

# Schadde / Hansel

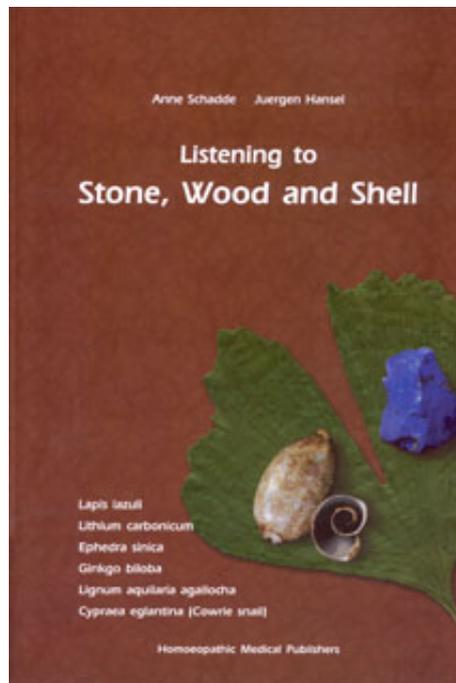
## Listening to Stone, Wood and Shell

Reading excerpt

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# GINKGO BILOBA

Anne Schadde

## SUBSTANCE

Ginkgo biloba and the art of narrating

.. . *the poem*

*This leaf from a tree in the East,  
Has been given to my garden.  
It reveals a certain secret,  
Which pleases me and thoughtful People.  
Does it represent One living creature  
Which has divided itself?  
Or are these Two, which have decided,  
That they should be as One?  
To reply to such a Question,  
I found the right answer:  
Do you notice in my songs and verses  
That I am One and Two ?*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe "Gingo  
biloba" (15. Sept. 1815), from: "Suleika" poems

The poem is part of the "Suleika" poems, a collection of oriental lyric. Here Goethe devotes himself, in the "western-oriental encounter", to the distant, different culture. "Hatem" (Goethe's poet-ego) expresses his feelings in the poems towards his beloved "Suleika". The Gingo-poem (Goethe dropped the "hard k") was inspired by his enthusiastic love for

Marianne von Willemer. Years of botanical studies, the foundation for his "metamorphosis teachings", made Goethe aware of the unusual shape of the Ginkgo leaves. Goethe was capable of mystical perception, of sensing cult functions, and of comprehending what had to be understood symbolically and allegorically. To him the leaf meant the unity of what is moving apart, the double within the one, which was a symbolic representation of his relation to Marianne von Willemer. He was in love with her, but lived apart from her (because she was married.) In a letter to a friend (Correspondence between Goethe and Zelter, Publ. Max Hecker, 2 Vol. Leipzig 1913-1918) Goethe described his interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the Ginkgo leaf. He saw it as a "rhythmic translation" of the Ginkgo, permeated by its sense of wholeness.

*. . . the mythology*

In the biographic-historical Goethe novel "Marianne" by the German writer Hans Frank (1879-1964) tells in 'Marianne' (a biographic-historical Goethe novel) the legend of the true tree of life, a kind of genesis: "The eastern Ginkgo biloba is the tree of life. The first humans grew on it. And just like the leaves, they had grown together on the bottom and divided on top. Like the leaf, man and woman formed at the same time a unity in their appearance and a duality in their nature... What changed this original condition, how the division of humans happened, I cannot clearly tell. Maybe it was the fault of an incredible storm that violently shook the tree, or of an overwhelming wave of happiness, or of the craving for adventure in humans who were joined together in spite of their dual gender. However, by the end of that night all creatures who had been shaken down or had jumped off the tree found themselves as man and woman on earth. Their bodily connection was torn apart. They became two. And now they have to find themselves all over again. . . Humans carried on, on this increasingly populated earth, with love and hate, with union and separation, just like man and woman up to this day carry on out of lack of a better way, to restore the fact or the appearance of the former union. The Ginkgo biloba though stretched his bare branch-arms accusingly towards the heavens above. And God had mercy on its loneliness, which would have signified death for the tree of life. In place of humans He let leaves emerge from its branches, which eternally symbolize the original condition of humankind, because they form a living duality - united on the bottom and separated on top -: "the terrestrial image of the divine trinity." (See in this regard dream #154 of a prover, who showed the most extensive symptoms during the entire proving.)

