hesse. They are made of metal sheets, cut in the shape of laurel leaves, topped with a figure of an angel or a lamb with a palm branch (Neurath-Sippel 2007: 16). They represent the triumphal type of sepulchral crowns, associated with the idea of overcoming sin and death or with glory deserved by living a good and virtuous life on earth. A similar symbolism is depicted in the portrait of the dead boy from Alkmaar. The child is shown with a branch of rose with an unbloomed bud in his left hand and laurel in his right hand, which together signify the triumph of innocence (Cat. G14, Fig. 8).

In the Salvator cemetery in Wrocław, a wreath decorated with branches of plants from the cypress family resembling thuja, was found in the grave of an approximately 7-year-old boy (Cat. J145; Wojcieszak 2015: 33). The genus (*Thuja* sp.) includes five species of evergreen, poisonous trees and shrubs. Thujas are often planted in cemeteries. The tree was formerly associated with negative effects on humans (Paluch 1984: 60). The remains of thuja tree were found in the tomb of Bishop Wężyk (Cat. J260) in the Przemyśl Archcathedral from the 2nd half of the 18th century (Drążkowska 2015, 304).

Coniferous branches were also used in the construction of wreaths, e.g.: spruce/larch or pine in Pritzen (Cat. H50; Lippok, 2009: 31). Marcin of Urzędów considered the pine as a plant of little medicinal use: "common pine vile for medicine except for building and fire" (Marcin of Urzędów 1595: 369). Pine needles and shavings were used to fill coffin pillows and mattresses because of the fragrance they emitted (Cat. H2).

On the lid of the coffin deposited in the crypt located in St Michael's Cemetery in Lüneburg (Lower Saxony) around 1900, were found three wreaths – made of spruce (*Picea abies*), thuja (*Thuja* sp.) and boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) (Ströbl and Vick 2008: 77). Today, these plants are also used for funerary decorations. Simple garlands of myrtle and roses are also characteristic of the final phase of the custom. Rose garlands were used, for instance, to decorate the epitaphs of soldiers killed in the First World War (Müller 2007: 15).

On the basis of analyses of written sources and ethnographic accounts, it is assumed that wreaths were also woven from the branches of cypresses (*Cupressus* L.), sprouts of mint (*Mentha pulegium* L., Fig. 48), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum* Mill, Fig. 49; Segschneider, 1976: 145), common gypsophila (*Gypsophila paniculata* L., Fig. 50), yarrow sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica* L.; Bärnthol 2003), periwinkle (*Vinca* L., Fig. 51; Fischer 1921: 102). Some plant species were supposed to be exclusively for the category of the deceased requiring protection after death, e.g., dwarf everlast (*Helichrysum arenarium* (L.) Moench, Fig. 52) wreaths in Lower Franconia were put on the heads of deceased obstericians (Bärnthol 2003: 52).

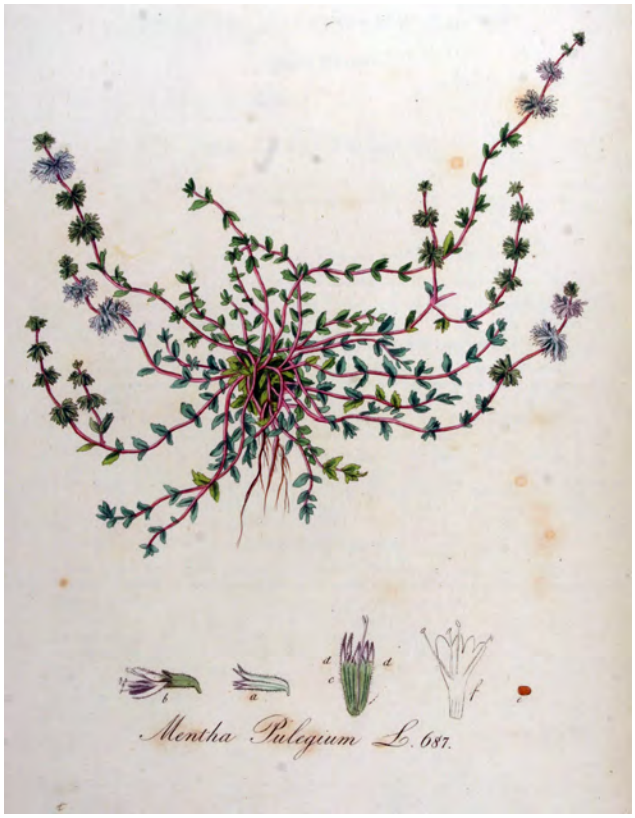

Fig. 48. Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium* L.)

The plant species used for wreaths construction evidenced in archaeological finds, written sources, and iconography, exhibit approximate features. They are fine-leaved, evergreen, aromatic and not native to the northern part of Europe. Rosemary, myrtle and boxwood were the most common plants encountered in wreaths. Wedding wreaths were also traditionally woven from these three plant species. Of the plants recorded less frequently, hyssop, common rue, bay laurel, trees of the cypress family, and conifer share some of the same abovementioned characteristics.

