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# Ethnobotany in Albania - a transition from folk knowledge to cultural popular studies (1946-1991)

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**ABSTRACT**

Albania can be considered a country rich in biocultural diversity as a reflection of its high biologic diversity alternated with a vibrant multicultural history This paper is a historical review of ethnobotanical data on wild and cultivated plants, including the uses and values of medicinal plants, collected through a bibliographic search of various sources written and published in the second phase of ethnobiology (1950-1991) (corresponding to the period of the socialist state). The second and the third phase (1950-1970; 1971-1991), namely as "the autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism"was developed during the period of communism in the history of Albania and corresponds to the emic and systemic phase. The studies of this period were dominated by the studies of traditional culture and folklore, ethnic culture, popular culture, which is often translated into English as "popular culture studies", taken to mean the totality of ideas, perspectives, attitudes, images, and social organization. This review aims to explore how ethnobotanical knowledge was collected, created, and used during the socialist period, not intending to be an exhaustive review of all the materials on this subject.

**Keywords:** Historical Ethnobotany; Folk Beliefs; Medicinal Plants; Traditional Knowledge; Albanian Plant Names.

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## SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This paper is a historical review of ethnobotanical notes about wild and cultivated plants, including medicinal plants' use and values, collected through the review of texts spanning a period from 1950 to 1991 and partly after the 2000s, following three proposed phases of the development of ethnobiology in Albania. This review presents an important and valuable historical source on how ethnobotanical cultural knowledge was collected, created, and used in Albania, or the "*autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism"* during the communist period in Albania's history. This review can contribute to the understanding of the state of ethnobotany in Albania, subject to the Marxist doctrine of historical and dialectical materialism, where the people were the subject producers of culture or "mass culture" and the importance of "ethnos" in the scientific study of plant knowledge and practices.

## INTRODUCTION

The history of ethnobiology is related to the development of theories and methodologies in other scientific disciplines, which served to support the holistic approach of ethnobiological studies (Bajrami et al. 2024). According to Clement (1998), the history of ethnobiology comprises three phases or periods: pre-classic, classic, and post-classic. The first phase (1860-1899) coincides with the birth of the scientific disciplines of ethnobotany and ethnozoology; during the second phase (1950-1980) an emic approach was adopted from anthropology and cognitive psychology; the third phase (1981-1992) was focused on the importance of the conservation of natural resources (Clement 1998). Additionally, Hunn (2007) recognized four phases: pre-classic (until the 1950s); cognitive ethnobiology (1950 –1970); ethnoecology (1970 - 1980), and the rights of indigenous people (indigenous ethnobiology (1990- to this day). Consequently, a fifth phase was proposed, which is known as conservation ethnobiology (Wyndham et al. 2011). In this phase, the importance of ethnobiological studies in the face of climate change and the need to preserve cultural biodiversity took priority (Bajrami et al. 2024; Hidayati et al. 2015; Wolverton 2013; Wyndham et al. 2011). Additionally, in line with theoretical developments in evolutionary theory (The Extended Evolutionary Synthesis) and the theory of Cultural Evolution (CE) during the 1980s, an evolutionary approach permeated ethnobiology. In short, researchers were interested in the factors that influenced cultural evolution and the adaptive nature of culture in humans (Bajrami and Qirjo 2019; Bajrami et al. 2019). Therefore, a sixth phase of ethnobiology was proposed, namely, evolutionary ethnobiology (Albuquerque and Medeiros 2013; Albuquerque and Ferreira Junior 2017; Albuquerque et al. 2022; Santoro et al. 2018). Furthermore, some authors proposed a need for another sixth phase of ethnobiology, in which a call for anti-oppressive ethnobiology due to colonialism and postcolonialism legacy is essential to challenge inherited practices and worldviews embedded in several scales, at personal and institutional levels (McAlvay et al. 2021; Soldati and Almada 2024).

