

FAUNISTIC RESOURCES USED AS MEDICINES BY AN AFRO-BRAZILIAN COMMUNITY FROM CHAPADA DIAMANTINA NATIONAL PARK, STATE OF BAHIA-BRAZIL.

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RESUMO: (Recursos faunísticos usados como remédios por uma comunidade Afro-brasileira do Parque Nacional da Chapada Diamantina, estado da Bahia, Brasil) - Este artigo apresenta lista de 22 animais utilizados como remédios por uma população afro-brasileira do Parque Nacional Chapada Diamantina, no Estado da Bahia, Brasil. Os dados foram obtidos mediante entrevistas abertas com abordagem êmica. Os zoterápicos são popularmente empregados em casos de derrames, dores reumáticas, surdez, distúrbios respiratórios, impotência e como antiofídicos. Animais utilizados na medicina veterinária de folk também foram registrados. É observado que algumas das espécies medicinalmente úteis encontram-se em risco de extinção e, portanto, sugere-se o manejo dessas e de outras espécies de importância para a cultura local em sistemas de fazendas tradicionais a serem desenvolvidos por especialistas nativos e cientistas.

Palavras-chave: Zooterapia; Etnozootologia; Biodiversidade; Uso; Conservação.

ABSTRACT: (Faunistic resources used as medicines by an Afro-Brazilian community from the Chapada Diamantina National Park, State of Bahia - Brazil) - This paper presents a list of 22 animals used as medicines by an Afro-Brazilian community from the Chapada Diamantina National Park, State of Bahia, Brazil. Data were obtained through open interviews and emic approach. Zootherapeutics are popularly utilized in cases of discharges, rheumatic pains, deafness, respiratory disorders, impotence, and as antidotes against snake-bites. Animals used in folk veterinary medicine have been recorded too. It is observed that some of the medicinally useful species are in danger of extinction and, therefore, it is suggested that the management of these and other species important for local culture in traditional farming systems be performed by both local people and scientific specialists.

Key words: Zootherapy; Ethnozootology; Biodiversity; Use; Conservation.

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Introduction

The use of wild products as medicine is a man's innate characteristic as well as in other animals. However, a greater number of surveys on medicinal plants have been carried out whereas studies on remedies of zoological origin were left out of account because of the bias developed by Western researchers.

Zootherapy is an ethnozoological subject which deals with the utilization of animals as medicines by folk societies. Considering Marques' zootherapeutical universality hypothesis, all human culture with a developed medical system utilizes animals as medicine (MARQUES, 1994). The use of zootherapeutics has been recorded to medical systems of different human cultures (GUDGER, 1925; WEISS, 1947; SILOW, 1983; POSEY, 1987; CONCONI & PINO, 1988; CHERRY, 1991; BEGOSSI & BRAGA, 1992; CHEN & AKRE, 1994; MARQUES, 1995). These papers suggest that zootherapy is both historical and geographically an old and widespread phenomenon.

Chapada Diamantina National Park is in the Center of Bahia. Its colonization occurred with the extraction of diamonds by Negroes' slave work. The seeking for these natural resources has lasted until recently and this anthropic action has changed the landscapes. In addition, tourism trade and enlargement of towns in a disordered way have been threatening wild species, especially those of medicinal or food interest, such as armadillos (according to local hunters).

This pioneer paper purposes to provide the properties, modes of use and scientific names of animals used in folk medicine of an Afro-Brazilian community from Chapada Diamantina. Yet, it gives an alternative for the rational use of animal species by managing them on traditional farming systems.

Study area

Remanso community is inhabited by a poor population who is political and economically marginal from the city to which it belongs (Lençóis). This community is near 12° 34'S, 41° 23'W and presents a rich biodiversity in fauna and flora. The mean annual temperature is 23,6° C and rainfall about 1.266 mm per year. The rainy weather is from November to January (CEI, 1994). The access to the community is made by tracks through the wood or by a precarious unpaved road.