Fig. 49. Marguerite (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* L.)

Other plants used to make wreaths (southernwood, juniper berries, citrus, cloves) are also distinguished by their intense aroma. It can be assumed that one of the most important functions of the natural plants woven into grave wreaths was to cover the unpleasant smell of decomposing body. This was seen at the time as a way of preventing the spread of disease, the source of which was the miasma released from the corpse. These plants were also turned into other decorative arrangements for coffins. They were used for filling of coffin cushions and embalming corpses In Western and Southern Europe, plants from four families have been most commonly used in embalming process

of the bodies of the deceased since the Middle Ages: the labiate (*Lamiaceae*), which include rosemary and hyssop, *Myrtaceae*, umbelliferous (*Apiaceae*) and *Asteraceae* (Corbineau *et al.* 2018: 157). Almost all of the listed natural plants that were found in grave wreaths belong to the mentioned families. *Labiate*, *Pinacae*, *Rosaceae*, *Rutaceae*, *Umbelliferae* and *Asteraceae* are among the few in the Central European environment to produce essential oils (Polakowska 1986: 26).

Fig. 50. Common gypsophila (*Gypsophila paniculata* L.)

In modern herbaria, herbs intended for wreaths are presented as remedies for infections, parasites of various kinds and even snake repellents and poison neutralisers. Modern research has confirmed the bactericidal, fungicidal and/or insecticidal effects of the essential oils produced by rosemary, myrtle, boxwood, hyssop, southernwood and rue.

With qualities associated with vitality and longevity, the plants used in grave wreaths may have had an apotropaic function. Magical/protective properties were attributed to rosemary, hyssop, southernwood, common rue, boxwood, juniper and bryophytes.

Fig. 51. Lesser periwinkle (*Vinca minor* L.)

Most of the species used for wreaths and crowns production are evergreen, such as myrtle, rosemary, boxwood, common rue, juniper, hyssop, pine, cypress, bay laurel. The green colour and the ability to remain fresh in winter symbolised the person beginning eternal life or the hope for Salvation. Evergreen plants were presumably associated with premature death. The willow, from which the hoops of wreaths were made, also signified a barren life (de la Feuille 1691: 27/9). Perhaps the reason for the use of cultivated, potted and evergreen plants is that fresh flowers

were unavailable during the winter. In Renaissance gardens, due to the popularity of trimmed hedges, espaliers and topiaries, evergreen species were favoured, along with other plants that tolerate well heavy trimming, such as boxwood and rosemary. Growing thermophilic plants indoors and in conservatories also became more fashionable. In the tomb of Princess Eleonora who was buried in March 1580 (Cat. K5) in Prague Cathedral, orange and rosemary leaves were placed which, perhaps grown indoors, were green at this time of year.

Fig. 52. Dwarf everlast (*Helichrysum arenarium*)

On the basis of the gathered materials, the conclusion can be drawn that natural flowers were rarely used to decorate garlands. Occasionally, the stems of the herbs used in the construction of wreaths possessed flowers, but it is likely that the green colour of the leaves themselves and the strong scent of the plant were more important. Many of the flower species described in written sources or shown in the iconography have not been found, or at least their discovery in burials examined archaeologically has not been reported in the literature. These include, for example roses, lilies and anemones. Presumably, artificial flowers were inserted between the natural, green branches.

The plants used to create grave wreaths were mainly those used in betrothal or wedding ceremonies in the past. Common myrtle, rosemary, southernwood, common rue, boxwood, carnations, lilies, roses, lemons and oranges can be associated with marriage or virginity symbolism. Juniper, common rue, rosemary and periwinkle were also used to make so-called wedding rods, symbolising the conclusion of a contract or transaction (Kapeluś 1989: 58). The grave wreath was an attribute of those, who died unmarried, i.e., remaining in a state of purity. The use of plants representing marital or virginal symbolism provides an argument for the thesis that grave wreaths may have been the equivalent of bridal or maidenly head ornaments. A separate category is constituted by the plants that form the structural building blocks of the wreath. Gilded juniper berries, poppy seed heads, cloves and pumpkin seeds were meant to imitate precious jewels. Most likely, the high flexibility of willow and boxwood twigs determined their selection for the hoop construction.

Interestingly, almost all the plants described as wreath parts were more or less established imports at the time. In Europe north of the Alps, in wreaths occured exotic plants which were introduced or returned to more frequent use in the early modern period, such as myrtle, cloves, citrus fruit and pumpkin seeds. This was probably related to the need to manifest prosperity. Initially, imported plants were less available and had to be purchased at considerable expense.

