



Blended divergences: local food and medicinal plant uses among Arbëreshë, Occitans, and autochthonous Calabrians living in Calabria, Southern Italy

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ABSTRACT

A study focusing on traditional uses of wild plants for gastronomic and medicinal purposes was carried out among three linguistic communities in Calabria, southern Italy. Ninety interviews with local elderly informants were conducted among Occitans and Arbëreshë, two linguistic minorities, and the dominant culture of autochthonous Calabrians. We recorded 85 taxa belonging to 39 botanical families and 66 different detailed use-reports including 35 culinary and 31 medicinal uses. Our overall data show the permanence of traditional ecological knowledge related to wild and semi-domesticated food and medicinal plants; however, high similarity indices among the three communities demonstrate that traditional ecological knowledge is following the pathway of homogenization and standardization toward the dominant culture, facilitated by a context of linguistic erosion, limited intergenerational transmission, and a centuries-old diffusion with Calabrian culture. Moreover, our study calls for further field surveys in isolated areas of Calabria to analyze how traditional ecological practices can be key tools in the development of local small-scale economies through the promotion of artisanal food entrepreneurship of wild food plant transformation.

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Introduction

Calabria, the southernmost region of peninsular Italy, is an interesting region from an anthropological and ethnobotanical point of view as it was settled by many populations over the centuries (Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans and Spanish). In addition to this anthropological, historical and social complexity, Calabria lies between two seas (Tyrrhenian and Ionian) and the Apennine Mountains reach 2267 m above sea level which turns each village into “an island” and the entire region into an area notably rich in biodiversity within the context of the Mediterranean Basin (Marziliano et al. 2017).

Calabria is home to three linguistic minorities: the Arbëreshë (about 40 communities of people from Albania who settled in this area beginning in the 15th century), Graecanics (a few communities in southern Calabria characterized by their Greek-speaking) and Occitans (the one surviving village, and five others now extinct, were founded by migrations of Piedmontese Waldensians that occurred during medieval times).

Calabria has been little investigated from an ethnobotanical perspective. Barone (1963), Leporatti and Pavesi (1989), Lupia (2004), Passalacqua et al. (2006, 2007), Leporatti and Impieri (2007), Tagarelli et al. (2010), and Lupia et al. (2018) are the few available publications. More studies have been published on Arbëreshë ethnobotany and ethnopharmacology (Pieroni, Nebel et al., 2002, Pieroni, Quave et al., 2002; Pieroni, 2003) as well as on Graecanics (Nebel et al. 2006). To

date, no ethnobotanical studies have been conducted among Occitans of Guardia Piemontese. However, in the last ten years a few studies regarding the Occitan minority in Piedmont have been published (Pieroni and Giusti, 2009; Mattalia et al. 2013; Bellia and Pieroni, 2015).

The objective of this study is to compare possible effects of language divides on the local use of wild and semi-domesticated plants for culinary and medicinal purposes in Calabria (southern Italy) among the Arbëreshë, Occitans and Calabrians.

Specific objectives are:

1. to record the local names and specific culinary and medicinal uses of local wild and semi-domesticated plants that are gathered in the study area;
2. to compare the data collected among the three linguistic communities; and
3. to compare the data with the available ethnobotanical literature in order to identify commonalities and differences in specific uses that could be linked to historical and/or socio-ecological dynamics.

In particular, the comparison was planned in three sections:

- with previous ethnobotanical studies conducted among the Arbëreshë living in the surrounding region of Basilicata, southern Italy;

- with the previous ethnobotanical studies conducted among Occitans and Waldensians in Piedmont, NW Italy, the region from which the Occitans of Calabria originally migrated; and
- with pre-existing studies on traditional plant uses recorded in other Calabrian communities.

Materials and methods

The study area

The field study was conducted in the Province of Cosenza (northern Calabria, southern Italy) between December 2017 and June 2018 (Figure 1). We visited five municipalities including Santa Caterina Albanese (Arbëreshë), Vaccarizzo Albanese (Arbëreshë), Sant'Agata di Esaro (Calabrian), Mottafollone (Calabrian) and Guardia Piemontese (Occitan). All these communities have less than 1000 effective inhabitants within their main centers (thus excluding peripheral and rural areas of these municipalities from our research). The five centers are classified as peripheral by the "Italian strategy for inland areas" (Barca et al. 2014) and are located between 350 m and 550 m a.s.l.

Calabria is mainly mountainous and hilly (42% and 49% of its territory, respectively). The climate is Mediterranean, with maximum precipitation during wintertime. Average temperature ranges between 8.3 °C (January) and 24.4 °C (August), with an annual average of 15.8 °C.

Calabria is home to three linguistic minorities, namely the Arbëreshë, Occitans and Graecanics. The Arbëreshë are descendants of Albanians who emigrated during the 15th and 16th centuries to areas scattered throughout central and southern Italy (Altimari et al. 1986). Currently, the Arbëreshë minority is spread out among 50 communities in seven regions of southern Italy (Abruzzo, Campania, Molise, Basilicata, Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily). The majority of Arbëreshë communities are located in Calabria (approximately 30 mainly in the Province of Cosenza). Calabria represents the region with the highest number of Arbëreshë communities. Most of these preserve their traditional language and culture thanks in part to Greek-Byzantine

Religious rites which take place mostly in Arbëreshë (Bolognari 2001)

Guardia Piemontese is linguistically and ethnically Occitan, and the inhabitants used to follow the Waldensian faith (thus, a religious minority). Currently it is the only Occitan isle in southern Italy and it has a Waldensian presidium to underline the importance this faith has played throughout their history. Waldensians are a Protestant Christian minority that originated in France during the 12th century. Due to the persecution they suffered through the centuries, they were often forced to migrate all over Europe (Bellia and Pieroni 2015). There is no precise data available regarding the year in which the first Piedmontese Waldensians settled in Calabria. Probably the first inhabitants of Guardia Piemontese moved from Pellice Valley to get to Calabria during the second half of the 13th century (Quattrone and Pisano 2012). Five other villages were subsequently founded by Occitan Waldensian migrants: Montalto Uffugo, Vaccarizzo, San Vincenzo La Costa e San Sisto dei Valdesi. The only surviving Occitan Waldensian village is Guardia Piemontese (Stancati 2008).

