

A Singular Remedy

Stefanie Gänger explores how medical knowledge was shared across societies tied to the Atlantic World between 1751 and 1820. Centred on Peruvian bark or cinchona, *A Singular Remedy* shows how that remedy and knowledge about its consumption – formulae for bittersweet, ‘aromatic’ wines, narratives about its discovery or beliefs in its ability to prevent fevers – were understood by men and women in varied contexts: Peruvian academies and Scottish households, Louisiana plantations and Moroccan court pharmacies alike. This study in plant trade, therapeutic exchange and epistemic brokerage exposes how knowledge weaves itself into the fabric of everyday medical practice in different places.

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A Singular Remedy

Cinchona Across the Atlantic World, 1751–1820

Stefanie Gänger

Heidelberg University



CAMBRIDGE
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108816335

DOI: 10.1017/9781108896269

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First published 2021

First paperback edition 2022

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Names: Gänger, Stefanie, 1983– author.

Title: A singular remedy : cinchona across the Atlantic World, 1751-1820 / Stefanie Gänger.

Description: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Series: Science in history | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020022779 (print) | LCCN 2020022780 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108842167 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108816335 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108896269 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Cinchona bark. | Cinchona bark—Therapeutic use—Early works to 1800. | Medicine—History. | Drugs—History.

Classification: LCC RM666.C53 G36 2021 (print) | LCC RM666.C53 (ebook) | DDC 615.3/23956—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020022779>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020022780>

ISBN 978-1-108-84216-7 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-81633-5 Paperback

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Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	page vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>A Note on Source Material</i>	xii
<i>A Note on Language and Translation</i>	xiv
<i>A Note on Weights, Currencies and Measures</i>	xv
Introduction: A Singular Remedy	1
The Outlines of Cinchona	4
An Appraisal of the Historiography	17
Book Structure	26
1 Origin Stories	30
Unalienable Truths	34
Botanists by Instinct	43
Illiterate Saviours	47
2 The Demands of Humanity	54
World Bark Trade	57
Geographies of Consumption	68
Limits to Distribution	76
3 Community of Practice	91
‘Proper Evacuations’	95
Preparations of the Bark	99
Proprietary Medicines	112
4 Febrile Situations	120
Marshes and Wetlands	123
Cities, Ships and Camps	132
‘Hot Climates’	135

vi	Contents	
5	Harvests of Change	147
	The Growth Regions	149
	The Spectre of Extinction	157
	The Bark Cutters	165
	Conclusion: A Plant of the World	179
	<i>Bibliography</i>	184
	<i>Index</i>	232

Illustrations

- 0.1 *Cinchona rosea Flor. Peruviana*. Sample collected under the aegis of the Botanical Expedition to the Viceroyalty of Peru (1778–1816), under the command of Hipólito Ruiz López and José Antonio Pavón. MA-780943. *Herbario del Real Jardín Botánico, CSIC*. © RJB-CSIC page 11
- 0.2 The ‘Fever Tree (*Lignum Februum*)’ by Francisco Torti, which supplemented the author’s taxonomy of fevers. Branches covered with bark, occupying the left part of the picture, represent fevers curable by Peruvian bark, whereas denuded, leafless branches represent continued fevers not curable by cinchona. At the centre are trunks and branches partly covered by bark, corresponding to the ‘proportionate fever’, in which susceptibility varied. Branches that anastomose represent fevers that change from one category to another, 1712. Francisco Torti, *Therapeutice Specialis Ad Febres Periodicas Perniciosas*. Credit: Wellcome Collection. CC BY 14
- 1.1 *Dessein d’une branche de l’arbre du Quinquina, avec ses feuilles, ses fleurs & les fruits, en leurs divers états* (Sketch of a cinchona tree branch, with its leaves, flowers & fruits, in their various states), 1737. Charles M. de la Condamine, ‘Sur l’arbre du quinquina’, *Mémoires de l’Académie Royale MDCCXL*. Credit: Wellcome Collection. 31
- 1.2 Isaac Paling (1630–1719), *Savants hollandais en discussion* (Dutch savants in discussion). The ‘Dutch savants’ are grouped around a piece of cinchona bark, with one individual (sitting fourth from the right) pointing his finger at it. n.p., n.d. © *Bibliothèque de l’Académie nationale de médecine*, Paris. 49
- 2.1 Volume of official cinchona exportations to peninsular ports, with 5-year averages. Adapted from Miguel Jaramillo Baanante, ‘El comercio de la cascarilla en el norte peruano-sur ecuatoriano: evolución de impacto regional de una economía de exportación, 1750–1796,’ in *El Norte en la Historia Regional*.