Albania can be considered a country rich in biocultural diversity, with an index value of 0.432 (Damo et al. 2012). Positioned in the Mediterranean and the Balkan peninsula, although relatively small, Albania is characterized by diverse ecosystems and habitats, with two distinct biogeographical regions, namely, Mediterranean and Alpine, and includes ca. 3650 plant taxa and ca. 1300 animal taxa (Vangjeli 2021). Albanian history is related to the intertwining of the most powerful empires in world history, such as the Roman and Ottoman Empires (Frashëri 1964; Fischer and Schmidt 2022). Additionally, Albania is home to various religious communities, including Muslims, Christians (Orthodox and Catholic), the Bektashi Order, and 9 official ethnic minorities, such as Greeks, Vlachs, Egyptians, Romani, etc. Characterized historically by religious tolerance and at some point, during the communist regime, declared the world's first "atheist state" beginning in 1967, Albania's cultural diversity in terms of languages, beliefs and, customs are an aggregation of various variables and components related to history and geographical trajectories intersections and also the intricate interrelationships between people, culture and biodiversity. For these reasons, the history of ethnobiology in Albania has specific characteristics.

In the two latest studies (Bajrami 2023; Bajrami et al. 2024), the authors outlined four phases of the development of ethnobiology in Albania. The first phase spans from the late 18th century (1796) to the early decades of the 20th century (1940); the historic period (1945-1991) includes two phases, emic (1950-1971) and systemic (1971-1990). During this period, the "autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism" was developed. Lastly, the fourth phase, or the "post-communist ethnobiology" (after the 2000s), is marked by a dynamic collaboration between local and foreign researchers.

The first phase of studies in ethnobiology in Albania was rooted in the numerous observations of travelers, explorers, missionaries, naturalists, anthropologists, botanists, etc., primarily focusing on the identification and use of plants (Saraçi and Damo 2021a). This phase corresponds to Ambrosio's first three phases (Ambrosio 2014) (Table 1), in which most ethnobiological knowledge was transmitted orally, while written sources were limited, sporadic, and nonexistent in Albanian. This phase also mirrors the cultural influence of the Ottoman Empire: Albania was the last country to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire, from its conquest in the late 14th century to the early twentieth century independence (Pacukaj 2013). The medical hierarchy during the Ottoman Empire comprised the position of *cerrahs* (surgeons) and Albanian *cerrahs* (in Alb. xherahët) specialized in one or several body organs or medical techniques and used several plants during their work (Minga 2009; Bajrami 2023). The early ethnobotanical knowledge is included in historical, geographical, anthropological, ethnographic, botanical texts, etc., of this period, mostly serving as data about the place, culture, and language and later as valuable notes in the works by Cozzi (1909, 1914), Durham (1909, 1928), Doda and Nopçë's manuscript from 1914 (2007), and Zojzi's articles (1937a,b). Durham, with her studies on the tradition of medicinal plant uses, can be considered

a pioneer of ethnobotanical studies in Albania (Saraçi and Damo 2021a). Before this period, publications about Albania were scarce, including ethnobotanical notes. However, it is important to notice that in some of the earliest Albanian dictionaries (Bardhi 1635; Da Lecce 1702), there are folk names of plants that are of interest to ethnobotany and ethnolinguistics. An unpublished and intriguing material from this period is a botanical dictionary by Mjeda, compiled in the years 1901-1903, which contains the Albanian names of 312 plants. One hundred and twenty of the names of wild plants were presented for the first time as collected from the people (Quku 1984). It is important to notice that this phase corresponds with the three first phases proposed by Hunn (2007) and Ambrosio (2014) (Table 1) and was characterized by a descriptive approach and discovery of useful plants in Albanian culture.

The second and third phases (1950-1970; 1971-1991) were developed during the communist era in Albania's history, namely the "autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism" which corresponds with the emic and systemic phase (Bajrami et al. 2024). Despite improvements in sanitation, healthcare, and the building of hospitals, most of the population counted on traditional medicine and traditional healers (Bajrami 2023). During this phase, abundant empirical evidence of Albanian tradition and people's culture from a historical perspective, especially on material culture (among them ethnobiological knowledge and practices), social organization, or mythology and beliefs, was collected (Abazi and Doja 2016), and numerous articles and books were published. Such studies have been dominated by studies of traditional culture and folklore, or ethnic culture, folk culture, or better people's culture, to comply both with socialist era terminology, which is often rendered in English as "studies of popular culture", taken to mean the totality of ideas, perspectives, attitudes, images and other phenomena that are deemed to be preferred within the mainstream of Albanian culture (Abazi and Doja 2016).

Finally, in the fourth phase, or the post-communist ethnobiology (after the 2000s), collaboration efforts between Albanian researchers and foreigners were important in documenting traditional ecological knowledge, and several ethnobiological studies were conducted, in line with the conservation ethnobiology approach (Bajrami et al. 2024). In this article, we will focus on the "autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism" in Albania. We aim to explore how ethnobotanical cultural knowledge was collected, created, and used during the socialist period.

