

ANALYSIS

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Food resilience and adaptation on the move: the importance of fostering studies on the Romani local knowledge systems

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Abstract

This analysis explores the food local knowledge of the Romani people in Italy, one of the most significant and historically marginalised ethnic groups in Europe. Despite their centuries-long presence across European countries, the Romani community's culinary and herbal practices have often been overlooked. A preliminary study on Romani domestic food and home (plant) remedies was conducted via 106 interviews in Turin, Rome, and Naples during the past fifteen years among urban Romani community members (who migrated to Italy from Romania and Serbia approximately three decades ago). By examining Romani's local food knowledge systems, this research highlights the importance of food ritual practices for preserving identity, fostering resilience, and bridging cultural divides; however, the data also show the plastic adaptability of Romani practices. Most quoted herbal items overlap the ones of the Balkan cultures where they lived together for centuries (Romanians and Serbs). The presented preliminary data insights into how the Romani diaspora in Italy has navigated cultural, economic, and social challenges through sophisticated mimicry and constant adaptation to new environments and cultures. Further understanding the Romani food ecological perceptions and ethnobotanical knowledge may be essential for improving social cohesion, challenging stereotypes, recognising the community's valuable contributions to European cultural diversity and, in general, building a more inclusive ethnobiology.

Keywords Adaptation, Ethnobotany, Food heritage, Herbal remedies, Italy, Marginalised communities, Minority, Romani people

While several food ethnobiologists, historians, and anthropologists, also in very recent years, have devoted a lot of effort to documenting local food systems and, more generally, LGK/LEK (local gastronomic knowledge/local ecological knowledge) of peripheral or minority

communities [1–6], very little attention has been paid to the Romani diaspora. However, studies examining marginalised cultural groups that interact with and understand their environments may provide a relevant and critical framework for understanding their nature-culture intersections. The Romani people, also known as Roma and often labelled for centuries with the derogatory term “Gypsies”, have an extensive yet frequently overlooked heritage primarily touched on in surveys of their overall folklore (see, for example, [7–10]). While the Romani community remains one of Europe's most significant ethnic minorities, prevailing stereotypes and historical discrimination have contributed to their marginalisation and social exclusion, with their cultural practices

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frequently misrepresented or neglected in mainstream narratives.

Food practices represent more than mere sustenance for the Romani people as for every cultural group; they embody cultural identity and a deep-rooted knowledge of the natural world and the urban environment. Food systems and traditional herbal knowledge may reveal Romani's understanding of the socio-ecological environments and illustrate their flexibility in using commonly available resources for culinary and medicinal purposes. However, the academic field of ethnobiology and food history has often underrepresented Romani voices, with some exceptions in the grey literature [11–13]. As global discussions increasingly recognise the importance of bio-cultural diversity and its role in fostering socio-ecological sustainable development and social cohesion, studying marginalised and discriminated communities such as the Romani becomes highly important. These communities often hold rich but underappreciated traditional ecological knowledge that provides valuable insights into the interplay between culture and environment. Incorporating Romani ethnobiology into a broader scholarly context helps bridge knowledge gaps and supports inclusivity in conservation and heritage studies. This lack of inclusion means that the Romani's contributions to cultural diversity, especially their knowledge and practices linked to nature, remain underexplored and undervalued.

As it is well-known, the Romani people trace their origins to modern northern India/Eastern Pakistan, from where they migrated towards Europe around the fourteenth century [14, 15]; this migration, marked by gradual movements through the Middle East and into Eastern Europe, was met with persistent challenges, including hostility, exclusion, and systemic discrimination. These encounters with “others” shaped the Romani identity, as they were subjected to restrictive laws, forced sedentarisation, and severe social penalties. Over centuries, Romani communities faced targeted persecution, including the Romani Holocaust during World War II, where Nazis murdered hundreds of thousands; this long history of stigmatisation and oppression has had repercussions still in contemporary Romani communities, where marginalisation persists, albeit in varied forms [16–18]. Unacceptable antiziganism and ziganophobia are quintessential parts of the narratives and of the agenda of many Western stakeholders and politicians. Across Europe, Romani populations often face significant barriers to inclusion, from discrimination in education and employment to limitations in housing and healthcare. As a result, many Romani communities remain isolated in informal settlements, lacking essential services, contributing to their socio-economic and spatial exclusion from mainstream society. These living conditions hinder their

ability to practice traditional agricultural methods, affecting food security and their ability to sustain cultural food practices. Romani communities have maintained a strong cultural identity despite these systemic challenges, notably through ritual feasts and domestic food practices. Food practices in Romani families represent a vehicle for expressing cultural continuity and adaptation simultaneously and offer insights into their relationship with the environment and their strategies for maintaining identity amid changing landscapes and social pressures.