### **Ginkgo biloba, the tree**

Darwin called the Ginkgo biloba a "living fossil". The main period of development for this plant species was during the Mesozoic Era, Jurassic to Cretaceous. That puts our Ginkgo tree, with 200 million years, into the group of the oldest plants on earth. This also shows the enormous vitality of this plant division, which did not become extinct but continuously adapted and developed itself. In China and Japan, old specimens of the trees can be found near temple sites. They are worshiped as holy trees or decorated with shrines. The Ginkgo is a Ginkgophyta and has fan-shaped leaves. It is not part of the conifer family nor of the deciduous trees; it is its own family with many fossil species. The peculiarity and beauty of its leaves made it popular in parks. Because of its resistance to insects, bacterial, viral and fungal disease and also pollution, the Ginkgo is one of the most desirable city trees. In New York/Manhattan, for example, it is the most frequently planted tree. It defies fire and radio activity. It is said that many old trees have survived lightning, fire storms, twisters and many natural disasters, which reflects the enormous power these trees possess. It was reported that after the nuclear explosion of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 300,000 people died immediately or as a result of burns and radiation. Flora and fauna were destroyed just the same. Then something happened that nobody had expected: The Ginkgo tree was able to regenerate. In the research paper "The nuclear bomb and the University of Hiroshima" it says: "Amongst the plants damaged by the nuclear bomb, Ginkgo trees showed the strongest restorative powers... In the first month neurospora bacteria developed and the burnt trees turned completely red. On trees that were located 2000 to 3000 meters from the center of the explosion, branches died off, but in fall or spring they produced new shoots. . .".

Ginkgo is highly regarded as lumber. Since it doesn't get infested with parasites, it is very useful in the production of furniture, wood carvings, art objects and sculptures. In Asia Ginkgo trees are planted next to temples and residences, because it is said that they ward off fire and disaster.

The shape of the Ginkgo tree varies from narrow column shape (male trees) to wide crown shape (female trees). It can grow up to 40 meters in height. Striking are the strong (aggressive!?) branches reaching skywards: In fall the leaves turn a light yellow. The trunk is long and straight. Its bark is ash-gray and turns rough and furrowed when old. The wood is light and soft, the center tender and spongy.

**. . . the reproduction**

Ginkgo is dioecious, which means there are male and female Ginkgo trees (Mr. Ginkgo and Mrs. Ginkgo). They are separate and yet there is a union. The pollination of the ovules can happen on the tree or while the ovules lie on the ground, by motile or free swimming sperms, which is one of the peculiarities of this tree specimen. The male flowers contain stamens. Each of the stamens bears two pollen sacs. The pollen is transported by the wind. The female flowers bear two (in some cases up to seven) ovules that grow at the tip of a long stalk. The actual pollination takes place several months later. Only when the pollen has reached the female flower and is retracted does the ovule of the female flower start to grow. The mature, apricot- or plum like seed contains a ligneous stone that is surrounded by a resinous fleshy coat. This coat decomposes with ripeness (butyric acid, valerianic acid, capronic acid) and emanates an unpleasant odor of rancid butter.

**. . . the discoverer**

In 1691, Japan traveller Engelbert Kaempfer was the first to describe the Ginkgo for the western world. He was a physician interested in botany, the so-called materia medica of plants. He had a passion for travelling and studied phenomena of natural history, agriculture, history, politics, mythology and religion. He began the description of Ginkgo like this: "Ginkgo is a nut tree with leaves that give it the appearance of a maiden's hair...".

**. . . the name**

The spelling Ginkgo began with Kaempfer. In Japan it was called "ginkyo" which meant "gin"= silver and "kyo"= apricot. It is assumed that a mistake while setting the print turned Ginkyo into Ginkgo. The word biloba, added by Carl von Linne, is Latin and means "two-lobed". Because of its fernlike leaves the tree is called in China "Ya Chio"/ "icho"= "duck foot". In English the Ginkgo is called "maidenhair tree" or because of his age "fossil tree". Other names are: "fan tree", "Japanese nut tree", "Japanese temple tree", "elephant's ear tree", "forty coin tree", "grandfather-grandson tree"...

**Ginkgo biloba and symbolism .**

**. . the tree**

The tree is a symbol for hope, longevity, fertility, friendship, adaptability, and invincibility.

As a "holy" tree it has been worshiped throughout all time. For example, farmers would pray for rain for the rice fields.

Very old trees are worshiped as a memorial for people because they have endured natural disasters, fire storms and nuclear explosion.

It was planted as a protection against wind and fire. Of an old tree on a temple site it is said that when it was young it suddenly sprayed water during a fire. (One of the seven wonders of this temple.)

The Ginkgo is the landmark of the city of Tokyo and the University of Tokyo.

It was said about a monk who was known for his wisdom, virtue and asceticism that he was guided by the tree-spirit of the oldest Ginkgo tree of Japan.