**Bång 1.** Major phases in the history of Ethnobiology according to different authors.

| Phase | Clement (1998) | Hunn (2007) | D'Ambrosio (2014) | McAlvay et al. (2021) | Bajrami et al. (2024) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | Pre-classical | Pre-classical (until the 1950s); | Pre-colonial. Before 15th century | Utilitarianism | **I. Pre- classical** |
| II | Pre-classical | First steps | Colonial. 15th to late 19th centuries | Cognitive Ethnobiology 20th century | (Late the 17th century-1940), The collection and documentation of folk names of plants and some traditional knowledge about their use |
| III | Economic usages (1860-1899) Recollection of additional information (1900-1931) First syntheses (1932-1953) | First steps | Formative Late 19th century to 1940s | Ethnoecology 20th century | |
| IV | Emic knowledge (1954-1968) Classification (1969-1980) | Cognitive ethnobiology (1950 – 1970); | Emic (classical) 1950's to mid. 1970's | Indigenous Ethnobiology. The late 20th and early 21centuries | **II. Emic** (1950-1970) Special importance to ethnocultural, discovering, preserving, documenting, evaluation of traditions, protection, and development study of folk medicine, considered as a merit of communist ideology |
| V | Associations (1981- 1992) | Indigenous rights (indigenous ethnobiology) (1970 - 1980); | Systemic classical Late 1970s to 1991 | Interdisciplinarity in an Era of Rapid Environmental Change 21centuries | **III. Systemic** (1971-1990) A turning point from the empirical use of plants by the people towards the scientific study of the values of their use, but as "mass studies" under the politic leadership. |
| VI | Resources and their management (1993 onwards) | Ethnoecology (1990 onwards) | Contemporary (post-classical) 1992 to present | Decolonizing ethnobiology | **IV. Post-communist** ethnobiology |

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This article is a review of ethnobotanical studies carried out in Albania in the Communist (1946-1990) and partly post-Communist (1991-currently) periods, aiming to present some data on plant use and to demonstrate how socioeconomic and political changes have shaped the dynamics of plant use studies.

For the review presented in this paper, we conducted a bibliographic search on different written sources in the second phase of ethnobiology (1950 - 1991) (which corresponds to the socialist state period) and "post-communist ethnobiology" (after the 2000s), to find materials that have ethnobiological (ethnobotanical) knowledge. This article is based on a review of 80 different types of texts (such as journal papers, reports, and books), from 36 authors (referring to the first author) that include, ethnobotanists, naturalists, anthropologists, botanists, pharmacists, physicians, veterinarians, linguists, agronomists, biologists, etc.

For the period from 1950 to 1970, which corresponds to the emic period, 14 texts from 9 authors were examined, while for the systemic period (1971-1991), 22 texts from 11 authors were considered. For the post-communist ethnobiology period (after the 2000s), 42 papers from 16 authors are mentioned. To complete the full panorama of the development of ethnobotany in Albania, several important works of the first phase (10 texts by 7 authors) have been mentioned.

The reviewed texts (1950-1990) are non-digital hard copies, and no selection criteria were applied. These texts were found in university libraries and depositories, whether public or private collections. The ethnobotanical material of the post-communist phase is selected from digital hard-copy and electronic sources.

Various publications of the autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism period have been reviewed since the first issue of the Bulletin of the Institute of Sciences in 1947 and onwards, as well as in other bulletins of the natural and social sciences, scientific journals, complete texts, etc. In this article, some of the materials and published studies that belong to the second phase are presented.

Although this study aims to provide an extensive literature review for the second phase of Albanian ethnobotany studies that have been presented, it is not intended to be an exhaustive review of all the materials on this subject. The list of texts is certainly not exhaustive but includes all the texts known to us that have studied ethnobotanical knowledge and met the aims of our study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The "autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism" in Albania

The establishment of the Communist regime in Albania in 1945 was followed by the adoption of an agrarian reform law, expropriating without compensation and confiscating "exorbitant" capital goods, including all vineyards, orchards, gardens, pastures, and forests larger than the legally defined limit of big landowners (Civici 2002).

