

Medicinal plants used by various ethnic groups in Sarawak

B.A. Fasihuddin and Laily B. Din

Faculty of Resource Science & Technology, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak

Abstract. Fifty medicinal plants used by various ethnic groups in Sarawak were collected and their uses have been recorded. This report is part of an on-going ethnobotanical survey carried out in Borneo.

Abstrak. Lima puluh tumbuhan ubatan yang digunakan oleh berbagai suku kaum di Sarawak telah dikutip dan kegunaannya direkodkan. Laporan ini adalah sebahagian daripada survei etnobotani yang dijalankan di Borneo.

Introduction

The practice of traditional medicine is universal, especially in rural areas where plants are used to treat disease. In Sarawak, some of the practices and the use of medicinal plants have been reported [1-4]. More extensive surveys need to be conducted to document the knowledge of indigenous people of Sarawak on medicinal plants as this knowledge is fast disappearing owing to rapid changes in their life styles. This paper attempts to provide additional information on the medicinal plants used by various ethnic groups of Sarawak.

Experimental

The information on medicinal plants used was obtained through field interviews. In the surveys, two or more practitioners were interviewed from each village. The plants mentioned by the practitioners were collected for taxonomic identification and laboratory analyses. The local names of the plants, uses and method of preparation were recorded.

Comment

The various ethnic groups in Sarawak still have practitioners who use plants, animals, or minerals to cure certain ailments. They are usually elderly men or women who are respected and possess extensive knowledge on traditional

medicine. Parts of plant used for remedy include roots, leaves, bark, flowers and fruits. Normally a particular part of a plant is used to treat a particular disease or disorder, though sometimes mixture of several plant parts from the same plant or different plants are being used. The common ailments suffered by the people in various communities are skin diseases, bleeding and cuts, fever and headaches, muscular aches and swelling, stomach ache, diarrhoea, malaria and post parturition problems of women. Plants belonging to the family of Annonaceae, Compositae, Euphorbiaceae, Lauraceae, Leguminosae, Moraceae, Rubiaceae, Simaroubaceae, Solanaceae, Verbenaceae and Zingiberaceae are being widely used for treating these ailments. Currently, we are still conducting interviews and collecting medicinal plants used by various ethnic groups to make sure the valuable knowledge is well documented.

Table 1 summarises the medicinal plants used by various ethnic groups in Sarawak. Our preliminary findings showed that practitioners from various ethnic groups use the same plants for treating the same ailment.

As the indigenous knowledge on the use of medicinal plants to treat diseases can lead to the discovery of new drugs, the herbs reported here could be studied chemically and pharmacologically for their active constituents.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank University Malaysia Sarawak for the Research Grant No. 1/94 for the support of this study.

References

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Table 1. Medicinal plants used by various ethnic groups in Sarawak

Family/Species	Vernacular name	Medicinal uses	Parts used and preparation
Acanthaceae			
<i>Acanthus ebracteatus</i>	Geriga (Melanau) Jeruju (Malay)	Skin diseases	Fruits pounded and applied as paste
<i>Andrographis paniculata</i>	Akar cerita (Malay) Hempedu bumi (Kadayan)	Hypertension, diabetes, tonic for heart problems	Leaves boiled and taken as tea
<i>Gendarussa vulgaris</i>	Daun rusa (Malay)	Bone fractures, sprains, backaches	Leaves pounded and applied as paste
<i>Jacobinia carnea</i>	Jarum Dayak (Malay)	Stomachache	Leaves pounded with cumin and applied on abdomen
Annonaceae			
<i>Fissistigma latifolia</i>	Akar rarak (Iban)	Fever	Stems crushed, boiled and taken as a tea
<i>Goniothalamus dolichocarpus</i>	Bihidieng (Kayan)	Stomachache, diarrhoea	Young leaves soaked in hot water and taken as tea
<i>G. tapis</i>	Kulit serbah (Malay) Lukai (Iban)	Stomachache	Roots boiled for drinking
<i>G. velutinus</i>	Hujan panas (Kadayan) Lakum (Kadayan)	Stomachache from food poisoning	Roots burned (charred) and mixed with hot water
Blechnaceae			
<i>Ageratum conyzoides</i>	Serak semalam (Malay) Souking (Bidayuh) Susuh (Bidayuh)	Cuts or wounds	Fresh leaves pounded and applied as paste
<i>Blumea balsamifera</i>		Fever and dizziness	Leaves boiled for tea
<i>Vernonia arborea</i>	Entepong (Iban)	Cuts and wounds	Leaves pounded and applied as paste
<i>Wedelia biflora</i>	Daun panas (Melanau)	Postparturition aids for mothers Cuts and wounds Sprains and swollen joints	Leaves boiled for bathing Leaves pounded and applied as paste Leaves pounded and applied as poultice
Convolvulaceae			
<i>Ipomea aquatica</i>	Kat minlet (Bidayug)	Cut and wounds	Leaves pounded and applied as paste
Cyperaceae			
<i>Mapania cuspidata</i>	Daun sangkor (Iban)	Poisonous caterpillar stings	Leaves or roots burned, mixed with coconut oil
<i>Mapania peitoata</i>	Penawar Fatimah (Kadayan)	Poison antidote	Decoction of roots used as a drink