The villages considered for this study are mainly inhabited by elderly individuals and provide a few essential services (e.g. Post office, small markets, and cafes). In each of the considered villages (as well as in Calabria in general) a wave of emigration occurred after WWII mainly to the principal cities of northern Italy such as Milan and Turin or to other European countries (Fofi 1964; Colucci 2008). Emigration is still a common occurrence, as people pursue academic studies or job opportunities in the larger cities of central and northern Italy (Viesti 2005).

Data collection

Ninety elderly and middle-aged informants were interviewed: 30 Arbëreshë (15 in Santa Caterina Albanese and 15 in Vaccarizzo Albanese), 30 Calabrians (15 in Mottafollone and 15 in Sant'Agata di Esaro), and 30 Occitans (in Guardia Piemontese).

Informants were selected on a random basis (mainly interviewing people walking on the street or talking in local cafes) and sometimes using a snowball method. We followed



Figure 1. The study area of Calabria, the southernmost region of Italy, on the left and the Province of Cosenza above. A = Arbëreshë villages C = Calabrian villages. O = Occitan village.

ethical guidelines prescribed by the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE, 2006). The free-listing method was used to elicit local knowledge on wild and semi-domesticated species utilized for culinary purposes. To obtain data on taxa used for medicinal purposes, we listed each part of the body one by one.

Data analysis

Data collected included the local name, part of the plant used, and process for culinary and/or medicinal use. The mentioned species were collected, when available, identified according to "Flora d'Italia" (Pignatti 1982), and then stored at the Herbarium of the University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo. Botanical nomenclature followed Bartolucci et al. 2018 and Galasso et al. 2018.

Data were compiled into an Excel database and sorted into culinary and medicinal purposes. We also calculated the total number of gastronomic and medicinal uses for comparison. Following González-Tejero et al. (2008), we calculated Jaccard Similarity Indices as follows:

$$JI = \left(C / (A + B - C) \right) \times 100$$

where A represents the number of taxa/Use Instances in sample A, B is the number of taxa/Use Instances in sample B and C is the number of taxa/Use Instances common to A and B.

Following Kalle and Sõukand (2016), we considered the detailed use-reports, employing emic categories for both medicinal and food uses of plants.

Results

Diversity of wild and semi-domesticated food and medicinal species

We recorded a total of 85 taxa belonging to 39 families (Table 1). Fifty-one taxa were used for gastronomic purposes only, while 9 were only used medicinally, and 25 were used both for healing and cooking. Arbëreshë informants reported the use of 67 taxa (42 for culinary purposes, 10 for medicinal purposes, and 15 for both), Calabrians mentioned 68 taxa (44 for culinary purposes, 6 for medicinal purposes, and 18 for both), while Occitans listed 61 taxa (45 for culinary purposes, 5 for medicinal purposes, and 11 for both).

The most well represented families were Rosaceae (n = 12), Asteraceae (n = 10), Lamiaceae (n = 7) and Apiaceae (n = 5). Eight taxa were mentioned in each community for both medicinal and gastronomic uses. These included *Ficus carica* (dried, baked, boiled, raw syconia), *Foeniculum vulgare* (both fresh aerial parts and dried seeds), *Laurus nobilis* (mainly as seasoning and in infusions), *Muscari comosum* (once harvested during springtime, they are now often bought at local markets), *Malus* sp. pl. (both eaten as a fruit or boiled in decoctions), *Urtica dioica* (mainly used for medicinal purposes) and *cicoria* (F.H.Wigg. sect. *Taraxacum* and *Cichorium intybus*). The most quoted taxa for medicinal purposes included *Matricaria chamomilla* and *Malva* sp. pl.

which are often used in decoctions and were considered as mild panaceas.

Medicinal plants were administered in different forms such as infusions, decoctions, poultices, and fomentations. In particular, decoctions were often used as panaceas. Some elderly individuals reported recipes of *decottu* (decoction) which were used as medicine for most minor ailments such as cough, flu, and mild abdominal pain. The *decottu* was often made from *Malus*, *Ficus carica*, *Malva sylvestris* and sometimes other species such as *Laurus nobilis*, *Prunus dulcis*, *Juglans regia*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, and *Matricaria chamomilla*. Various ingredients are mixed and boiled together and the resultant decoction is considered a panacea. In some cases, it was prepared in the evening and then left outside the window to be exposed to the night-time humidity (*sereno*).

In the past, anti-helminthic plants were important medicines, especially among children. Even though there is no longer a need, elderly individuals often reported the use of *Ruta graveolens*, *Clinopodium nepeta*, *Matricaria chamomilla*, *Mentha* sp. pl. and garlic administered in infusions or juices. In Sant'Agata di Esaro (Calabrians), some informants mentioned the use of the algae *simentella* (*Corallina officinalis*), that came from the village of Diamante on the coast, as a strong anti-helminthic agent which was administered to children until several decades ago. Indeed, Marmocchi (1844) reported the common use of *Corallina* as a powerful anti-helminthic.