Political instruments of communist propaganda permeated science, and a new cultural knowledge was created to seize an authentic, traditional, and popular culture as an official ideology. From the communist point of view, people's culture had to turn into an ideal projection of the fixed idea of the communists as builders of a new emancipated world, a New Man, and a new culture, including the transformation of all sides of the cultural process, the meaning of people's culture and the code that served to catalog, analyze and interpret cultural production (Abazi and Doja 2016). Within this ideological framework and the need for legitimization of the new regime, this period attached special importance to ethnoculture, preserving and documenting national traditions, and material and spiritual culture created over generations. According to Kokalari et al. (1977a), during this period, the evaluation of traditions, their discovery, protection, and development, as well as the evaluation and study of folk medicine, gained prominence for the first time in our history, considered a merit of the communist regime and the Party. The Marxism-Leninism method, particularly the theory of class struggle, was deployed to explain and interpret scientific facts involving history, and strict political control was used, and as such, the instrumentalization of national history and culture followed.

As mentioned earlier, during the communist period in Albania (1946-1991), the second phase of ethnobiology was developed. Regarding botanical studies, this period could be called the autochthonous period of botany because botanical studies were conducted by local authors. Ethnobiology during this period was characterized by the same feature; by analogy, it could be called the autochthonous ethnobiology of socialism. Despite the ideological aspects and the strict control of science by the regime, a considerable volume of traditional knowledge and practices was gathered during this period, including significant ethnobiological information, reflected in various publications and materials archived in different institutions.

The period from 1950 to 1990, which corresponds to the socialist state period, referring to Hunn's

(2007) and D'Ambrosio's (2014) classifications, the development of ethnobiology in Albania can be divided into two phases: emic (1950-1970) and systemic (1971-1991). To illustrate the proposed phase divisions within this article, only a part of the materials and published studies will be presented. Various publications in the field can be found from the first issue of the Bulletin of the Institute of Sciences in 1947 and onwards, in other bulletins for natural and social sciences, incomplete texts, etc.

## The emic phase (1950-1970)

During dialectological and botanical explorations in the emic phase, phyto-folkloric material (folk plant names, wild and cultivated, folk parts of plants names, folk agricultural practices names, etc.) was also collected regarding the use of plants, especially ethnolinguistic material on the popular names of plants, using empirical anthropological methods. The first publication dealing with the medicinal flora of our country is by Popa (1952). A series of works were carried out during this period by various researchers, including Mitrushi (1952, 1955), Lako (1960, 1965), Ndoja (1964), Demiri (1958), Nuri and Misiri (1970), Papadhopulli (1968), Oktrova (1970), etc. Mitrushi, considered the pioneer researcher of Albanian botany, in his study "Emrat shqip të drurëvet e të shkorretet" ["Albanian folk names of trees and shrubs"] published in three parts (Mitrushi 1952, 1953a,b), provides popular names for a considerable number of plants, mostly collected by him in various regions of the country, some also taken from various dictionaries of the time. In addition to presenting various synonyms for plant names, the author gives their ethnobotanical usage for several plants. In this regard, this work can be considered as the first ethnobotanical study in this period. Mitrushi's work culminates in the book "Drurët dhe shkurret e Shqipërisë" ["Trees and shrubs of Albania"] (Mitrushi 1955), the first of its kind in our country, describing 330 species of trees and shrubs, accompanied by popular names and information of interest regarding their use. Additionally, the book "Fjalorth latinisht – shqip i emrave të bimëve të florës shqiptare" ["Latin- Albanian vocabulary of plants of Albanian flora"] (Lako 1965), a significant work by the author for collecting and verifying popular names of plant species, led to a more advanced stage in ethnolinguistic studies related to Albanian plant names. Albanian legends about flowers are thought to be numerous, but unfortunately, they have been scarcely collected, and the merit of Lako (1960) lies in the fact that he published a small volume with some of them, collected during field research.

In the emic phase, quite interesting data were collected and recorded, especially by Franciscan researchers, but some of it remains in manuscript form. Such material, which was not allowed to be published and remained in manuscript form in the archives of the communist state, and part of it lost, is Benedict Dema's glossary. In the period 1962-1966, Dema, as a churchwarden of the Bajza parish (Shkodra), gathered rich ethnobotanical and medicinal material in the field, which he compiled into two manuscript volumes. Seized by the communist regime of the time, the manuscript titled "Mjekí"["Medicines"] was partially appropriated and published by another author in the seventies (Ndoja 2013). After the manuscripts were retrieved from the State Archive, Volume I "Fjalor i shtjelluem i gjuhës shqipe – Mjeki"["Explanatory dictionary of Albanian language- Medicines"] (Dema 2015) and Volume II "Fjalor i shtjelluem i gjuhës shqipe – Bimë e frymorë (Flora e fauna)" ["Explanatory dictionary of Albanian language- Flora and Fauna"] (Dema 2017) were published. Dema, with his works, provides not only popular names for plants, animals, and various diseases but also extensive material on their use in folk medicine. The collection of traditional cultural knowledge recorded by Dema and published around 50 years after the time of recording, constitutes a valuable contribution to the field of Albanian ethnobotany.

