

ETHNOPHARMACEUTICAL FIELDWORK IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON AND PHYTOCHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF TRADITIONAL RECIPES. NEW INSIGHTS FROM LOCAL HERBAL MEDICINAL KNOWLEDGE

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Ethnopharmaceutical research investigates the modes of preparation through which plants are transformed into medicines, and may offer a valuable arena to investigate the culturally recognized procedures and standards necessary for the wanted formulation of the end medicinal product in a given context.

In the present work, ethnopharmaceutical fieldwork was performed in the region of San Martín, Peru, by the means of semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of traditional Amazonian herbal medicine preparation. Phytochemical data based on HPLC-UV/DAD metabolite fingerprinting analyses were also acquired on selected herbal medicinal products. In accord with literature data on other traditional pharmacopoeias [1, 2], our results show how specific manufacturing steps do affect the chemistry of the finished product, indicating the relevance of the study of traditional processing methods for a more comprehensive understanding of the chemistry of herbal medicines at large.

Anthropological contributions, however, contend that a purely chemical outlook in ethnopharmaceutics does not capture the broader beliefs and practices linked to the efficacy of herbal medicines [3]. In the present study we pursue an interdisciplinary approach to ethnopharmaceutics and, by recording informants' discourses on the production process, we shed light on the underlying concepts of quality, safety, and efficacy in traditional herbal medicine, making us rethink the model of the "Active Ingredient" in other pharmacopoeias.

References

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