We found 66 different detailed use-reports including 35 culinary and 31 medicinal uses. However, we did not find significant differences among the three groups. Detailed food use-reports included 27 among Occitans, 29 among Arbëreshë, and 31 among Calabrians. In each group, the most common use-reports were 'eaten raw' (as a snack), 'cooked in mixed soups', 'prepared in liquor', or 'used for seasoning'.

Regarding detailed medicinal use-reports, we found 22 uses among both the Arbëreshë and Occitans and 25 among Calabrians. The most common uses were decoctions shared by the three groups, and infusions to treat abdominal pain as well as to treat cough. Wild vegetables gathered and consumed by Arbëreshë (A), Calabrians (C) and Occitans (O) in the Province of Cosenza (Calabria, southern Italy) are included in the Table 1.

Comparison among the three groups

The Venn diagram (Figure 2) shows a large number of species common to all three linguistic groups (n = 50), a variable number of taxa common to two groups (between n = 1 and n = 5) and some taxa mentioned only within a single linguistic group.

When calculating similarity among medicinal taxa, lower Jaccard indices are observed, yet they are quite similar among the three groups. Gastronomic taxa among the three groups are homogenous. The Jaccard similarity indices indicate a lower degree of similarity of the plants used for medicinal purposes (Table 2).

Table 1. List of recorded taxa in Arbëreshë, Calabrian and Occitan communities in the Province of Cosenza. The symbol * represents a taxon or use of a taxon which is no longer practiced. Recorded local names were written following Italian phonology except for names in italics which indicate that Arbëreshë phonology was followed. A = Arbëreshë; C = Calabrians; O = Occitans. (M) indicates medicinal preparations while (F) food preparations.

Botanical taxon/a and family	Recorded local name	Parts used	Reported food (F) or medicinal (M) Use	A n = 30	C n = 30	O n = 30
<i>Allium</i> sp. pl. (Amaryllidaceae)	Hudor (A)	Bulbs and leaves	(F) Seasoning	1		
<i>Allium ampeloprasum</i> L. (Amaryllidaceae)	Porro selvatico (C)	Bulbs	(F) Preserved with vinegar (F) Preserved with olive oil		3 2	
<i>Amaranthus retroflexus</i> L. (Amaranthaceae) UNISGCAL007	Vritta (A)	Leaves	(F) Mixed soups (F) Ravioli filling (F) On pizza	4 3 1		
<i>Arbutus unedo</i> L. (Ericaceae) UNISGCAL016	Aruamule (A), Cacungolo (A); Arrobete (C), Cacumpr (C); Gumnier (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw as a snack (F) Jam (F) Liquor (F) Mustard (F) Dessert	5 5 1 1 1	9 4 1 1 1	14 1 2
<i>Asparagus acutifolius</i> L. (Asparagaceae) UNISGCAL014	Sparaglio (A), Sparaini (A), Sparici (A); Asparago servaggio (C); Spangoli (O)	Stems	(F) Cooked with eggs or in omelettes (F) Boiled (F) Cooked with risotto or pasta	15 13 6	20 5 8	19 3 5
<i>Atropa bella-donna</i> L.* (Solanaceae)	Belladonna (A, C)	Fruits	(M) Jams to treat anxiety (M) Jams to treat abdominal pain	1 1	1	
<i>Beta vulgaris</i> L. (Amaranthaceae) UNISGCAL020	Sescola (A), Bieta (A, C); Beta servag (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soups (F) Boiled	3 1	8	6 2
<i>Borago officinalis</i> L. (Boraginaceae) UNISGCAL006	Fraina (A); Vurraina (A, C); Burraina (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soups (F) Stir-fried (F) Raw in salads (F) Cooked with sanguinaccio (F) Boiled (M) Infusion as a diuretic	5 5 5 9 2 1		3 3 3 9 1
<i>Brassica fruticulosa</i> Cirillo subsp. fruticulosa (Brassicaceae)	Rapanida (A), Rapa selvatica (A), Cavociell (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soups (F) Boiled and stir-fried	6 4		2 3
<i>Capparis spinosa</i> L. (Capparaceae)	Chiapparo (A)	Thallus	(F) Raw in salads (F) Preserved with vinegar	5 14		3
<i>Castanea sativa</i> Mill. (Fagaceae)	<i>Kështënjë</i> (A); Castagna (C); Cistagnier (O)	Fruits	(F) Seasoning (F) Boiled (F) Bread* (F) Baked (F) Jam (F) Dessert (F) Liquor	12 8 2 8 4 3 3	17 2 17 17 8 3	18 6 14 1 4
<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i> L. (Fabaceae)	Sciusedda (O)	Dried Fruits	(F) Raw as a snack			4
<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i> L. subsp. <i>siliquastrum</i> (Fabaceae)	Albero di Giuda (C)	Flowers	(F) Raw as a snack		2	
<i>Cichorium intybus</i> L. (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL008	Cicoria (A); Marella (C), Mareddi (C); Cicoira (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Preserved with olive oil (F) Mixed soup (F) Preserved with vinegar (F) Boiled and then stir-fried (F) Boiled and then in salads	1 13 3 13	9 20 9	13 11 13
<i>Clematis vitalba</i> L. (Ranunculaceae) UNISGCAL011	Curparo (A), Curpure (A); Vingiarra (C); Vttus (O)	Shoots	(F) Boiled and then stir-fried (F) Omelettes (F) Boiled and then in salads	20 9 9	9 8 3	9 4 10
<i>Clinopodium nepeta</i> (L.) Kuntze subsp. <i>nepeta</i> (Lamiaceae) UNISGCAL028	Anipeta (A); Aniepeta (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Seasoning (M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain (M) To treat bee stings (M) Anti-helminthic*			3 1 2
<i>Corallina officinalis</i> L.* (Corallinaceae)	Simentella (C)	Aerial parts	(M) Anti-helminthic*		2	2
<i>Corylus avellana</i> L. (Betulaceae) UNISGCAL023	Noccioline (A, C, O)	Fruits	(F) Baked (F) Filling for dried figs	6	4 1	7
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i> Jacq. (Rosaceae) UNISGCAL027	Biancospino (A, C); Bossu (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw as a snack	1	3	1
		Flowers	(M) Infusion as a sleep-inducing agent (M) Infusion as refresher	2		3
<i>Cydonia oblonga</i> Mill. (Rosaceae)	Pero cotogno (A); Mela cotogna (C; O)	Fruits	(F) Boiled (F) Jam	2	3 1	1
<i>Cynara cardunculus</i> L. subsp. <i>cardunculus</i> (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL030	Carciofini servaggi (A, C O)	Buds	(F) Preserved with olive oil (F) Preserved with vinegar (F) Stir-fried	7 9 3	6	1 2
<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers. (Poaceae) UNISGCAL034	Gramigna (A)	Roots	(M) Infusion to treat the prostate	2		
		Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soups	3	5	6