The modern period, and especially the Renaissance, was characterised by an interest in all sorts of innovations which were attempted to be introduced into Northern European gardens. Medicinal gardens were established for learning about medicinal plants and testing their usefulness. Efforts were also made to accommodate Mediterranean plants and those imported from other continents (Jagiełło-Kołaczyk and Brzezowski 2014: 108).

Mediterranean herbs first appeared in Northern Europe at the twilight of Antiquity or in the early Middle Ages. The information contained in the Renaissance literature suggests that in Central Europe Mediterranean herbs were considered still relatively unknown in the 16th century (Kapeluś 1989: 57). In the Middle Ages, bachelors and ladies of the court portrayed themselves in wreaths made from herbs of foreign origin. Wedding and funeral wreaths made from aromatic herbs were known in the Middle Ages, but it was not until the modern period that these plants began to be used to crown the dead. Embalming procedures using herbs of Mediterranean origin were also used among the upper classes in the Middle Ages.

The adaptation and spread of plants from Southern Europe were probably influenced by the reading of the Scripture, literary studies, Greek and Roman mythology and, in the modern period, also by a growing interest in ancient history, philosophy, way of life (the concept of achieving virtues) and symbolism or the imitation of fashionable horticultural trends. The spread of systematised and standardised botanical knowledge accelerated in the 16th century, through the agency of printed books, especially herbal-pharmaceutical compendia. Authors of herbaria made use of familiar ancient works, especially those of Dioscorides, Pliny the Elder, Theophrastus and Galen. To a large degree, modern herbaria were compilations of Western European, medieval and younger works, but they also contained the authors' own observations. They were the first botanical publications in national languages (Zemanek 2012: 213). Compendia containing information on both the properties of native plants and hitherto unknown imported species from different parts of the world have been made available for the first time. Knowledge that had formerly been transmitted orally or restricted, began to be replicated without any errors or distortions. Herbaria entries were provided with realistic engravings showing the appearance of the herbs, which made it possible to identify the plants in nature. In the lands of Poland, modern herbaria were used as a basis for medicinal treatment until the 19th century (Zemanek 2012: 218)

Based on the information collected in the catalogue, a high proportion of herbs associated with ancient, cosmopolitan symbolism can be observed in relation to plants popular only locally. Mediterranean herbs appear in the pages of Scripture, the reading of which has become widespread since the Reformation. In German ethnographic literature, a connection was sought between the modern custom of placing wreaths on the heads of the dead and ancient funeral ceremonies (Segschneider 1976: 14-16). The increased interest in Antiquity in modern Europe may have contributed to the development or resumption of the custom of wreathing the heads of the dead.

The popularisation of plants of Mediterranean origin was also influenced by the flourishing of modern emblematics and the infusion of visual space with representations of a symbolic nature which appeared not only in art, but also on prints and everyday objects. They were depicted on craft objects, such as ceramics, parts of clothing, glass, furniture and textiles. Iconological personifications of concepts which also referred to emblematics and used symbols, were often accompanied by floral attributes.

Religious changes may have resulted in the spread of the custom in the 16th-17th centuries. According to Gerhard Seib, grave wreaths can be originated from folk piety (Seib 1979: 114). As a result of the Reformation, the cult of the saints and the props used in it began to be questioned, including floral decorations which were considered unnecessary pomp and a manifestation of pride. According to Jack Goody, the removal of flowers from worship led to the flourishing of secular customs associated with plants. The demand for iconoclasm in the early phase of the Reformation by the more radical spiritual leaders led to the removal of plants from official worship, but the need to decorate images of saints moved into the private sphere of domestic rituals where a new path for its development began (Goody 1993: 186).

Protestants rejected the belief in the possibility of influencing the fate of the dead through posthumous prayer and other religious acts performed on their behalf, but the abrupt break with old customs was not fully effective. According to some authors, amongst Protestants, grave wreaths may have become widespread as a protective amulet gifted to children deceased before they were baptised. The burial of unbaptised children in the modern period was no longer subject to ecclesiastical prohibitions, but it still happened to differ significantly from the typical burial

of the time (Lippok 2009: 81). Protection was also provided for unmarried individuals.

Wreaths and sepulchral crowns may well have originated from the funerals of rulers and the aristocracy. Funerals of members of wealthy families included references to ancient ceremonies and triumphs. Sermons, descriptions and graphics of the bodies in the coffins, and family trees showing the connections of the deceased, were published in print. The artistic and theatrical arrangement of funerals and the accompanying printed publications were addressed to the living members of the families, fulfilling the function of consolidating alliances, often based on blood ties. For this reason, symbols of triumph were used even at the funerals of children of a few years old who had not yet managed to earn their posthumous honours.

In the western lands of present-day Poland, grave wreaths and crowns are found in ordinary earthen graves in cemeteries and in urban churches (in Germany also in rural churches). In the eastern part of Poland on the other hand, grave wreaths have been discovered (apart from Protestant burials) only in a few graves of the nobility.