Yeast Ecology and Taxonomy (the 50’s and 60’s)

The 1950’s and 1960’s represent the early stages of Nicolau van Uden’s scientific career. As a microbiologist with a medical background, the first studies in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s constituted exploratory incursions into the area of medical mycology and dealt with human and animal pathogens like Aspergillus, Histoplasma and Microsporum. The first ecology study was published in 1957 and concerned a survey of yeasts from bovine intestine. The research included an extensive program of yeast isolation and the description of new species. Medical mycology had a constant presence in a series of subsequent studies dealing with yeast occurrence in the gastrointestinal tract of mammals and consequently the distribution of Candida albicans and Cryptococcus neoformans was always a concern. Another major topic of this period was the ecology and taxonomy of marine and estuarine yeasts. Several new species were described from surveys carried out in the Atlantic and other oceans. A striking feature of this period is that the studies were not only descriptive but rather aimed at a more profound goal. The intention was to disclose the rules that governed yeast distribution and to contribute to a general model of yeast ecology. In parallel, ideas for future endeavors were evolving – the temperature relationships of yeasts were being studied, as well as the physiology of raffinose utilization and new methods for the identification of Candida albicans.

José Paulo Sampaio

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