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Botanical taxon/a and family	Recorded local name	Parts used	Reported food (F) or medicinal (M) Use	A n= 30	C n= 30	O n= 30
<i>Daucus carota</i> L. (Apiaceae) UNISGCAL039	Ars (A), Pastinacchia (C) Pastinanagl (O)		(F) Boiled and stir-fried		1	
<i>Diplotaxis tenuifolia</i> (L.) DC. (Brassicaceae) UNISGCAL015	Rugola (A); Aruoc (O)	Leaves	(F) Seasoning (F) Stir-fried (F) Boiled (F) Raw in salads	1 1 2 2		3 4
<i>Equisetum arvense</i> L. (Equisetaceae) UNISGCAL018	Erba cavallina (A)	Aerial parts	(M) Decoction to treat the kidneys	1		
<i>Euphorbia helioscopia</i> L. subsp. <i>helioscopia</i> (Euphorbiaceae) UNISGCAL022	Euforbia (O)	Latex	(M) To treat (foot) warts			1
<i>Fallopia dumetorum</i> (L.) Holub (Polygonaceae) UNISGCAL024	Vitareddi (A), Curriolo (C)	Aerial parts	(F) Boiled (F) Mixed Soup	1	1	
<i>Ficus carica</i> L. (Moraceae) UNISGCAL025	Fik (A); Fico (C); Fica (O)	Fruits	(F) Boiled (F) Raw (F) Dried (F) Fig honey (F) Jam (M) Infusion to treat cough (M) Decoction	25 25 25 8 1 3 10	26 26 26 11 1 1 8	27 27 27 9 1 1 8
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> Mill. subsp. <i>vulgare</i> (Apiaceae) UNISGCAL026	Mèraj (A); Finocc (C); Fneugl (O)	Seeds	(F) Seasoning (F) Liquor (M) Infusion to treat headache (M) Infusion to treat cough (M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain (M) Infusion to lose weight (M) Mouthwash (M) Fomentation to treat earache	16 8 1 3 4 1	21 9	19 2
		Fresh aerial parts	(F) Cooked with fava beans (F) Seasoning (F) Mixed soups (F) Cooked with pasta (F) Stir-fried (F) Boiled (F) Cooked with polenta (F) Liquor (F) Jam (F) Raw (F) Preserved in alcohol (F) Dessert (F) Frozen (F) Ice-cream or slush	9 9 9 7 6 1 1 8 2 4 3 1 1 4	4 14 5 1 6 1 10 10 10 3 3 1 4	10 6 7 8 14 9 5 4
<i>Fragaria vesca</i> L. subsp. <i>vesca</i> (Rosaceae) UNISGCAL052	Fragoline, aula (A); Fragoline (C); Maius (O)	Fruits	(F) Cooked with polenta (F) Liquor (F) Jam (F) Raw (F) Preserved in alcohol (F) Dessert (F) Frozen (F) Ice-cream or slush	8 2 4 4 3 3 1 1 4	10 4 10 10 3 3 1 4	9 5 4 4
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> L. (Fabaceae) UNISGCAL035	Rigoliz (A), Argalizia (C)	Roots	(F) Raw (F) Liquor (M) Infusion to control blood pressure (M) Decoction	4 2 2 3	1 2	
<i>Helminthotheca echioides</i> (L.) Holub (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL003- UNISGCAL004	Spraina (A); Scarola servaggia (C); Spiraina (O), Lactugag (O)	Leaves	(F) Mixed soup (F) Boiled	4 3	5	4
<i>Helosciadium nodiflorum</i> (L.) W.D.J.Koch subsp. <i>nodiflorum</i> (Apiaceae) UNISGCAL010	Scavun (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Raw in salads			6
<i>Humulus lupulus</i> L. (Cannabaceae)	Luppolo selvatico (A, O)	Shoots	(F) Boiled and in omelettes	1		1
<i>Juglans regia</i> L. (Juglandaceae)	Arrè (A); Noce (C); Nuis (fruit); Nuvier (tree) (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw (F) Filling for dried figs (F) Liquor (F) Cooked with pasta (F) Cooked with sanguinaccio (F) Dessert (F) Omelettes (M) Decoction	3 9 2 1 2 5 2 1	10 16 17 1 1 7 1	9 11 2 1 1
		Dried leaves	(M) Powder to treat warts		4	
<i>Juniperus communis</i> L. (Cupressaceae)	Ginepro (C)	Berries	(F) Liquor (F) Seasoning		5 4	
<i>Knautia integrifolia</i> (L.) Bertol. subsp. <i>integrifolia</i> (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL001 UNISGCAL002a/b	Chanavedd (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soup			8
<i>Kundmannia sicula</i> (L.) DC. (Apiaceae)	Piede di Nibbio (C)	Young leaves	(F) Mixed soup		1	