viii List of Illustrations

- Siglos XVIII-XIX*, ed. Scarlett O'Phelan Godoy and Yves Saint-Geours (Lima: IFEA-CiPCA, 1998), graphic 1. 59
- 2.2 Some of the world's principal commercial entrepôts and urban consumer markets for cinchona in the late 1700s and early 1800s. 77
- 2.3 Approximate market prices in réis for bottles of 'English Water' (*Água de Inglaterra*) between 1772 and 1809, at a time when that medicine was fabricated in Portugal and exported to the West African captaincies of Angola and Benguela via Brazil. Data from Sousa Dias, *A água de Inglaterra*, 45; *Documentos régios; Enformes que deram os Médicos d'esta Corte*, 56. 84
- 3.1 Bottles of English Water (*Água de Inglaterra*), c. 1800. © *Museu da Farmácia*, Portugal. 115
- 4.1 Lambeth Delftware Pill Jar, decorated and labelled EX:CORT; PERUV:D (hard extract of cinchona bark), c. 1710–1740 © The Science Museum / Science and Society Picture Library. 126
- 4.2 Albarello drug jar from Spain used to store cinchona bark, 1731–1770; calisay[a] was one popular cinchona variety. © The Science Museum / Science and Society Picture Library. 130
- 5.1 Some of the principal harvest areas and transfer sites for cinchona in the Viceroyalties of New Granada and Peru in the late 1700s and early 1800s. 152
- 5.2 Watercolour of a cinchona tree (*cascarilla*, in colloquial Spanish), by a native artist. Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón (1782–1789), *Trujillo del Perú or Colección original inédita de mapas relativos al obispado de Perú; retratos en colores y dorados de Arzobispos, Vireyes y otros personajes del Perú; planos de ciudades; cuadros sobre lenguas indígenas*, Estampa IX, Vol. III © *Patrimonio Nacional (España)*. 164
- 5.3 Rawhide bag for storing cinchona bark, collected by the Botanical Expedition to the Viceroyalty of Peru (1778–1816), under the command of Hipólito Ruiz López and José Antonio Pavón. © The Science Museum / Science and Society Picture Library. 166

Acknowledgements

I have researched, written and rewritten this book over a period of seven years, and, in the process, have incurred many debts. I laid the foundation for the project at the University of Konstanz, in the context of the research group ‘Global Processes’, funded by the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize, in 2012. The book would not have come to fruition in its present shape without the knowledgeable scholars assembled there – especially Jürgen Osterhammel, Jan C. Jansen, Martin Rempe and Franz L. Fillafer – and our stimulating debates on world and global history. I would also like to thank Gabriela Ramos, my former supervisor at the University of Cambridge, for encouraging me to choose this particular research topic, and for her unstinting kindness and support for the last decade and a half. I wrote a first version of the manuscript at the University of Cologne, where affable colleagues, a diverse environment, and the generous support of the Global South Studies Center – special thanks are due to its speakers, Barbara Potthast and Michael Bollig – made the process of researching and writing up a great pleasure. I finished the manuscript at the University of Heidelberg, where I found a permanent, happy home in April 2019.