This study focuses on a few preliminary food scouting and ethnobiological field studies conducted among Romani communities in Italy, particularly examining their food and herbal perceptions and practices. Our study aims to document and analyse Romani culinary and herbal heritage, strategies for adaptation, and cultural expressions of resilience.

Fieldwork was conducted between 2010 and 2020 among 108 Romani participants, including 81 individuals from the Turin and the Piedmont region, mainly migrated from Romania, and 27 individuals from Rome and Naples, with roots in Serbia. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group consisted of 71 individuals, including 46 women (43.4%) and 25 men (23.6%), aged between 18 and 59 years, with a mean age of 32.6 years. The second group included 21 individuals, with 60% women and 40% men. The third group comprised 16 participants, made up of 14 Romani cooks (87.5%) and 2 members of the “Chi rom... e chi no” association (12.5%). The interviews, which averaged 30 min, were sometimes extended due to cultural or language barriers. Data were recorded in handwritten notes, loose papers, and audio recordings.

In Romani communities, food preparation is traditionally considered a woman's responsibility. Men's involvement with food is limited to eating, while women manage food shopping and cooking. The term “Rom”, meaning “man” in Romani, reflects the gender dynamics within this society, where men are expected to work and provide financially, while women traditionally contribute through “manghel”, which involves begging for money or exchanging small crafts and divination services. While some view manghel as a respectable way for women to contribute, others see it as a last resort for survival.

“You should ask my wife! I am a man I don't cook! Sometimes my wife refuse to cook as my mom used to do... ah times changed...!”

Romani food culture is an integral part of the community's social structure, shaped by centuries of migration, adaptation, and cultural preservation. Historically, Romani communities have maintained a mobile lifestyle, which influenced their food choices and preparation

methods. Due to their itinerant nature, food was often simple, portable, and based on locally available ingredients. Traditional Romani dishes include stews, soups, and bread, often cooked over an open fire, reflecting both practicality and communal living. Food also carries symbolic meaning in Romani culture. The purity of food is connected to the respect and honour of the family, with certain foods and rituals believed to maintain social cohesion and the well-being of the community. For example, the idea of contaminating food is seen as a serious offence, as it can affect both the physical and moral health of the family. Moreover, food-related practices are linked to broader cultural norms, such as modesty and gender roles, where food preparation serves as a site for the reinforcement of values around family and community loyalty.

The research identified critical elements in Romani food practices, such as *baxtale* (lucky, pure) foods and the rejection of *bibaxt* (unlucky, impure) foods. This classification system, deeply embedded in Romani culture, determines what foods are consumed, how they are prepared, and the context in which they are shared. *Baxtale* foods, known for their strong and vibrant flavours, include black pepper, garlic, chilli, and pickled vegetables. These foods are perceived as sources of strength and resilience, symbolising good fortune and purity within the community. In contrast, certain foods or contaminated items are deemed *bibaxt* and are believed to bring bad luck to those who consume them. Foods may become impure if touched by someone considered unclean or if mishandled, such as falling to the ground. Some meats, like horse meat, are avoided due to their association with animals traditionally valued as resources rather than food.

The strong emphasis on purity extends beyond food to utensils, cooking areas, and social interactions during meals. Romani culinary traditions are characterised by adaptability and resourcefulness: their dishes often use ingredients available within local ecosystems, adapting to the limitations of urban environments and constrained access to traditional farmlands. For instance, vegetables such as cabbage, potatoes, and beans are dietary staples due to their availability and low cost, with pickling and fermentation methods commonly used to extend their shelf life. Cabbage, in particular, proved essential in many Romani recipes among the study participants and is often fermented to produce dishes like *sarma* (stuffed cabbage rolls) and *podvarak* (baked fermented cabbage with meat). These techniques preserve food and impart unique flavours and perceived nutritional benefits.