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Botanical taxon/a and family	Recorded local name	Parts used	Reported food (F) or medicinal (M) Use	A n=30	C n=30	O n=30			
<i>Laurus nobilis</i> L. (Lauraceae) UNISGCAL038	Dafina (A); Lauro (A, C, O)	Berries Leaves	(F) Liquor	3	8				
			(F) Seasoning	15	16	10			
			(M) Decoction	3	1	5			
			(M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain		7	5			
			(M) Infusion to treat headache			1			
			(M) Mouthwash			1			
			(M) Fomentation to treat earache			1			
<i>Malus</i> sp. pl. (Rosaceae)	Mola (A); Meli servaggi (C); Pummier (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw	12	12	10			
			(F) Cooked in the ash	1					
			(F) Jam		1				
			(F) Boiled		1				
			(M) Infusion to treat cough	1		1			
			(M) Decoction	2	5	2			
<i>Malva sylvestris</i> L. (Malvaceae) UNISGCAL040	Malva (A); Marvn (C), Marva (C); Varmn (O)	Fresh or dried aerial parts; Roots	(M) Infusion to treat cough	4	3	4			
			(F) Bread with lupins and rye			1			
			(M) Poultice to treat the skin	4	5	2			
			(M) Decoction	10	7	5			
			(M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain	3	4	11			
			(M) Infusion to treat the kidneys	1	1				
			(M) Infusion as a detox	3	1				
			(M) Poultice to treat toothache	2	5				
			(M) Mouthwash		1	1			
			(M) Fomentation for earache			1			
			(M) Infusion to treat headache			1			
			<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i> L. (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL043	Camomigl (A), Galumiggia (A); Camomill (C); Cacomill (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Liquor		3	
						(M) Infusion as a mild sedative	8	13	16
(M) Infusion to treat cough	4	1							
(M) Poultice to treat bee stings	1	2				1			
(M) Poultice to treat warts	1	1							
(M) Decoction	5	5				3			
(M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain	7	4				8			
(M) Infusion to treat headache	1					1			
(M) Fomentation to treat earache						1			
(M) Anti-helminthic*						3			
(M) Infusion to treat the eyes	2	3				2			
<i>Mentha</i> sp. pl. (Lamiaceae) including <i>Mentha arvensis</i> L. UNISGCAL046	Mendre (A), Menta (A, C, O);	Leaves				(F) Seasoning	9	13	9
						(F) Liquor		4	
			(M) Infusion as anti-helminthic*			2			
			(M) Infusion as a detox			3			
			(M) Poultice to treat toothache		1				
			<i>Mentha pulegium</i> L. subsp. <i>pulegium</i> (Lamiaceae) UNISGCAL047	Puliau (A)	Aerial parts	(F) Seasoning	2		
(M) Fomentation to treat headache	2								
<i>Mespilus germanica</i> L. (Rosaceae)	Nespola (A, C)	Seeds Fruits	(F) Liquor	1	1				
<i>Morus alba</i> L. (Moraceae)	Amuricivice (A), Cerso (A); Cersa (O), Cersi (C), Murianchieri (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw	3	14	9			
			(F) Liquor			1			
<i>Morus nigra</i> L. (Moraceae)	Amuricivice (A), Cerso (A); Cersi (C); Cersa (O), Muricid(O)	Fruits	(F) Raw	6	10	6			
			(F) Slush		2				
			(F) Jam		2				
<i>Muscari comosum</i> (L.) Mill. (Asparagaceae)	Cipugline (A), Cipollizze (A); Cipolline (C); Cipullett (O)	Bulbs	(F) Preserved with olive oil	6	5	2			
			(F) Stir-fried	14	12	16			
			(F) Preserved with vinegar	1	3	3			
			(F) Omelette		4				
			(M) Juice applied on temples to treat headache*	6	3	5			
			(M) Warm <i>Muscari</i> with bran to treat rheumatism		1				
<i>Myrtus communis</i> L. (Myrtaceae)	Mirtiddu/a (A, C); Murtidd (O)	Fruits	(F) Liquor	1	8	4			
			(F) Seasoning	9	11	6			