## The systemic phase (1971-1991)

The systemic phase (1971-1991) can be considered a turning point from the empirical use of plants by the people to the scientific study of the values of their use. The 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Labour Party of Albania (January 1971) can be regarded as the impetus for directing studies towards a more scientific aspect. It provided guidance for more in-depth study and further development of popular medicine. Shortly after the plenum, it was particularly emphasized the need for the medicinal plants of our country to be recognized, studied, and more widely utilized for the benefit of health and the economy by healthcare specialists as well as the entire population (Goda et al. 1972). For this purpose, the Institute of Popular Medicine was established in 1977, creating conditions for organized scientific study based on experimental laboratory and clinical analysis of the popular experience of treatment. Popular medicine was considered a field of study for all healthcare workers (Kokalari and Sima 1976) and a perpetual and invaluable source for enriching therapeutic metadata (Kokalari et al. 1977a).

The 1976 Constitution abolished private ownership, plot ownership, and animal ownership (Civici 2002), resulting in a shortage of food and medical resources. The popular use of spontaneous plants was a way ("hidden harvest" and "reserve

resource") to survive under the conditions of state propaganda in providing the well-being of the people in the conditions of Albania's political and economic isolation during this period. In this context of propaganda, if the people were the subject producers of culture, the research process also required activation of the so-called "mass studies" (Alb. *studime nga masat*) under the leadership of local party committees and state bodies (Abazi and Doja 2016). This task had to be undertaken as a continuous collective action of teachers, agronomists, veterinarians, physicians, midwives, and even villagers, farmers, and stockbreeders in every district and every locality (Kostallari 1972, Abazi and Doja 2016).

During the systemic period, numerous publications on medicinal plants were released (Goda et al. 1972; Shtepani 1973; Joti and Dhroso 1973, 1980; Dizdari 1973; Dizdari and Ndoja 1975; Goda et al. 1975; Kastrati et al. 1976; Papadhopulli 1976, 1987; Kokalari, 1976; Kokalari and Sima 1976; Goda et al. 1977; Kokalari et al. 1977a,b; Demiri 1979; Kokalari et al. 1980; Kokalari et al. 1984; Kokalari and Naçi 1987; Sima 1988; Piperi and Kajno 1990). Among them, Shtepani's publication (1973) stands out as a practical manual for plant and animal uses. Dizdari and Ndoja (1975) have provided a comprehensive synthetic summary of the folk medical practices of Northern Albania, traced for years by the authors themselves for about 30 groups of diseases and 150 different indications for which 1150 treatment methods have been described using about 160 medicinal plants. The book "Bimët e egra e të dobishme e të dëmshme të vendit tonë" [Wild, useful and harmful plants in our country] (Demiri 1979) is a comprehensive and practical scientific work that combines encyclopedic synthesis with scientific and ethnobotanical data on the utilitarian values of wild plants.

In Albania, during the years 1971-1991, work on cultural heritage in the field of medicine was organized throughout the entire country. With the establishment of the Institute of Popular Medicine in 1977, studies in this field became its focus, and commendable efforts were made to document and study traditional prescriptions and practices. Thanks to the work and scientific research in this field, many pharmacies and other units currently feature a variety of plants with high curative values and effectiveness in treating numerous diseases. According to Kokalari et al. (1977a), in the Korça region alone, from an incomplete collection of traditional knowledge about popular medicine, over 225 plant sources and more than 36 animal sources are counted as primary medicinal substances. In 1988, the former Institute of Forestry and Pastures conducted a national inventory of all wild medicinal plant species gathered in Albania.