In addition to cabbage, meats such as pork, chicken, and lamb hold cultural significance, especially during festivals or communal gatherings. Traditional dishes like

ćevapčići (grilled minced meat) and *djuvec* (meat stew) are commonly prepared for special occasions, fostering a sense of cultural pride and identity within the community. Fermentation also plays a vital role in Romani food systems, providing both nutritional value and an economical means of food preservation. Pickled foods, for example, offer a cost-effective way to extend the usability of seasonal vegetables, supporting food security in economically constrained households.

Another aspect that emerged from the interviews concerns animal husbandry. In the areas of origin, raising and processing meat was common: for example, pork products were frequently homemade, partly due to the widespread practice of raising animals at home; the practice was interrupted in the urban Italian context. The raising of chickens and hens for eggs was also standard and, to some extent, continues to be so also in the host country, as it is relatively easy to keep hens in the camps, too, in which a few Romani community members in our sample live:

“Here, we only keep hens at the camp. So, we have eggs, then we raise the hen to make ciorba. (...) We go to the countryside to get them; there’s a man who sells them, and now and then, we buy a good number to raise in the camp. It’s easier than raising pigs, which is more labour-intensive. In Serbia, I lived just outside Belgrade in the countryside, so my family kept all kinds of animals and then prepared meat.”
(Interview 57)

Regarding festive foods, the dish traditionally associated with all celebrations is *sarma* (plural: *sarme*). The term, derived from Turkish and meaning “wrapped”, refers to vegetable leaves stuffed with rice, minced meat, and various vegetables, and these leaf rolls are made and served as a side dish for main meat courses or as an appetiser (Fig. 1):

“My recipe for sarme comes from my grandmother; she showed me how it’s done. She lives here with us, and we prepare it together for celebrations. (...) My sarma recipe uses cabbage; you make a hole and leave it with water and salt in a barrel for a month. It has to stay that way for a month; then you take it out. You take each leaf and dry it a bit. Then I add onion, carrot, celery, fry them, and minced meat and rice, depending on what I find when shopping or cooking at the camp. Sometimes, we add meat. Then I stuff the cabbage leaf with this filling and close it.”
(Interview 24)

Remaining on the connection between food and holidays, the grand liturgical celebrations of Orthodox



Fig. 1 Romani sarme (credits: A. Pettenò)

Christians, especially Easter and Christmas, are of particular interest; over time, recipes have changed, mainly due to social and historical periods, such as the Balkan conflict:

“During the last war, we ate whatever we could find, but the česnica was never missing. It’s a type of bread; flour was usually available, so even if it was tiny and quick to make, we made it anyway. At least that way, we thought less about bombs and more about Christmas.” (Interview 25)

Česnica bread holds special significance as its preparation follows many rules, the most important of which involves placing a coin inside the dough. The main ingredients for česnica are wheat flour and water; the dough is kneaded and baked on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning by the women in the family. The preparation process involves several rules, such as using flour from a new, unopened bag and water from a spring where a grain of wheat has been placed. The women working the dough must be “clean” to transmit sacredness through purity. When Christmas dinner begins, the loaf is rotated three times counterclockwise among the diners, who break it apart. The person who finds the coin inside is believed to be blessed with good fortune in the coming year.

Another dish often associated with Christmas celebrations is the *božićna pečunica*, a roasted pork served as the main course, usually accompanied by vegetables and potatoes.

As for Easter, some interviewees stated that they observe the *vaskršnji post*, the Easter fast. This is observed for forty days or, in some cases, only in the days leading up to Easter. During this period, they abstain from eating meat and eggs, so the foods prepared include

soups, vegetables, and sometimes Italian-style dishes such as pasta or pizza.

To celebrate Easter, dishes primarily based on lamb are prepared: roasted, skewered, or even as a *ciorba*. However, the first food eaten after the fast is the coloured egg:

“We always do this; we even prepare it for Easter at the camp and work. We cook eggs along with some vegetables to colour them. We add red onion or purple cabbage to the water to make them red. To make them green, we use spinach or Swiss chard. (...) Just boil water and add the eggs and vegetables. When ready, we decorate them with designs and fabric and place them in baskets for sale. We make the red ones and play a game: you tap one egg against another, and if it breaks...” (Interview 68).