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Botanical taxon/a and family	Recorded local name	Parts used	Reported food (F) or medicinal (M) Use	A n=30	C n=30	O n=30
			(F) Raw as a snack			1
			(M) Powder of dry leaves to treat warts		1	
<i>Nasturtium officinale</i> R.Br. (Brassicaceae) UNISGCAL048	Crescione (A, C); Pisciarriello (C)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soup	2	1	
			(F) Boiled and stir-fried		2	
			(F) Raw in salad		6	
<i>Olea europaea</i> L. (Oleaceae)	Ulivo (A, C)	Leaves	(F) Liquor		1	
			(M) Infusion as a sedative	2		
<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i> (L.) Mill. (Cactaceae)	<i>Fik palet</i> (A); <i>Fichi a paletta</i> (C); <i>Fik de mori</i> (O)	Leaves	(F) Peels sundried and then batter-fried *	4	15	3
			(F) Raw	5		14
			(F) Liquor	1		
			(M) Face lotions	3	2	
<i>Origanum vulgare</i> L. (Lamiaceae) UNISGCAL053	Rigat (A), Rigan (A); Arregano (C); Arringhian (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Seasoning	11	19	16
			(M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain		1	
			(M) Infusion to treat cough		1	
<i>Orobanche crenata</i> Forssk. (Orobanchaceae)	Spurchia (A)	Stems	(F) Boiled and then stir-fried	2		
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i> L. subsp. <i>Rhoeas</i> (Papaveraceae) UNISGCAL051	Paparine (A), Iuglicuche (A); Papparina (C); Cuccuvedd (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Boiled	8	11	2
			(F) Mixed soup	1	4	6
			(F) Stir-fried	1		1
<i>Papaver somniferum</i> L.* (Papaveraceae)		Seed pods	(M) Sleep inducing*		1	6
<i>Parietaria officinalis</i> L. (Urticaceae) UNISGCAL017	Erba du vient (C)	Aerial parts	(M) Poultice to treat stings		1	
			(M) Infusion to treat rheumatism		1	
			(M) Infusion to treat renal colic		1	
<i>Pimpinella anisoides</i> V.Br. (Apiaceae)	Ananzu (A, C), Anze (A), Anice (O)	Seeds	(F) Seasoning	1	16	12
<i>Plantago</i> sp. pl. (Plantaginaceae) including <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> L. UNISGCAL009	Piantaggine (A)	Leaves	(M) To treat pain caused by vipers	1		
<i>Portulaca oleracea</i> L. (Portulacaceae) UNISGCAL012	Purchiaccia (A, C), Andracchia (C); Purciacc, Gressun (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Raw in salads	19	15	10
			(F) Mixed soup			1
<i>Prunus cerasus</i> L. (Rosaceae)	<i>Gjershi</i> (A); <i>Amarena servatica</i> (C); <i>Cerese</i> (O)	Fruits	(F) Jam	14	10	4
			(F) Preserved with alcohol	5	3	
			(F) Liquor		1	
<i>Prunus domestica</i> L. (Rosaceae)	Prugna (A, O); Prugni (C)	Fruits	(F) Jam	6	3	8
			(F) Raw	4	5	
<i>Prunus dulcis</i> (Mill.) D.A.Webb (Rosaceae)	Mendole (A); Mandorle (C); Miendle (O)	Fruits	(F) Filling for figs	6	3	
			(F) Raw	2		3
		Peel	(M) Decoction	1		
<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L. subsp. <i>spinosa</i> (Rosaceae)	Prugnolo (A)	Fruits	(F) Raw	1		
<i>Punica granatum</i> L. (Lythraceae)	Shegga (A); Melograno (C, O)	Fruits	(F) Raw	2		5
			(F) Liquor	1	2	
			(M) Decoction	2		
<i>Pyrus</i> sp. pl. (Rosaceae)	Darda (A), Peri (A, C); Prussier (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw	11	13	9
			(F) Cooked in the ash	1		
			(F) Jam		2	2
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i> L. subsp. <i>raphanistrum</i> (Brassicaceae) UNISGCAL013	Laprista (A, C), Lapristi (A); Laprist (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soup	8	2	4
			(F) Boiled and then stir-fried	4	1	11
			(F) Boiled			12
<i>Reichardia picroides</i> (L.) Roth (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL019	Ricotteggia (A)		(F) Mixed soup	1		
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i> L. (Fabaceae)	Agaggia (C)	Flowers	(F) Batter-fried		4	
<i>Robinia idaeus</i> L. subsp. <i>idaeus</i> (Rosaceae)	Lamponi (C)	Fruits	(F) Raw		3	
			(F) Dessert		2	
			(F) Jam		1	
			(F) Frozen		1	
			(F) Liquor		1	
<i>Rubus ulmifolius</i> Schott (Rosaceae) UNISGCAL029	Menze (A); Muri (C); Runzieri (O)	Fruits	(F) Jam	13	13	16
			(F) Dessert	1	7	
			(F) Frozen	1	1	
			(F) Raw	4	6	3
			(F) Liquor	2	6	3
			(F) Slush		1	
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> L. (Asparagaceae) UNISGCAL033	Pungitopi (A); Pungisorci (C), Pungitopo (O)	Stems	(F) Omelettes	4	8	3
			(F) Cooked with pasta		1	
<i>Ruta graveolens</i> L. (Rutaceae)	Rutta (A); Ruta (C); Rud (O)	Leaves	(F) Liquor		1	
			(M) Anti-helminthic*	1	8	6
			(M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain			1

