Aborigines

- First off, I am no expert on the aboriginal people of Australia.
- Australia is the size of mainland America.
- And like America, there are many different climates, peoples, cultures, traditions, and languages.
- It can be difficult to talk about “the Aboriginal people” or their traditions because they are so diverse.

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- If you are an acupuncturist, this podcast as well as others, are approved for CAB CEUs and NCCAOM PDAs at a reasonable cost.
- I have a new book coming out called *Dragons in the Medicine Cabinet, Chinese Herbal Medicines Everyone Should Have at Home*.
  - If you are interested in getting information, please send me an email at DrGreg@SperbsHerbs.com.
Dreamtime

- One of the first things I like to do when learning about a new culture is to understand their basic philosophy and/or religion
  - This helps establish how they view the world and what is important in that world and possibly in any after “places”
- With all their differences, and they have different origin stories, they do seem to have the “Dreamtime” in common

Dreamtime

- Dreamtime is a “time” before current history where “ancestral beings (usually half-human, half-animal) wandered over the country creating all the features on the landscape and setting up the Law” (Latz, 1995, p. 16)
- This sets up a lot of what is important: the land, its features, the importance of harmony and caring for the land, and the Laws to support these

Australia

- From this Dreamtime, we have the landscape as it is: it is a harsh environment
  - Australia has more desert than any other continent in the world
  - 90% of Australia’s population lives within 10-20 miles of the coast
- The Australian Aborigines have lived on this harsh land and has one of the longest standing cultures on the planet, with estimates it is over 40,000 years old
- And they have a deep, deep connection with the land
Aboriginals

- There is a wonderful, sobering, harsh, anger-inducing book about the history of the Aborigines in the Northern Territory and their interactions with the Balanda, or non-Aboriginals, called Why Warriors Lie Down and Die (Trudgen, 2000)
- In it there is a passage describing the author walking with the Aborigines (pp.114-5)

Get Behind, Brother

- After arriving in “Arnhem Land” in 1973, the author was traveling by barge, then 25 miles on land with a tractor pulling a trailer, which broke down
- They began walking...
- “As we filed out across the tidal plain, heading for the woodland ahead, I joined the leader up front like a ‘good Balanda’. We were following the two tracks in the grass made by the vehicles in their journey out. The people were on one track behind the leader and I was on the other, beside the leader.

Get Behind, Brother

- We walked for a while then my companion said, ‘Brother, walk behind me here.’ Not knowing what he had in mind, I did as I was told for a while; but then I rejoined him, walking on the parallel track. Again he beckoned me to walk behind. This made me very uncomfortable. I could hear him say in Yolnu Matha, ‘Walk behind me’, but I could not understand the other things he said which presumably explained the reason for this instruction. Maybe it’s because he’s the boss and doesn’t want anyone else up front with him, I thought. After a kilometre or so my cultural instincts overtook me and I moved up beside him again.
Get Behind, Brother

• This time he stopped. The whole line of people came to standstill as he motioned me back behind him. I was starting to feel a bit stupid. *What is going on in this guy’s head?,* I asked myself.

• Just then I found out. We had only gone another 30 metres or so when a large snake came out of the middle of the track and headed for cover, travelling right across the path I had just been walking on…After the group calmed down and they were sure the bapi had gone for cover, we continued on.

Get Behind, Brother

• I was a bit stunned. *So that’s what he was trying to tell me*, I thought soberly. If I had still been on that track, the snake would have wrapped around my legs. He was not only concerned for me; he was just as concerned for himself because I could have disturbed the snake and frightened it into his legs.

Get Behind, Brother

• I learnt three things that day: that the Yolnu Matha word for snake was bapi, that I should always trust the people while in their environment, and that Yolnu as a group of people have knowledge Balanda don’t have.”
Melaleuca cajuputi

- Family: Myrtaceae (myrtles)
- Medicinal part: leaves
- Other Names: Paperbark, Rangan, Mamarra, Jikara, Badarr, Naambarra, Thiyel, cajuput, cajeput, cajaput, white samet, Delek air, Gelam, Nipis Kulit, Pokok, Kajeputbaum, swamp tea tree
- First described in the west in 1809 by Thomas Powell in *Pharmacopoeia of the Royal College of Physicians of London*

Melaleuca cajuputi

- Melaleuca cajuputi is a tree found in the Northern Territories, Queensland, and Western Australia and Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam, generally in coastal plains or seasonal swamps
  - Several of these locations have been planted including in Java and Malaysia