From the Easter perspective, the egg, already a symbol of life and fertility, is seen as a sign of resurrection. In a rural tradition, Easter is believed to protect the farmhouse and its inhabitants. In some testimonies, it is described that often, the coloured eggshell was buried in the ground to fertilise the fields. The coloured eggs, as mentioned in the interview above, are also the main feature of a traditional game that starts the Easter meal: the egg battle. Each person holds their egg, with the tip pointed upwards, and strikes it against the opponent’s egg. The person who ends up with the most substantial egg is believed to be the one who will best withstand illnesses.

At the wedding banquet, many dishes are served on a large platter in the centre of the table. Again, the dishes commonly prepared for weddings belong to the traditional cuisine of their culture of origin: the inevitable *sarme*, *djuvec* or *gulah*, roasted pork or lamb, and *kiseli kupus* or *svadbarski kupus*, literally “wedding cabbage”:

“We take the pickled cabbage and cook it in a clay pot for many hours. Along with the cabbage, we add mutton, pork, and beef. Then, onion, pepper, and bay leaves. (...) Three different meats because a wedding is a celebration, so everyone must eat plenty. Sometimes, the celebration lasts two days. If there’s no food, it’s not a good wedding.” (Interview 13).

All main dishes are accompanied by traditional *pita* bread, which initially involved only women in the preparation:

“Pita was once eaten every day, but here, the bread is good, and it’s easier to buy it daily. We only make pita when there’s catering for the restaurant or our celebrations. (...) it’s easy to make—flour, water, and lard. Mix everything, then take a piece of dough, roll it out with a rolling pin and hands,

then put it in the oven or a hot pan. The pita puffs up, and it's ready." (Interview 10)

The migration of Romani communities to Italy has led to significant cultural adaptations and the integration of Italian ingredients into their traditional recipes. For example, Romani families we encountered commonly prepare pasta and pizza as staples, reflecting the most recent influence of Italian culinary culture. However, they also incorporate elements from their homeland, such as *ajvar*, the well-known Balkan relish prepared using local Italian peppers and eggplants. Such hybrid dishes embody the Romani's ability to adapt while retaining cultural specificity, blending familiar ingredients with those encountered in new environments.

The study also reveals that those Romani women who work in restaurants often use family recipes for broader audiences. This dual engagement with Romani and Italian culinary elements fosters cultural pride and facilitates interactions with non-Romani people. For instance, *ajvar* is often served as a side with popular Italian dishes, allowing the Roma to share their culinary heritage in Italian contexts. Romani communities maintain their cultural identity through these hybrid practices while adapting to life in urban Italy, demonstrating resilience in the face of change.

One crucial consideration must be addressed regarding the Romani's perception of food beyond its nutritional and ritual values. It is related to a critical research aspect, namely, food as medicine. During interviews, several Romani women mentioned certain foods with specific medicinal uses or claimed that a particular food "is very good for health".

Other challenges to data collection include the primarily oral transmission of knowledge and the geographical discontinuity caused by migration. The latter factor has had a twofold effect: on the one hand, it has promoted cultural adaptability and versatility; on the other, it has led to a loss of knowledge. Generally, the few individuals able to provide information on this subject seem to have gained more knowledge from connections with communities in their countries of origin rather than solely from the Romani community.

Romani communities have interacted with local food cultures, leading to a fusion of traditional Romani cooking with regional culinary practices.

For instance, in Eastern European countries like Serbia and Romania, Romani food culture shares similarities with local dishes, such as stews, meats, and bread-based meals. These regions' long-standing agricultural traditions and reliance on simple, hearty ingredients align with Romani cooking, which also emphasises portability, practicality, and communal

meals. In countries such as Spain, where Romani populations have been present for centuries, there is a notable overlap with Spanish cuisine, especially in the use of paprika, rice, and slow-cooked stews.

Similarly, in the Mediterranean region, where Romani communities have been part of the cultural landscape for hundreds of years, elements of Romani food culture are closely tied to the local practices of utilising fresh vegetables, olive oil, and grains. The shared emphasis on communal eating, along with methods like grilling or cooking over an open fire, further reflects the blending of Romani and regional culinary traditions.

Older Romani women who adhere to traditional community culture tend to categorise illnesses into two groups: *gagé* (non-Romani) illnesses and *Roma* illnesses. The first group includes ailments like flu, venereal diseases, haemorrhoids, and cancer, while the second comprises disorders often linked to psychophysical distress, such as mental illness, difficulty adapting, and fatigue.