I presented initial outlines of the project and earlier versions of chapters at various seminars and symposia held at the universities of Cambridge, Yale, Tucumán, Munich, Heidelberg, Basel, Dresden, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Zurich, and Brown, and in Paris, Boston, New York, La Plata, Berlin, Vienna, Santiago de Chile and Chicago and I am grateful for the comments and feedback I received on these occasions. I am particularly indebted to Lea Beiermann, Dagmar Wujastyk, José Pardo-Tomás, Rachel E. Black, Jonathan Reinartz, Dagmar Schäfer, Anne-Isabelle Richard, Emile Chabal, Barbara E. Mundy, Michael Zeheter, Nuria Valverde Pérez, Paola Bertucci, Miruna Achim, Nina Verheyen, Irina Podgorny, Iris Montero, Sarah Albiez-Wieck, Neil Safier, Timothy D. Walker, Sebastian Haumann, Gesine Müller, Clare Griffin, Arndt Brendecke, Tim Le Cain and Elaine Leong, for guidance and support at various stages of the project. Matthew Crawford and

x Acknowledgements

Samir Boumediene, who had researched and written about other aspects of the history of cinchona long before I came to the topic, were so kind as to share their work, and to offer their advice. I am especially grateful to the colleagues who have taken the time to read chapters and to suggest changes: Heiner Fangerau, Raquel Gil Montero, Jürgen Osterhammel, Sebastian Haumann, Jan C. Jansen, Martin Rempe, Franz L. Fillafer and Elaine Leong. Barbara Orland, Agnes Gehbald, Caterina Mantilla and Melina Teubner have kindly taken the trouble to read and comment upon nearly the entire manuscript. I particularly owe a great debt to Cambridge University Press. I cannot thank the two anonymous readers and the Series Editors – Jim Secord and Simon Schaffer – enough for their valuable, perceptive comments and suggestions, which have made this a much better book than I could have written on my own. I am also deeply grateful to Lucy Rhymer and her editorial team for their steady support and kind guidance throughout the publication process.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the staff at the archives I visited in Spain, Portugal, Peru, Ecuador, England, France and Switzerland in the course of my research. I owe particular gratitude to Gudrun Kling at the Zurich Archive of the History of Medicine, Esther García Guillén at the archives of the Royal Botanical Garden in Madrid, Ada Arrieta Álvarez at the archive pertaining to the Riva Agüero Institute in Lima, Damien Blanchard at the Academy of Medicine Library in Paris and Isabel Amado at the Portuguese Overseas Archive in Lisbon. I would not have been able to navigate the Ecuadorian national archive in Quito so well without the generous help and hospitality of a colleague, Christiana Borchert de Moreno, and her husband, Segundo Moreno Yáñez. I am also grateful to Katalin Pataki and Reina María Pacheco Olivera, who were kind enough to share archival materials from Mexico and Hungary with me, or to point me towards them. I particularly would like to thank Meike Knittel for making me aware of the manuscript recipe collections kept at the Zurich Archive of the History of Medicine. Ruby Ellis prepared the index and, together with Albert Loran, helped format the manuscript and secure copyright permissions.

I am grateful to the Royal Botanical Garden in Madrid, the Wellcome Library and the Science Museum in London, the Academy of Medicine Library in Paris, Lisbon's Pharmacy Museum (*Museu da Farmacia*) and Spain's National Heritage body (*Patrimonio Nacional*) for granting copyright permissions for the illustrations in this book. I also thank Miguel Jaramillo Baanante for allowing me to adapt his statistics for Figure 2.1 and Monika Feinen for crafting Figures 2.2 and 5.1. I also thank Oxford University Press for permission to include parts of an article I wrote for the journal *Environmental History* ('Cinchona Harvest, Deforestation,

Acknowledgements

xi

and Extinction in the Viceroyalty of New Granada, 1752–1811’, Vol. 24/4, 2919) in Chapter 5.

Finally, and once again, I thank my friends and family, particularly my husband, Arne, for his companionship, quiet faith and untiring support. I finished writing the first draft of the manuscript for this book when I was pregnant with our son, Elias, and revised it – again, and again – in the months and years after he was born. It is dedicated to them both, with all my love.