Melaleuca cajuputi

- There are many species of Melaleuca found throughout Australia and generally they have similar uses
- Lassak & McCarthy (1990, p. 37) state there are many synonymous species to cajuputi including saligna, minor, trinervis, lancifolia, leucadendron and others
- Melaleuca quinquenervia is also a synonym
Indications

• In Aboriginal medicine, it is used to treat congestion and pain associated with respiratory infections
• It is also used to treat pain, burns, and dyspepsia in addition to colds and influenza

Preparations

• The Aborigines have three major preparations
• Inhalation is achieved by crushing a few young leaves by hand and the vapor is inhaled to help nasal and bronchial congestion

Preparations

• A wash is created by crushing a large handful of leaves and boiling them in water
  – The liquid and leaves are rubbed into the chest or aching joints
  – A small amount of the liquid can be sipped
  – The steam produced during boiling can be inhaled
  – These methods are used as a rubefacient, decongestant, and expectorant to treat bronchitis, sinusitis, and colds
• This wash can also be applied as eardrops to treat an earache
Preparations
- In other parts of the world it is used internally for stomach cramps, colic, and asthma, as an ointment or liniment externally for neuralgia and rheumatism, for toothaches and earaches, and treating tumors
- The oil is also used as an insect repellent, treating worms, and infections of the genitourinary system
- It is also a flavoring in cooking, and a fragrance in soaps, cosmetics, detergents, and perfumes

Preparations
- It is easily available on Amazon and other sources as an essential oil to treat cuts, scrapes, bug bites, and as an antiseptic
- It is also found in various lotions, detergents, and other products including toothpaste

Chinese Medical Actions
- There does not appear to be any direct translation of cajuput to Chinese medicine
- The closest was translating the essential oil into Chinese medicine and one company (Snow Lotus, n.d.) describes it as having the function of tonifying qi, raising yang qi, and warming the interior and strengthening the spirit
Chinese Medical Actions
• But that is the essential oil
• From its traditional uses we can get some idea of how it works in Chinese medicine
• Since it works on colds and respiratory infections it probably releases the exterior and is acrid and definitely aromatic
• Since it is rubefacient, reducing skin redness, we can assume it is cooling in nature
• And since it relieves pain and congestion, it is probably damp draining and qi and possibly blood moving

Chinese Medical Actions
• That leaves a few questions:
• Since it treats respiratory conditions, does it tonify lung qi? Or is it just exterior relieving?
• Since it is a decongestant and expectorant does it transform phlegm? Given its aromatic nature, this is probably likely
• Since it appears to be antibacterial/antiviral, does it clear toxic heat?
• Probable summary: Acrid, aromatic, cool, enters the lung, liver? (due to qi moving), drains and transforms damp/phlegm heat, regulates qi, and releases the exterior

Comparisons
• Similar to tea tree oil which is probably stronger in its antimicrobial properties
  – Some of the synonymous Melaleucas are actually used in the production of tea tree oil, so it is possible, depending on where it is grown and processed, some tea tree oils are actually cajuput
The Science

- It appears this plant has strong antioxidant and antibacterial activity (Al-Abd, et al., 2015)
- It has been tested for anti-acne and anti-tumor activity though the results were not substantial
- There needs to be a lot more research done
- There were some compounds in the essential oil that may help depression and anxiety (Noor, et al., 2020)

Contents

- The dominant component in the essential oil is 1,8-cineole (Silva, et al., 2007)
  - There are lots of other components in the essential oil both minor and trace
- There appears to be a good amount of saponins
- There are large amounts of calcium in the leaves

Drug-Herb Interactions

- There was no obvious research looking at potential drug-herb interactions in a Google Scholar search
Concerns

- Noor, et al. (2020), showed low toxicity of the essential oil
- There was little other research into the safety and toxicity of cajeput

Next Episode

- Nourish the Yin Category of herbs
- A very important category of herbs, especially for women’s issues, the Nourish the Yin herbs are used extensively in Chinese formulas. Please jin us as we explore these useful herbs and compare them to each other!

Thank You

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- You can always get in touch with me at DrGreg@SperbsHerbs.com or at our website, www.sperbsherbs.com
Bibliography

Aboriginal Communities of the Northern Territory. (2016). Traditional Aboriginal Medicines in the Northern Territory of Australia. Darwin, NT, Australia: Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.


