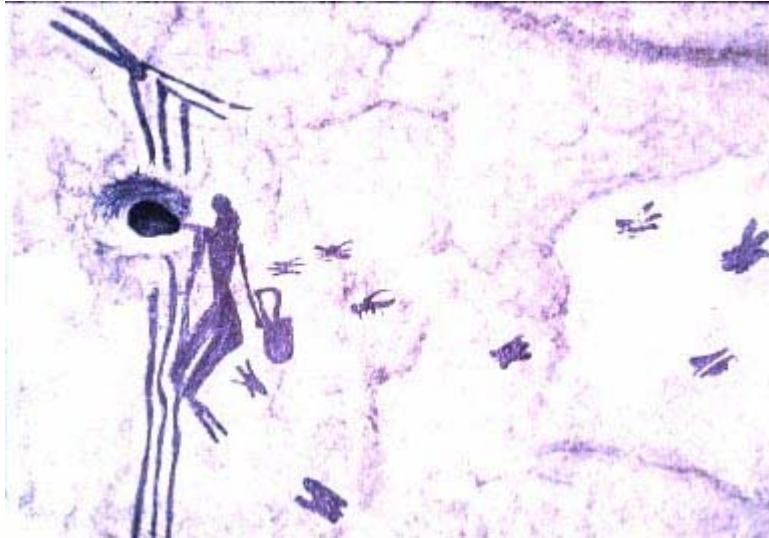


The book of honey



Prehistoric man gathering honey, a rock painting made 6000 BC, Cueva de la Arana, near Valencia, Spain

**Hi
high,
higher
to bee or
not to bee
my sweet honey
sweetest blessing
in spite of all the
horrible painful stings**

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I would appreciate your feedback at info@bee-hexagon.net

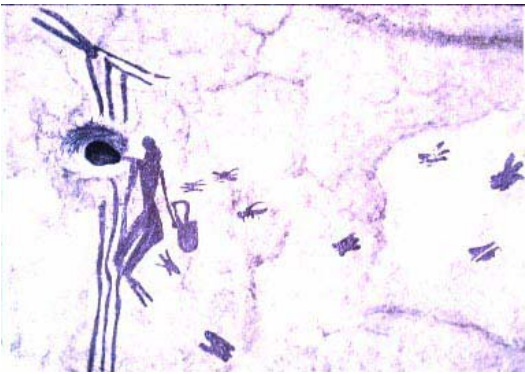
Muehlethurnen, Switzerland in May 2011

A Short History of Honey

Stefan Bogdanov

Prehistoric Times

Honey bees are one of the oldest forms of animal life, still in existence since the Neolithic Age, thus preceding humans on earth by 10 to 20 million years. In the course of human history honey has been used mainly as sweetener, but also in medicine.



*Prehistoric man gathering honey
A rock painting made 6000 BC, Cueva de la
Arana, near Valencia, Spain*

Primeval humans gathered and ate the honey and honeycombs of wild bees, the only available sweet, as far back as 7000 BC

As the only sweetener, honey was an important food for man since the very beginning of man.

The story of honey and Homo sapiens started during the stone age. In order to reach the honey sweet man climb up, may be risking his life.

Ancient India

Around the same time, i.e. 2-3,000 BC., honey was mentioned several times in the holy books of ancient India, the Vedas:

*Let every wind that blows drop honey
Let the rivers and streams recreate honey
Let all our medicines turn into honey
Let the dawn and evening be full of honey
Let the darkness be converted to honey
Let our nourisher, the sky above, be full of honey
Let our trees be honey
Let the Sun be honey
Let our cows make honey*

Rig Veda 1:90:6-8



The Vedas

Ancient China



The five elements

In ancient China honey has been mentioned in the book of songs Shi Jing, written in the 6th century BC; a honey medicine was mentioned in the “52 prescription book, 3th century BC. According to Chinese medicine honey acts according to the principles of the Earth element, acting mainly on the stomach and on the spleen. It has Yang character, acting on the Tripple Heater Meridian (Shaoyang).

Ancient Egypt



*Pabasa tombs, 26^e Dynasty,
760-656 BC,*

image courtesy www.virtualinsectary.com/egypt.html

In old Egypt honey was an important sweetener and was depicted in many wall drawings. According to the Ebers papyrus (1550 BC) it is included in 147 prescriptions in external applications. Also according to the Smith papyrus (1700 BC) it was used in wound healing: “*Thou shouldst bind [the wound] with fresh meat the first day [and] treat afterwards with grease, honey [and] lint every day until he recovers.*”

Ancient Greece



The bee goddess Artemis

In old Greece the honey bee, a sacred symbol of Artemis, was an important design on Ephesian coins for almost 6 centuries. Aristoteles described for the first time the production of honey. Hippocrates speaks about the healing virtues of honey: “*cleans sores and ulcers, softens hard ulcers of the lips, heals cabuncles and running sores*”. After his death in 323 B.C., Alexander the Great was embalmed in a coffin filled with honey.

Ancient Rome

Honey was mentioned many times by the writers Vergil, Varro and Plinius. Especially Virgil's Georgics is a classic where he describes in detail how honey is made.

During the time of Julius Caesar honey was used as a substitute for gold to pay taxes.

In the first century A.D., Apicus, a wealthy Roman gourmet, wrote a series of books in which more than half the recipes included honey.



From Virgil's Georgics

The Bible

In Israel, the land where honey and milk flow, honey was very important and has been mentioned 54 times in the Old Testament. The most famous is the saying of the wise King Solomon "Eat thou honey because it is good".

In the New Testament it plays a role in the resurrection of Christ. The first food he was given was fish and honeycomb.



Old Hebrew bible text

The Koran

The Koran recommended honey as a wholesome food and excellent medicine. In the XVIth Chapter of the Koran, entitled The Bee, we find: "There proceedeth from their bellies a liquor of various colour, wherein is medicine for men." Mohammed pronounced: "Honey is a remedy for all diseases."



Old Koran script

Medieval High Cultures



St. Ambrosius

In medieval high cultures of the Arabs, the Byzantines and Medieval Europe honey was important too and in these cultures most sweet meals contained honey. In Byzantium honey was used as an ingredient of many dishes.

During the Christian Middle ages honey was highly estimated and the great figures like the saints Ambrosius, Chrystosomus und Bernhard of Clairvaux were represented with woven hives. The old Celtic, Germanic and Slav people traditions celebrate honey mead as an immortal beverage.

The East Orthodox Tradition



St. Haralampios

Beekeeping and honey has also a long tradition in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. The saint Haralambos was a Greek Christian saint from the 2nd century AC. Haralambos was a Greek Christian preaching Christianity, persecuted very severely by the Roman emperor of that time, he helped many persecuted brothers by healing them with the use of honey, propolis and herbs. He lived until he was executed at the age of 112 years.

Central and South America



Mayan Bee God

In Central and South America honey from stingless bees was used for ages, long before Columbus. Honey of the native stingless bees was used regarded as a gift of the Gods, it was also a sign of fertility and was given as an offering to the gods.

Africa



African beekeeper

Africa has also a long tradition of a bee use for honey, both in the high cultures of Mediterranean Africa, and in the more primitive cultures in regions to the south.

It was recently found that the honey bee *Apis Melifera* originates in Africa.

Nowadays



For a long time in human history it was an important carbohydrate source and the only largely available sweetener until industrial sugar production began to replace it after 1800. At present the annual world honey production is about 1.2 million tons, which is less than 1% of the total sugar production.

Now science has proven the healing virtues of honey, described by ancient writers, poets and scientists.

Further reading

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