A Note on Source Material

This book brings together evidence from a wide array of sources, variable with respect to genre, language and origin – ranging from imperial bureaucratic reports to domestic recipe collections – and scattered, much like its subject matter, across the Atlantic World. In order to reassemble the history of the bark’s harvest, and of Spanish trade and Portuguese, British, Dutch and French contraband in it, the book relies primarily on official correspondence and reports, legal files and royal orders from the General Archive of the Indies (*Archivo General de Indias*) in Seville, the Spanish state archives in Simancas (*Archivo General de Simancas*), the archives pertaining to Spain’s Royal Palace (*Archivo del Palacio Real*) in Madrid, the Portuguese Overseas Archive (*Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*) in Lisbon and the Ecuadorian National Historical Archive (*Archivo Nacional de la Historia*) in Quito. The records contained in these archives revealed the bark’s passage into a vast array of territories far beyond the Spanish and Portuguese empires – primarily, though not exclusively, across Europe and the societies within or adjoining its colonial possessions and commercial and evangelizing entrepôts rimming the Atlantic basin. Moving beyond traditional archival research, the book follows the pathways alluded to in these Iberian records, alongside those mentioned in the extant historiography, to archives, libraries and repositories, both physical and digital, elsewhere, for print and manuscript sources on bark use in these other societies. I primarily searched pharmacopoeias, medical treatises and various genres of popular print, especially published self-help manuals, recipe collections and almanacs, for bark recipes, stories and medical understandings. Specifically, I selected and probed into medical and popular print sources from Spain and Portugal, the Viceroyalties of Peru, Brazil, New Granada and New Spain, the Dutch, British and French West Indian possessions, the Kingdom of France, England and Scotland, British India, the Habsburg territories and the Swiss Confederacy, the Italian Peninsula, the Portuguese and British enclaves along the African coast and the French and British North American colonies – or, after 1776, the United States. I also drew on

Russian pharmacopeias, wherever they were available in Latin. To verify, at least selectively, whether readers heeded the medical advice these formats dispensed I consulted a selection of manuscript notebooks of medical recipes kept by women and men for domestic use – from Britain, France, various German- and Italian-speaking territories, the Portuguese Empire and the Viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru – kept in the archives and manuscript collections of London’s Wellcome Library, Portugal’s National Library (*Biblioteca Nacional*), Peru’s National Library (*Biblioteca Nacional de Lima*) and the University of Zurich (*Archiv für Medizingeschichte*), all of which hold national as well as international collections of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century recipe books. Studies that operate on a geographical and socio-political canvas more extensive than one empire, or nation-state require a measure of reliance on the work of specialists in other world areas. On account of the impossibility of mastering all the languages and visiting all the archives of the places where the bark’s pathways lead, I relied primarily on secondary literature for evidence on bark use in Sweden, the Sultanate of Morocco, the Dutch colonies, the Ottoman Empire, the Chinese and Mughal empires and Tokugawa Japan.

A Note on Language and Translation

The research for this project was conducted in many languages. I have worked with primary sources in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Latin, German and Italian. All translations of these sources into English are my own, unless otherwise noted. I also benefitted from the translations, and linguistic advice, of other scholars with sources and literature in languages I have not mastered: Maike Lehmann and Ingrid Schierle with Russian, Meike Knittel with Dutch, Jean-Baptiste Pettier with Chinese and Katalin Pataki with Hungarian. I am particularly grateful to Sırma Hasgül and Sibylla Wolfgarten for their translation of Bursalı Ali Münşi's eighteenth-century essay on cinchona – 'Tuhfe-i Aliyye', or 'Kına Kına Risâlesi' – from Ottoman Turkish. To avoid ambiguity, I have usually given the English translation or transliteration of quotations (or proper names, for that matter) and provided the original in parentheses.

A Note on Weights, Currencies and Measures

The situation with regard to weights, currencies and measures in the late 1700s and early 1800s is generally one of great complexity, to say the least, and the more so in a book that adopts a transatlantic perspective. Weights, currencies and measures varied not only from area to area during that period, but to some extent also over time. I have converted the various historical units of weight and mass into kilograms, the base unit of mass in the current metric system, and units of length into metres. To avoid ambiguity, and ensure transparency, I have indicated both the conversion and the original units of mass and length throughout the text. I have chosen not to convert historical to other, or present-day, currencies, but found it preferable to give the reader an idea of their value by referencing their purchasing power in the period and society under consideration.