Euphorbiaceae				
<i>Macaranga triloba</i>	Sedaman (Kadayan)	Skin itches	Young leaves pounded and applied as paste	
<i>Glochidion littorale</i>	Tutum (Melanau)	Rashes and itchy skin	Leaves, lime and garlic, crushed and applied as paste	
<i>Phyllanthus urinaria</i>	Ranimin buah (Malay)	Diarrhoea	Whole plants boiled for tea	
		Wounds	Plants crushed and applied as paste	
Labiata				
<i>Coleus scutellarioides</i>	Ati-ati (Malay)	Fever	Leaves boiled for bathing	
<i>Hyptis capitata</i>	Meradak (Bidayuh)	Skin diseases	Fruits burned, mixed with coconut oil to a paste	
<i>Ocimum sanctum</i>	Daun ampas (Malay)	Coughs	Leaves boiled and taken as tea	
Lauraceae				
<i>Beilschmeidia endiandraefolia</i>	Medang piawas (Bidayuh)	Rheumatism	Young leaves in hot water or boiled for drinking	
<i>Cinnamomum iners</i>	Abau (Bidayuh)	Tonic, coughs, asthma, lumbago	Roots boiled and taken as tea	
	Medang tuja (Iban, Malay)			
	Lawang (Bidayuh)			
	Taang (Bidayuh)	Tonic	Roots boiled for drinking	
	Madang Enkala			
Leguminosae				
<i>Bauhinia kockiana</i>	Akar ketong (Kenyah)	Skin diseases	Roots boiled for bathing	
<i>Cassia alata</i>	Serugsm (Iban)	Ringworm	Leaves pounded and applied as paste	
	Gelenggang (Malay)			
<i>Desmodium heterophyllum</i>	Kabot (Bidayuh)	Jaundice, sore throat and fever	Roots boiled for drinking	
<i>Saraca deckubata</i>	Babai (Iban)	Diarrhoea	Roots or stem-bark boiled for drinking	
Menispermaceae				
<i>Fibraea tinctoria</i>	Akar badi (Malay, Iban)	Food poisoning	Roots boiled for drinking	
<i>Tinomiscium petiolare</i>	Lengkunis (Kadayan)	Hypertension	Root decoction and as a drink	
Moraceae				
<i>Artocarpus odoratissimus</i>	Lumuk (Iban)	Diarrhoea	Roots boiled for drinking	
	Terap (Malay)			
<i>Ficus crassiramea</i>	Kara kajang (Iban)	Snake bites	Leaves pounded and applied as paste	
<i>F. variegata</i>	Nyanwey (Kenyah)	Dysentery	Young leaves boiled for drinking	

Myrtaceae			
<i>Eugenia paradisa</i>	Ubah (Iban)	Diarrhoea	Leaves boiled for drinking
<i>E. rugosa</i>	Sinar (Bidayuh)	Headaches	Young leaves crushed and applied on forehead
<i>E. affkinabalensis</i>	Au Hanafiah (Kadayan)	Postparturition aids and tonics	Decoction of roots for drinks
Piperaceae			
<i>Piper arborescens</i>	Sireh bubut (Iban)	Rheumatism	Whole plant boiled for drinking
<i>P. caninum</i>	Erok sireh (Malay) Setebel (Iban)	Postparturition aids	Whole plant boiled for drinking
Polygalaceae			
<i>Salomonina cantoniensis</i>	Sarah (Bidayuh) Langer Tikus (Iban)	General malaise	Roots boiled for drinking and bathing
Rubiaceae			
<i>Hedyotis capitellata</i>	Akar saungkaungkat (Iban)	Sprains	Leaves warmed over fire and applied on sprain
<i>H. costata</i>	Kayu kesing (Iban)	Painful urination from gall stones	Whole plant boiled for drinking
<i>H. verticillata</i>	Duk spatok (Bidayuh)	Antidote for snake bites, insect stings	Leaves boiled for drinking
<i>Lucinea membranacea</i>	Petagar temu urat (Kadayan)	Rheumatism	Decoction of roots for drinking
<i>Nauclea affsubdita</i>	Kedembah (Iban)	Stomachache	Roots boiled for drinking
<i>Timonius lczsianthoides</i>	Batut (Bidayuh)	Skin diseases	Young leaves pounded and applied as paste
Schizaeaceae			
<i>Lygodium sancdens</i>	Remat (Than)	Diarrhoea	Plant boiled for drinking
Simaroubaceae			
<i>Brucea javanica</i>	Pedada (Malay)	Diarrhoea and malaria	Mature fruit taken orally
<i>Quassia borneensis</i>	Medang Pahit (Than) Kayu pahit (Malay)	Malaria, diabetes, hypertension	Roots boiled for drinking
Zingiberaceae			
<i>Curcuma zedoaria</i>	Entemu kuning (Malay)	Stomachache	Tuber with cumin, garlic, boiled for drinking