



Tropentag, September 16-18, 2015, Berlin, Germany

“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

Food and Herbal Remedies Consumed in Manila, The Philippines

ISABEL MADALENO

Portuguese Tropical Research Institute, Portugal

Abstract

The Philippine islands are extremely vulnerable to hurricanes. It is also a country that possesses a high prevalence of poverty and frequent socio-political stresses. Food security and health care are major concerns in Manila, where most households rely on herbal medicines and informal fruit and vegetable trade to solve their health and nutrition needs. Current contribution presents the results of a survey conducted by the Portuguese Tropical Institute in early 2015. The main objective of this research is to compile the species of fruits, staples and medicinal plants consumed in Manila and to compare them with the plants mentioned in early Spanish colonisation manuscripts. The survey totaled fifty semi-structured interviews to three categories of informants, following the format of previous investigations on the same issue, elsewhere in Asia and in Latin America. Results show that there is predominance in consumption of Asian species, particularly in herbal medicine. Due to the importance of the Chinese community, in terms of wealth, trade, and number, Chinese medicinal flora is especially sought. In fact, they settled on these islands long before the Portuguese Magellan officially discovered those (1521) at the service of the Spanish kingdom. Nevertheless, there is still preference for a few popular Old World species introduced by the Europeans, such as grapes (*Vitis vinifera*), mint (yerba buena as in Spain), or tusilago (*Tussilago farfara*), and native American plants as yacón (*Polymnia sonchifolia*), guava, guayabano (*Annona muricata*), and corn, which trade route was initiated from New Spain (Mexico) through the Pacific in the sixteenth century. Hope is to contribute to the study of medicinal flora in the Philippines, which has frequently dual consumption as food.

Keywords: American, Asian, European, flora, food, medicine, Philippines