*. . . the leaf*

The fanlike leaves have long stalks and are called "forked up nerves". They are similar to the maidenhair fern. The leaves of a young Ginkgo-tree have a deep cleft in the middle (biloba = two-lobed); in older, mature trees though the cleft is less pronounced. The leaves remind us of certain fern species. It is striking that the veins of the leaves do not unite in the stalk but only join at the bark of the tree.

As mentioned earlier Goethe "tasted" in his poem the "secret meaning" of the leaf and glorified it as a symbol of love. The "leaf of lovers", which is heart shaped, gives hope for a peaceful existence when kept as a charm, a bookmark or a sign of friendship.

*. . . the nature*

The "two-lobed" leaves or the "dioecious" form of reproduction show a possible relationship to Yin and Yang, male and female, joy and pain, life and death, light and shadow, past and future.

All of nature unfolds in the tension field of two poles: the opposites of day and night, man and woman, breathing in and out etc. Everything is in harmony when the poles are balanced. A loss of vitality develops when one pole becomes "dominant" and the other one "wastes away". Because this disturbs the biological balance, disease ultimately ensues.

In our body the brain houses both poles. In our Western culture the left brain hemisphere with its causal-analytical thinking is being overstressed and overrated; whereas, the analog-synthetic function of the right

hemisphere is being neglected (see proving symptoms # 9pp). The one-sided emphasis of a brain hemisphere can lead to a loss of vitality of the entire brain or a degeneration of its functions.

The *Ginkgo* tree in its totality symbolizes a possible union, a balance of polarity.

### **Ginkgo biloba and the phyto-therapeutic application**

#### ***. . . the "barefoot-medicine" of the Japanese and Chinese***

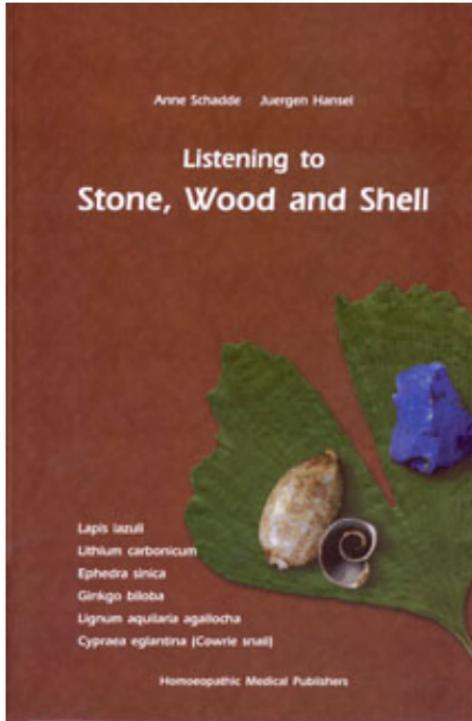
The first traces of Ginkgo were found in China. A Chinese medicine book, the "materia medica" of 1578, mentions the community Nanking as the home of the Ginkgo.

It is said that very old trees show growths, which resemble air roots. They are called Japanese chi-chi, which means "breast", "nipple". Women ask for milk to nurse their children or they scrape part of its "nipples" off, let it simmer in hot water and drink the tea to produce mothers milk.

The leaves of the tree reportedly have an insecticide effect. In China it is common to put Ginkgo leaves between the pages of books to keep paper pests away. They are applied as a dressing for skin impurities, or made into tea to ease cough and are also used in asthma and scrofula. The boiled leaves help as an application with chillblains. They are also used for circulatory problems, high blood pressure, nervousness and concentration failure.

The seeds (the "nuts") contain starch and protein and are eaten in Japan and China after being roasted. In large amounts, though, these seeds have a slightly laxative effect (poisoning). The fleshy hull of the seed respectively of the samen is used in folk medicine for asthma, cough, cystitis, bed-wetting, worms and alcohol abuse. Roasted they are supposed to be a great aphrodisiac for men and help with reduced sperm production. It is said to bring energy into the abdomen. Ginkgolic acid in great dilution isolated from the seed is able to limit the growth of tuberculosis bacteria. This is why isolated ginkgolic acid is used as a remedy against tuberculosis in China.

The fruit was considered very precious and was sent to the emperor as a tribute. Crushed seeds are used in the cosmetic industry against wrinkle formation and for detoxification.



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Lapislazuli, Lignum aquilaria agallocha,  
Ephedra sinica, Lithium carbonicum,  
Ginkgo biloba, Cypraea eglantina -  
Cowrie Snail

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