

Containers used to store and transport proprietary indigenous medical preparations (A survey conducted in the National Museum)

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Historical sources provide evidence towards an effective pattern of health preservation and system of medicine from ancient times in Sri Lanka.

The traditional physicians have used containers known as *heppu* or *karandū* (pill boxes) made from various material to be used such as gold, silver, copper and also buffalo horns to store proprietary indigenous medicine. In case of emergency, the traditional physicians used these containers for drug transportation. However it is not known which material had been primarily used to make these containers.

The aim of this study was to find out the primarily used material by conducting a survey at National Museum by examining the inventory and collection of containers. The result shows the number of pill-boxes made from horns amount to 67%, from ivory 24%, from coconut husks 3.8%, from turtle shells 3.8%, and from wooden material 1.4%. Therefore it is confirmed that the buffalo horns had been more frequently utilized for producing containers. This traditional physician was more accustomed to the use of buffalo horn containers as an instrument of self - defence (40.8%), as a walking - stick (12.2%) and as decorators (47%).

In conclusion it is evident that this material (buffalo horn) is more suitable for purposes of storing indigenous medicine.

Analysis of chemical contents of the buffalo horns is suggested. If buffalo horns are used as containers which are environmental friendly, it provides an additional income to the manufacturer.