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Botanical taxon/a and family	Recorded local name	Parts used	Reported food (F) or medicinal (M) Use	A n=30	C n=30	O n=30
			(M) Infusion in alcohol to treat abdominal pain		1	
			(M) Poultice and infusion to treat toothache			1
<i>Salvia officinalis</i> L. (Lamiaceae) UNISGCAL037	Salvia (A, C); Salvio (O)	Leaves	(M) Infusion as a panacea		2	
			(F) Seasoning	2	7	3
			(F) Liquor		1	
			(M) Infusion to wash the eyes	2		
			(M) Infusion to treat stomach pain		1	
			(M) Infusion to wash the teeth		1	
<i>Salvia rosmarinus</i> Schleid. (Lamiaceae) UNISGCAL021	Rosemarino (A, C); Rumarin (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Seasoning	3	4	9
			(F) Liquor		1	
			(M) Infusion to treat stomach pain		1	
			(M) Powder of dried leaves to treat warts		1	
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L. (Viburnaceae)	Shtogju (A), Catamaiu (A); Sam'co (C); Mur de Reuz (O)	Flowers	(F) Batter-fried	2	13	1
			(F) Juice			1
			(M) Decoction	2		
			(M) Infusion to treat flu			1
<i>Sinapis arvensis</i> L. subsp. <i>arvensis</i> (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL041	Ravisol (O), Ricottella (O)	Aerial parts	(M) Poultice to treat warts			2
			(F) Boiled			8
<i>Sonchus</i> sp. pl. (Asteraceae) including <i>Sonchus asper</i> (L.) Hill UNISGCAL031- UNISGCAL032 <i>Sonchus oleraceus</i> (L.) L. UNISGCAL036	Cardun (A); Cardoni (C), Chardun (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soup	14	4	5
			(F) Boiled and stir-fried	11		2
			(F) Stems raw as a snack*			2
<i>Sorbus domestica</i> L. (Rosaceae) F.H.Wigg. sect. <i>Taraxacum</i> (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL042	Varzi (A) Sorbo (A, C); Zorbier (O)	Fruits	(F) Raw	5	10	14
	Rrëshël (A), Risceddi (A); Tarassico (C)	Aerial parts	(F) Mixed soup	4		
<i>Thymus</i> sp. pl. (Lamiaceae) including <i>Thymbra capitata</i> (L.) Cav. UNISGCAL044 <i>Tilia cordata</i> Mill. (Malvaceae) <i>Tolpis umbellata</i> Bertol. (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL045 <i>Urtica dioica</i> L. (Urticaceae) UNISGCAL050	Timo (C, O)	Aerial parts	(F) Boiled and then stir-fried	4	1	
			(F) Raw in salads		3	
			(F) Preserved with olive oil	1		
			(F) Mixed soup	13	9	13
			(F) Preserved with vinegar	3		
			(F) Boiled and then stir-fried	13	20	11
<i>Tilia cordata</i> Mill. (Malvaceae)	Tiglio (A, C, O)	Flowers	(M) Infusion as a sedative	3	2	1
			(F) Mixed soup			8
<i>Tolpis umbellata</i> Bertol. (Asteraceae) UNISGCAL045 <i>Urtica dioica</i> L. (Urticaceae) UNISGCAL050	Yerva bianc (O)	Aerial parts	(F) Soup	1		2
			(F) Cooked in risotto		2	1
			(F) Ravioli filling		6	
			(M) Boiled to treat wounds	1		2
			(M) Poultice to wash the hair	3	3	8
			(M) Broth for fomentation as a panacea	2		
			(M) Poultice to treat rheumatism	1	1	
			(M) Broth to treat the kidneys	1	2	
			(M) Infusion to treat abdominal pain		1	
			(M) Infusion as a laxative		1	
			<i>Ziziphus jujuba</i> Mill. (Rhamnaceae)	Iuiule (A), Iuiuma (A, C); Iuiu (O)	(Dried) Fruits	(F) Raw
(F) Liquor	2	1				
(F) Jam		1				
(M) Decoction	1	1				

A diagram of the top 10 plants used highlights three species relevant to all three communities (*Asparagus acutifolius*, *Ficus carica* and *Foeniculum vulgare*), another two common to Calabrians and Occitans (*Origanum vulgare* and *Castanea sativa*), while *Laurus nobilis* is common to the Arbëreshë and Calabrians and *Muscari comosum* is common to both the Arbëreshë and Occitans (Figure 3).

Comparison with the Arbëreshë of Vulture (Basilicata)

A considerable portion of the recorded species taxa in this study had previously been documented in another area inhabited by the Arbëreshë, the Vulture region (Basilicata). We found 6 medicinal taxa earlier reported by Pieroni, Nebel et al., 2002, Pieroni, Quave et al., 2002 and Pieroni and

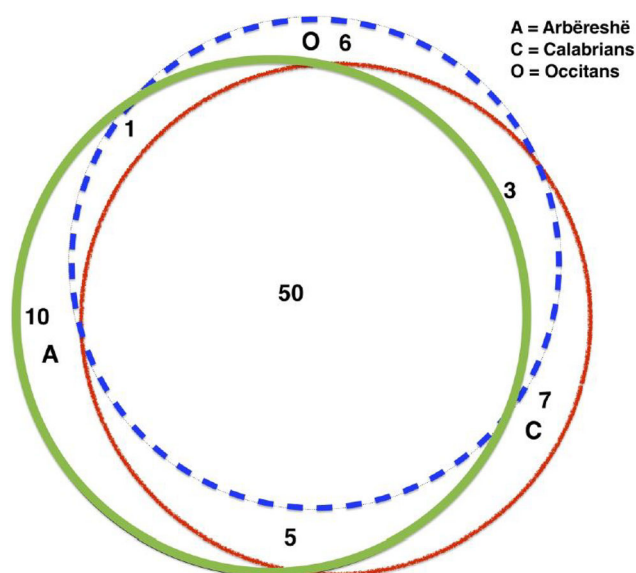


Figure 2. Proportional Venn diagram: number of taxa mentioned for each linguistic group.

Table 2. Jaccard similarity indices for the compared groups for all currently used taxa, taxa only used for food preparations, and taxa only used for medicinal preparations.