Health and illness are closely linked to the concept of the body, which in traditional Romani culture is viewed as divided into a pure part (from the waist up) and an impure part, deemed responsible for many diseases, particularly contagious ones. Among older Romani women, some illnesses are also believed to arise from a luck/unluck duality: socially deviant behaviour from group norms can cause bad luck, manifesting as illness.

The cure for these Romani-specific illnesses is not found in Western medicine but instead relies on knowledge and practices from older *romni* (Romani women). While they recognise that medications can be effective in some cases, they consider them risky because they are under the control of the *gagé* and medical professionals.

Furthermore, Romani health practices reflect their beliefs in purity and cleanliness. Certain foods, utensils, and cooking spaces are handled carefully to maintain spiritual purity, especially when preparing medicinal foods. For example, cooking spaces are cleansed before preparing herbal infusions, and certain foods are avoided if associated with perceived impurity. These practices highlight the Romani's view of health as a balanced state requiring physical nourishment and spiritual protection, where cleanliness and adherence to traditional norms contribute to wellness.

The medico-ethnobotanical knowledge held within Romani communities reveals the resilience of an eroded but still surviving intimate connection to traditional plant-based health practices. Some common plants the study participants gather and use in their domestic areas are valued for their medicinal properties (Table 1); these remedies overlap, as for the recorded ritual foods, those used in the Balkan countries where the interviewees spent centuries and from where they moved to Italy.

Table 1 Home herbal remedies that the Romani study participants quoted

Botanical taxon and family	Local name (English common name)	Used parts	Preparation	Treated illnesses	Frequency of citation
<i>Achillea millefolium</i> L., Asteraceae	Coadă șoricelului, Sporiš (Yarrow)	Aerial parts	Infusion	Stomach pains; digestive issues; baby washes (external use)	low
<i>Allium cepa</i> L., Amaryllidaceae	Ceapă (Onion)	Whole plant (bulb, stem, and leaves)	Dense sweetened decoction (with honey or sugar) mixed with walnut decoction	Cough; flu	medium
<i>Allium sativum</i> L., Amaryllidaceae	Beli luk (Garlic)	Bulb	Consumed raw	Hypertension; cold; Candida infections	low
<i>Arctium lappa</i> L., Asteraceae	Čičak (Burdock)	Entire plant leaves	Compress, infusion	Headache (externally); flu	low
<i>Beta vulgaris</i> L., Amaranthaceae	Cvekla (Beetroot)	Roots	Fresh, in salads and beverages	“To purify the blood.”	medium
<i>Brassica oleracea</i> L., Brassicaceae	Kelj, Varză (Cabbage)	Leaves	Leaves added to homemade distillate (<i>țuica</i>); lacto-fermented in brine	Flu; alcohol intoxication; general health	high
<i>Calendula officinalis</i> L., Asteraceae	Neven (Marigold)	Flowers	Compress	Burns, skin spots, redness (externally)	high
<i>Chenopodium album</i> L., Amaranthaceae	Loboda (Fat hen)	Aerial parts	Filling for <i>burek</i>	General health	low
<i>Equisetum arvense</i> L., Equisetaceae	Coadă-calului (Horsetail)	Aerial parts	Infusion	Purifying	low
<i>Juglans regia</i> L., Juglandaceae	Nuc (Walnut)	Pericarp, leaves	Decoction, sometimes with onion or with lemon and honey	Anti-rheumatic (washing); anti-dry cough; adds shine to dark hair (externally)	medium
<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i> L., Asteraceae	Mușețel (Chamomile)	Flowers	Infusion	Sedative; flu; adds shine to blonde hair (externally); conjunctivitis; headache; general purifying	high
<i>Mentha x piperita</i> L., Lamiaceae	Mentă (Mint)	Leaves	Infusion	Digestive; antispasmodic; anti-diarrheal	high
<i>Oryza sativa</i> L., Gramineae	Orez (Rice)	Seeds	Raw	Anti-diarrheal	low
<i>Pinus</i> spp., Pinaceae	Brad (Pine)	Young shoots	Syrup (decoction with water and sugar); jam	Expectorant (syrup for children, jam for adults)	low
<i>Rumex crispus</i> L., Polygonaceae	Dragavé (Dock)	Leaves	Consumed	General health, digestive	high
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L., Caprifoliaceae	Soc (Elder)	Flowers	Infusion: fermented beverage (with lemon and sugar)	Flu; refreshing	medium
<i>Solanum tuberosum</i> L., Solanaceae	Krompir (Potato)	Tuber (sliced)	External application	Headache (externally)	medium
<i>Tilia</i> spp., Tiliaceae	Var (Linden)	Flowers	Infusion (tea)	Sedative (contraindicated in male adolescents as it is anaphrodisiac); headache; conjunctivitis (externally)	low
<i>Urtica dioica</i> L., Urticaceae	Urzică (Nettle)	Leaves	First, leaves boiled and sautéed with garlic (residual broth also consumed); infusion	Purifying (kidneys, lungs, blood); hair wash for dandruff; iron deficiency	high