## Post-communist ethnobiology in Albania

A portion of the diverse ethnobiological tradition (ethnobotany, ethnomedicine, ethnopharmacology) identified and collected during the communist period was not published, and some of it was released after that era, such as the materials collected by Ndoja (1995), for example. Since the 1990s, globally, the science of ethnobotany has gained increasing importance within the scientific community, and ethnobotanical issues have also become a focus of attention for a broader audience. In Albania, despite the rich traditional knowledge about plants, numerous ethnobotanical studies have been conducted, especially after the 2000s. In the studies of this period, which can be termed post-communist ethnobiology, the beginning of collaborative work between Albanian and foreign researchers is observed, a collaboration that had been almost entirely interrupted for more than 50 years. Studies such as "Bimët spontane të florës shqiptare të përdorshme si perime dhe bimë për erëza" ["Spontaneous plants of the Albanian flora used as vegetables and spices"] (Bianco et al. 2001), or that of Dinga et al. (2001) on plants in Albanian culture can be mentioned as some of the early works of this period. In addition to contributing to the study of ethnocultural aspects, some anthropologists, such as Tirta (2004), also contributed to ethnobiological knowledge and practices.

Ethnobotanical studies following contemporary ethnobotanical/ ethnobiological methodologies began in 2004-2005 (Pieroni et al. 2005). The authors emphasized that no ethnobotanical research had been conducted in Albania until their study during the summer of 2004 and 2005 in the village of Lëpushë, in the Northern Albanian Alps. However, subsequent studies in Albania, mainly in the Alps region (Pieroni et al. 2005; Pieroni et al. 2006; Pieroni 2007, 2008, 2010, 2017; González-Tejero et al. 2008; Hadjichambis et al. 2008; Pieroni and Quave 2014; Quave and Pieroni 2014; 2015), and also in other areas such as Peshkopia, Mokra, and Prrenjas (Pieroni et al. 2014a,b,c), Prespa National Park (Tomasini and Theilade 2019) revised this conclusion and extended the roots of ethnobotanical knowledge in Albania almost 100 years earlier. Most of the mentioned works were conducted by foreign researchers. Additionally, after the 2000s several articles based on ethnobotanical field research and theoretical approaches regarding ethnobiology and native perspective belonged to local authors (Dinga et al. 2001; Damo and Icka 2010; Damo et al. 2010, 2011, 2012; Papajani et al. 2014; Saraçi and Damo 2013; Saraçi and Zdruli 2017; Icka and Damo 2018; Stillo et al. 2018; Bajrami and Qirjo 2019; Icka

et al. 2019; Saraçi and Damo 2021a,b,c; Bajrami 2022, 2023; Bajrami et al. 2022; Bajrami et al. 2023).

After the fall of the communist regime, the Albanian biocultural heritage has suffered significant erosion, mostly due to the high emigration rate, and a portion of the cultural knowledge possessed by various communities has been permanently lost, despite some documentation from previous studies. While traditional knowledge tends to disappear permanently if not properly documented, analyzed, and disseminated, ethnobiological/ethnobotanical studies allow the "rediscovery"of their last traces in areas not explored until now, constituting most of the country's territory. The results of ethnobiological studies can serve not only as a written testimony to the richness of local knowledge held by Albanians but can also be used for sustainable management and use of biological natural resources and their ecosystems, from which communities benefit socially, culturally, economically, and ecologically.

## CONCLUSION

Albania experienced intensive cultural and landscape changes during collectivization and industrialization during the Communist period, leading to vast losses of traditional knowledge (TK). There has been scattered literature on useful plants used in Albania, most of which has been books on medicinal plants.

During Socialist Albania, in the emic period (1950-1970), ethnobotanical research was conducted almost exclusively within an ethnographic framework that was considered a subsidiary field within historical studies, and therefore subject to the Marxist doctrine of historical and dialectical materialism. During the systematic period (1971-1991), studies on the use of plants were not carried out simply in an ethnographic context but also in a dynamic and useful way, to change reality, focusing especially on plants' medicinal value and use for the people's benefit. Useful wild plants have always been a part of human life and have been considered a "hidden harvest"and "reserve resource"and have had crucial importance at the time of shortage of food and medical drugs in the period of socialist collectivism. It is worth noting that comparative studies do not characterize this period.

After the 1990s and especially after the 2000s, knowledge and practices about plants have been actively investigated by both local and foreign researchers. This is related to globalism processes affecting Albanian culture and the need to identify, document, and promote native biocultural diversity, but most importantly, because of the high rate of migration, which has caused a massive process of depopulation of the villages since the 1990s and persists to this day.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

## CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Conceived of the presented idea: AS, AB, RD Carried out the data analysis: AS, RD
Wrote the first draft of the manuscript: AS, RD, AB
Review and final write of the manuscript: AS, RD, RB
Supervision: AS

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