This village was founded in 1920's by Manoel Pereira, 70, who is the politician and religious leader. Nearly 350 inhabitants have the subsistence agriculture for a living and maize, bean and manioc are the main crops. They complete their diet with protein coming from game, fish and by harvesting wild fruits. The leftover of agricultural production and fishery are taken to Lençóis's fair to be sold.

Houses were originally made of wood or huts with mud walls (known as "pau-a-pique") and covered with dry leaf palms, such as *Elaeis guineensis* ("dendê") and *Syagrus coronata* ("ouricuri"). For this reason, this folk community was selected to study the native knowledge and uses of animals in Chapada Diamantina National Park.

Methods

The observations reported here are based on visits performed in October 1995 and from March to May 1996 with a total of 12 days spent in Remanso community.

Data were obtained through an emic approach by noting folk knowledge and included open interviews with both men and women. Interviews regarding medicinal animals were conducted by asking informants about folk knowledge and uses of animals.

Taxonomic identification was carried out according to folk description of each specimen given by interviewees and from pictures shown to them.

Results and discussion

At least twenty-two animals are traditionally considered as medicines by their healing properties. The faunistic resources are represented by 8 reptiles, 5 mammals, 4 insects, 3 birds, 1 mollusk, 1 fish and 1 arachnid. Except hen, all species are wild. Taxonomic identification, parts used, modes of use and ailments related to them are shown in Table 1. The effectiveness of these folk medicines will not be discussed.

A total of 30 therapeutically useful raw materials was recorded. Most of these zootherapeutics come from hunting, fishing and harvesting of honey. Hence, traditional families maximize the spent time by getting food, remedies and other culturally important products (QUITANA et al, 1992;

Tabela. Folk medicinal uses of animals in Remanso community, Chapada Diamantina, Brazil.

Scientific name		Local	Part used	Disease	Receipt
Family	species				
Mollusk					
Pulmonata	<i>Pomacea lineata</i>	aruá	egg	sprain foot	massaged
Arachnid					
Buthidae	<i>Tityus</i> spp.	scorpion	whole	antidote against its own bite	put on the stung area
Insecta					
Apidae	<i>Trigona (Trigona) spinipes</i>	arapuá	honey	cough	eaten
	<i>Apis mellifera</i>		scutellum	cough	a syrup is made
	<i>Scaptotrigona</i> sp.	oropa	pollen (saburá)	...	a syrup or tea is made
	<i>Melipona</i>	jítai	honey	cough	eaten
	<i>scutellans</i>	uruçu	honey	influenza	eaten
				cough	eaten
Fish					
Auchenipteridae	<i>Parauchenipterus galeatus</i>	cumbá	spur	impotence	a tea is made with a flour from one toasted spur
Reptiles					
Crotalidae	<i>Crotalus durissus</i>	cascavel	rattle	antidote against snake bites	eaten
Boidae	<i>Boa constrictor</i>	jibóia	fat	rheumatism	passed or massaged
	<i>Epicrateres ceuchria</i>	salamanta	fat	rheumatism	passed or massaged
Teiidae	<i>Tupinambis teguixin</i>	teiú	tail	deafness	put in the ear
			leather	rheumatism	a tea is made with a flour from the toasted leather

Tabela 1 (cont.)

Family	Scientific name species	Local	Part used	Disease	Receipt
Elapidae	<i>Micrurus spp.</i>	coral	penis ("vergalho") whole	impotence	toasted and drunk with white rum
Alligatoridae	<i>Caiman cf. latirostris</i>	jacaré	teeth leather tail ("catana")	antidote against snake bites antidote against snake bites discharge impotence	put in a bottle of white rum and drunk a tea is made with a flour from the scraped teeth a tea is made with a flour from the toasted leather toasted and drunk with white rum (cachaça) a tea is made from the toasted shell drunk fried or massaged in the area
Chelidae	<i>Phrynops tuberculata</i>	cágado	shell ("casco") fat	discharge rheumatism	eaten fried a tea is made with a flour from the toasted foot a tea from the boiled featherless anu is drunk
Birds					
Phasianidae	<i>Gallus domesticus</i>	galinha	fat	influenza	
Tinamidae (?)	<i>undet.</i>	perdiz	foot	antidote against snake bites	
Cuculidae	<i>Crotophaga sp.</i>	anu	whole	asthma	
Mammals					
Felidae	<i>Felis sp.</i>	gato-do- mato	tongue	antidote against snake bites	a tea is made from the toasted tongue
Canidae	<i>Chrysocyon brachyurus</i>	guará	leather	epilepsy	a tea is made with a flour from the toasted leather
Hydrochaeridae	<i>Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris</i>	cavivara	fat	rheumatism	massaged