The Romani study participants commonly use the most quoted herbal remedies to prevent or treat trivial illnesses like digestive issues and flu symptoms.

Romani food and herbal practices in Italy illustrate resilience, adaptability, and some cultural continuity in challenging socio-economic changes. With limited access to land and attached traditional farming resources, the Romani migrants rely on local markets

for ingredients, modifying traditional recipes with available resources. This adaptation extends to food and herbal preparations, as Romani women also incorporate Italian ingredients into their dishes while retaining some original cooking techniques. This proverbial food adaptability reflects an economic necessity and the Romani's flexibility and capability to blend their heritage with their neighbours constantly [19]; the

Italian Romani sample was not able to identify any specific food items or herbal remedy that they connected to their perceived ancestral, original culture, as we have instead observed for cooked hedgehogs and a couple of unusual magic and toxic plants among Romani populations in Lithuania and Belarus.

Future studies on Romani local knowledge systems may be essential for several reasons, providing practical and academic insights into culture, health, and sustainability. Here are a few crucial reasons: preservation of cultural heritage; understanding adaptation and resilience—Romani communities have historically faced marginalisation and displacement, and their LGK/LEK demonstrates remarkable adaptability and resilience, offering valuable insights into how communities maintain cultural continuity amidst socio-economic challenges; environmental sustainability contributions—Romani practices include the use of plants expand knowledge of ethnobotany and potentially lead to a possible historical link to their areas of origin; challenging stereotypes and promoting social inclusion—highlighting the depth of Romani knowledge helps counter negative stereotypes and prejudices; it could showcase their contributions to local and global cultural and ecological systems and appreciation for their role in maintaining cultural diversity, promoting a genuine dialogue between Romani and non-Romani communities; enhancing interdisciplinary ethnobiological research—studying Romani LGK/LEK contributes to multiple disciplines, including anthropology, human ecology, gastronomy, and medicine, and provides a holistic understanding of how culture, health, and environment intersect.

Moreover, scholars and policymakers could eventually address the issues of Romani heritage preservation, social justice, and ecological sustainability by focussing on their food and herbal practices while gaining valuable insights into a historically marginalised community.

The Romani anthropologist Trajko Petrovski (1952–2020), whom the first author had the honour of being in touch with over one decade, was the first Romani scholar to hold a PhD in the Republic of North Macedonia and one of the leaders for many years of the “Marko Cepenkov” Folkloric Institute of Skopje; his research has witnessed the immense prairies of local knowledge systems Balkan Romani communities articulated in the past and are still able to exercise.

The ethnobiological arena must learn from him and include Romani communities in local ecological knowledge adaptation and resilience studies. It may be time for ethnobiology, and especially for ethnobotany, to lose the romantic, naïve, and feverish, botany-driven attraction to always “discover” new plants, remedies, or ingredients. There is an immense untapped ethnoecological cobweb

to relate to and understand in the courtyards of our Romani neighbours.

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Author contributions

AP designed the study and methodology, analysed the most salient outcomes, and drafted the preliminary version; NS and MA reviewed the initial manuscript. The final version was later revised and approved by all authors.

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Availability of data and materials

The data supporting this study's findings are incorporated in the article. Further inquiries should be directed to the corresponding author.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The International Society of Ethnobiology Code of Ethics was strictly followed, and informed consent was always obtained from each participant before interviews.

Consent for publication

“Not applicable.”

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest. AP is the EIC of the JEET.

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