



Kallawaya: Folk medicine and pharmacology in the Andes

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...the fastest growing field in anthropology is the medical or epidemiological anthropology. ...physical and biological anthropology... A notable development has been the emergence of ethnomedicine or the study of the interplay between native Latin American healing traditions and modern medical practice (Handbook of Latin American Studies. Social Sciences 1983: xviii).

Introduction

At the time of Contact (500 years B.P.) the Inca empire included what today is known as Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Northern Chile, and Northern Argentina. Quite apart from the monumental architecture, agricultural engineering, advanced technology and artistic skills, the Spanish recorded the existence of a significant medical praxis. Inca physicians were conducting successful brain surgery (trepanation) employing techniques that still amaze the contemporary medical profession. In addition they employed a sophisticated arsenal of phytotherapeutic resources and applications to combat disease which they attributed to both supernatural and non-supernatural origin.

The Inca recognized the effects of the environment on Man; a significant variable considering that although most population centers were situated between 8,000 - 12,000 feet above sea-level, there was much communication across the extreme topography and associated flora of their empire which extended from sea level to the timber line (Leonard J. N. 1967: 121).

Among the current Andean republics, ethnopharmacology maintains an important role for all socio-economic classes. For example, the drinking of "mate de coca" a tea made with the infusion of the leaves of

the coca plant, which besides its soothing taste, is deemed of therapeutic value against headache, nausea, and other ailments associated with altitude sickness. Of course, the ethnopharmacology is of greatest value to the lower socio-economic classes. This is largely due to the medical and health care infrastructure of the Andean countries which reflects the general lack of development and economic conditions so characteristic of the underdeveloped and developing nations. Western physicians are scarce and costly and the acquisition of industrialized medicine is prohibitive. Filling the gap between the need for medical care and the availability of medical resources are the folk doctors of the Andes, the "Kallawayas"—peripatetic faith healers who travel from village to village carrying at their sides their distinctive bag of medicinal herbs. Indigenous traditions are still very much alive and are even expanding their influence. Homero Palma has summaries and discussions of conceptions of disease, etiology, and therapy in the Andean region (Bennett, W. 1963: 36). There is a plethora of material on the region about how to engage in the healing process, principally due to the vitality of the pre-Columbian indigenous traditions that survive among the region's population.

Over the past fifty years medicine, the social sciences and other related disciplines have conducted multidisciplinary investigations in which much of the folk medicine and pharmacological knowledge of the Andes has been documented. As this data base grows, together with an interest in the subject deriving from current events and the need for practical applications in the areas of medicine and nutrition, it has become more important to organize and catalog this information in a manageable form. The purpose of this bibliography is to contribute to this goal. As we gain more insights into of the Incas' knowledge concerning the plants of the high mountain environments, perhaps also we shall gain other practical knowledge applicable to western society as well.

Scope arrangement

The following bibliography presents materials which have been listed sources published from 1980 to the present. It covers only those topics concerning traditional and folk medicine. The most heavily represented country in the bibliography is Peru, as the literature from and about this nation seems to be by far the most prolific. This is not surprising, since Peru was the cradle of the Inca empire, and the Peruvian national consciousness derives much of its character from its Inca forebears.

The bibliography is divided into five sections. It begins with a discussion of the most useful reference works available for the study of

folk medicine and pharmacology of the Andean region. Thereafter are four sections citing specific bibliographic references: 1) General works on the Andean region; 2) Bolivia; 3) Ecuador; and 4) Peru. Each of the four bibliographic sections is further subdivided as follows: a) Bibliographies; b) Congresses; c) Dictionaries; d) Handbooks; and e) Monographs, dissertations, and country articles.

Reference books

"The Handbook of Latin American Studies" (HLAS), continues to be among the best sources for information on works on the literature of popular culture. The Handbook publishes Social Sciences and Humanities volumes in alternate years. The volume pertaining the Social Sciences is the one most valuable for information on Folklore.

"The Hispanic American Periodicals Index" (HAPI) is as valuable as the HLAS, especially for current journal articles. Articles are indexed from the most reputable Latin American and Caribbean journals as well as North American and European journals that deal with Latin American Studies.

Lionel Loroña's "A Bibliography of Latin American Bibliographies", 1980-1984; "The Social Sciences and Humanities" and its supplements are the continuation of Arthur Gropp's "A Bibliography of Latin American Bibliographies Published in Periodicals" (1975) and to Haydee Piedracueva's "A Bibliography of Latin American Bibliographies", 1975-1979: "Social Sciences and Humanities" (see Bibliography). The series cites articles as well as monographs. Its contents are drawn from more than 430 important serials which are monitored by members of the "Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials" (SALALM). They are arranged by broad subject category which is in turn subdivided by geographic area.

"The University of Texas Latin American Collection Catalog" with its first, second, third, and fourth supplements is a very good source of information. This catalog is continued by G. K. Hall's "Bibliographic Guide to Latin American Studies" which is published annually.