Tabela 1 (cont.)

Scientific name		Local	Part used	Disease	Receipt
Family	species				
Procyonidae	<i>Nasua nasua</i>	quati	bones	strengthen bones	a tea is made with the crushed bones
Erythizontidae	<i>Coendou prehensilis</i>	luis-cacheiro	penis ("binga")	impotence	a flour from the scraped penis is drunk
			spine	epilepsy	a tea is made from the toasted spines

SILVA, 1993). There is a significative use of fats (17%), being they useful for rheumatism, and influenza. Indigenous bee honeys are also important (13%).

Many animals take part in the local medicine by providing only one raw material (33%) that is utilized in the preparation of remedies prescribed for specific diseases. In contrast, it was shown the multipurpose of uses for caimans (*Caiman cf. latirostris*) since four remedies are prepared from its body. A tea made from the toasted leather ("casco") is useful for discharge. Both tail ("catana") and penis ("vergalho") are useful for impotence as they are toasted and drunk with *cachaça* (white rum), and a tea made with a flour from the scraped teeth is recommended as a antidote against snake-bites. Caiman's teeth are also put in a little cloth sack and used as a pendant to protect babies during their first dentition. According to CASCUDO (1983), this usage is a common superstition in all Latin America.

When the number of ailments is taken into account, cases of impotence, rheumatism and respiratory disturbances become the most zootherapeutically treatable diseases. In addition, the use of 5 medicaments as antidote against snake-bites seems to indicate that a high degree of ophidism exists in the area, which could be subject of interest by the public health professionals. As World Health Organization estimates, nearly 88% of people living in developing countries depend on mainly traditional medicines to their primary healthcare needs (RODRÍGUES & WEST, 1995). Most of these populations have not received any type of medical assistance and this increases their beliefs in the curative properties of plants, animals, fungi, and minerals.

Only two faunistic resources used in folk veterinary medicine were observed. Michila's leather (*Tamandua tetradactyla*) is put on warts and termites (Isoptera, Insecta) are eaten by hunterdog as flair is lost.

Caiman cf. latirostris, *Felis* sp., *Chrysocyon brachyurus* and *Coendou cf. prehensilis* are in danger of extinction, either from overhunting, destruction of their environment, or both (IBAMA, 1989). An alternative to the recovery of these and other cultural, economical worth species is becoming them in managed resources. Thus, the government would improve the lives of rural people by providing them an additional source of food and income. The endangered species or not would be rationally reared on traditional farming systems accordingly to folk and scientific techniques. Recent studies on indigenous animals domestication have shown that this new kind of farming promotes the reforestation of fragile lands and the conservation of endangered species (FITZHUGH & WILHELM, 1995).

Conclusions

For the first time, a survey on animals used in folk medicine of a traditional human population from Chapada Diamantina was systematically developed and scientific names were provided. Yet, this survey corroborates Marques' hypothesis.

Although considered as a foolish medicine, these empirical medicines should be viewed not only by ethnobiologists and anthropologists, but even pharmacologists, zoopharmacognosists and biochemists who are trained to discover new drugs from natural products.

Considering that some species of cultural value, including medicinal, are threatened or in risk of extinction, an efficacious conservation system will only be reached if we think that native human populations have interacted with nature for centuries and, therefore, their knowledge about ecology and biological diversity uses must be studied and respected.

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