"The Handbook of South American Indians" (vols. 2 and 5) deals with the Andean Civilizations. It is a good general source for information concerning religion, magic, witchcraft, medicine, supernatural beings, curing, healing, and medical practitioners (*curanderos*; i.e. *qolawayu*, *qolasiri*, *kallawayas*, and shamans). The Handbook provides an essential bibliography for each topic covered to facilitate the further study of these subjects.

The national bibliographies of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru are other important sources for publications of national authors and popular culture. "Bio-bibliografía boliviana" and its predecessor "Bibliografía

boliviana", although not official national bibliographies, are a useful source for publications of Bolivian authors. Additionally, this unique bibliography occasionally includes international published works concerning the country.

The "Bibliografía ecuatoriana", with its annual cumulation "Anuario bibliográfico ecuatoriano", is published by the Biblioteca of the Universidad Central del Ecuador. It includes periodical publications as well as monographs, pamphlets, etc. Because of its delayed publication schedule, it will not present the most up-to-date information. The "Diccionario del folklore ecuatoriano" contains important information on the folklore of the country, especially on "folklore mágico," which is subdivided "no medicinal" and "medicinal." It contains information on witchcraft, magia médica, and magia médica vegetal.

Peru's "Bibliografía nacional" continues the "Anuario bibliográfico peruano". Included are references on religion, ethnology, folklore, and periodical publications for each topic. The "Enciclopedia ilustrada del Perú" -although it presents information in a dictionary format (short but informational)- includes entries related to topics such as archaeology, anthropology, folklore, ethnobotany, etc. It also contains Quechua terminology and its usage presented in a readily accessible information form and entries on plants, both native and those brought to the region, which today are an integral part of Peruvian daily life. In addition, it provides descriptions of the usage of popular pharmacopeia; i.e., "the smoke of its [eucalyptus] leaves is good in the treatment of asthma, and its fresh leaves to be used in infusion. Also, fresh leaves under the pillow are good to alleviate insomnia and diabetes." (author's translation). The "Diccionario folklórico del Perú", treats the cultural life and language inherent to Peru and also provides information on doctors and medicines. The "Diccionario de medicina peruana" is an excellent treatise on the origins of medicine in Peru, containing a wealth of names, places, etc., and other information of value for any scholarly research.

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Conclusion

The Andes truly has a rich legacy of a medicinal pharmacology derived from the unique flora of its environment. Today we have revived interest in such pharmacology and folk medicine on several different levels. We see the scientific search for plants with specific medicinal qualities and the search for better nutrition in the world. But this interest is not limited to the scientists, it is an interest shared by many lay people in the back-to-nature movement. Thus, a transfer of cultural knowledge from the people of the Andes to the people of more industrially advanced societies is occurring. Consequently, in the future, we expect this body of knowledge to continue to grow as more works are published. It is the task of bibliographers to organize, facilitate, and contribute to this endeavor, and this bibliography is a small step in that direction.

Abstract

Five hundred years ago, the royal Inca surgeons were already performing brain surgery in Ancient Peru with techniques that still amaze contemporary medical doctors. The learned men of the Inca empire, which included the greater part of Southern Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Northern Chile, and Northern Argentina, had developed many advanced medical techniques and an arsenal of methods and herbal medicines to cure diseases and ward off malevolent spirits.

More recently, doctors, anthropologists, sociologists and others have undertaken a collective effort to study, document, and record much of the rich legacy of folk medicine and pharmacology of the Andes. As this body of knowledge grows, together with an interest in the subject derived from current events and the need for practical applications in the areas of medicine and nutrition, it has become more important to organize and catalog this useful information. The purpose of this bibliography is to contribute to this goal. As we gain more knowledge of the Incas' wisdom concerning the plants of the high mountain environment, perhaps also we shall gain other practical knowledge applicable to western society.

Resumen

Desde hace más de quinientos años, los cirujanos del Inca en el antiguo Perú, conocían las técnicas para la trepanación del cerebro las mismas que aún hoy maravillan a la ciencia médica. Los Kallawayas (médicos) del vasto Imperio Incaico que comprendía la parte sur de Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia, Norte de Argentina y Chile desarrollaron la medicina con un arsenal de métodos y hierbas medicinales para curar las enfermedades así como también para desbaratar a los espíritus malignos.

Durante los últimos cincuenta años, doctores, antropólogos y sociólogos, así como también otros investigadores en un esfuerzo colectivo, han estudiado, documentado, y publicado para la posteridad, el rico legado de la medicina folclórica y farmacología de los Andes.

Este incremento en el conocimiento de la medicina popular, deriva de la necesidad que existe hoy en día de encontrar aplicaciones prácticas a ésta ciencia, en el campo de la medicina moderna y la nutrición. Esta importancia muestra la necesidad de organizar y catalogar estas fuentes de información. El propósito de esta bibliografía es el de contribuir a la recuperación de los trabajos escritos sobre la materia. Conforme se vaya descubriendo la especial sabiduría que los Kallawayas tienen acerca de las plantas del medio ambiente andino, talvez obtengamos un valioso conocimiento de su uso práctico y de su aplicabilidad a nuestro diario vivir.

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