Compared groups	J_{taxa}	$J_{\text{food}_{\text{taxa}}}$	$J_{\text{medicinal}_{\text{taxa}}}$
Arbëreshë & Calabrians	72.36	69.11	41.93
Arbëreshë & Occitans	68.00	73.84	44.44
Calabrians & Occitans	73.61	67.16	45.83

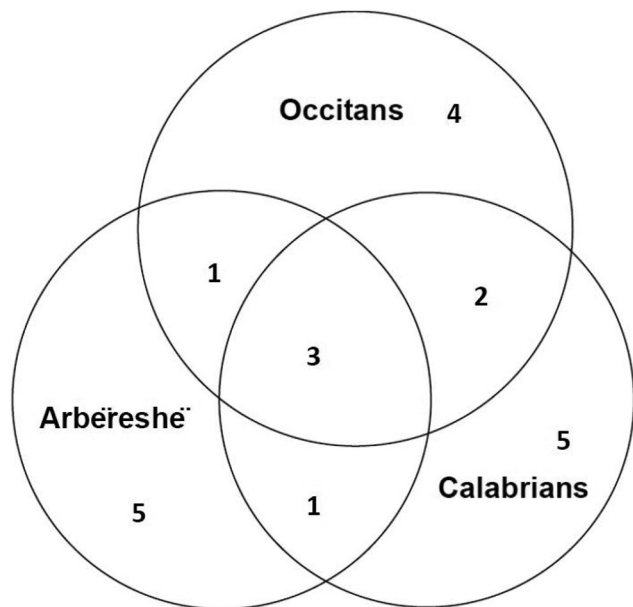


Figure 3. Proportional Venn diagram: distribution of the 10 top used taxa for each linguistic group.

Quave (2005), including *Cynara cardunculus*, *Ficus carica*, *Laurus nobilis*, *Malus* sp. pl., *Malva sylvestris*, and *Prunus dulcis*. These plants are mainly administered as decoctions. Five other taxa mentioned in Pieroni, Quave et al., 2002 and Pieroni and Quave 2005 include remedies such as *Glycyrrhiza glabra* and *Sambucus nigra* to treat cough and sore throat, but they are mentioned only by a few people.

Papaver somniferum is no longer used as a sedative in either Calabria or Basilicata. On the other hand, *Muscari comosum* and *Matricaria chamomilla* are very common and can also be found in local markets.

Regarding food species, we found 44 taxa earlier reported by Pieroni et al. (2002) and an additional 13 when also including Giusti et al. (2002). Taxa common to the three studies include *Borago officinalis*, *Foeniculum vulgare*, *Papaver rhoeas*, and *Sonchus* sp. pl. which were also observed in other Mediterranean areas such as Spain and Greece (Leonti et al. 2006). *Amaranthus retroflexus* was only recorded among the Arbëreshë (yet was also found in Apulia by Biscotti and Pieroni 2015), while other taxa such as, *Clematis vitalba*, *Nasturtium officinale*, *Origanum vulgare*, and *Portulaca oleracea* were recorded in different areas of Italy (e.g. Apulia (Biscotti and Pieroni 2015), or Campania (De Natale et al. 2009)). Specifically, Ghirardini et al. (2007) found *Asparagus acutifolius* and *Urtica dioica* to be common to several areas of Italy.

Comparison with other Calabrian communities

In 2007, Leporatti and Impieri (2007) published research on medicinal plants used in 11 villages located in northern Calabria. We found 19 genera in common with our findings. Particularly, 9 genera and taxa were mentioned by all three groups: *Ficus carica* (commonly used as a co-adjutant in therapies for treating cold, flu, and cough), *Malus*, *Malva sylvestris* (commonly used in lenitive infusions or decoctions), *Matricaria* (to treat abdominal pain and as a mild sedative, also in Passalacqua et al. 2007), *Tilia cordata*, *Urtica dioica* (local washing), and *Ziziphus jujuba* (to treat cough). In addition, other common uses reported in Leporatti and Impieri (2007) include: *Clinopodium nepeta* used to treat bee and insect stings, *Cynodon dactylon* as a diuretic (also in Passalacqua et al. 2007), *Juglans regia* against excessive foot perspiration, *Sambucus nigra* in a decoction as an external wash for an affected body part (also in Passalacqua et al. 2007) and *Ruta graveolens* as an anti-helminthic. Moreover, Passalacqua et al. (2007) describe the use of *Parietaria* (the infusion is a diuretic and effective in cases of renal and kidney stones) as in Sant'Agata di Esaro.

Comparison with Piedmontese Waldensians and Occitans

In comparing our results with the research conducted by Bellia and Pieroni (2015) among the Waldensians in Piedmont, we found 18 shared taxa (including *Asparagus* which is called *acutifolius* in Guardia Piemontese and *tenuifolius* in Piedmont). Occitans mentioned none of them exclusively and thus we suppose that the relevant diversity in terms of geography and climate may have induced Occitans to adapt their original cuisine to the new environment.

In Guardia Piemontese there are two main identitarian recipes. One is *Pallod*, a soup made from several wild plants including *Borago officinalis*, *Raphanus raphanistrum*, *Daucus carota*, *Clematis vitalba*, *Foeniculum vulgare*, *Papaver rhoeas*,

Portulaca oleracea, *Tolpis umbellata*, *Helminthotheca echioides*, *Knautia integrifolia*, and *cicoira* (F.H. Wigg. sect. *Taraxacum* and *Cichorium intybus*). All those plants are boiled together and served with broth, potatoes and some pasta. The second recipe is a peculiar use of polenta among the inhabitants of Guardia Piemontese. In fact, in this region polenta is cooked with *Foeniculum vulgare* or other food plants (e.g. *Cichorium intybus*), while in northern Italy (which is home to this dish) it is only cooked with (game) meat or cheese. Indeed, there is also a southern recipe of polenta cooked with broccoli called *thriscatula* (or *frascatula*) which is widespread in Sicily, Calabria and Basilicata. The use of polenta in Guardia might have its roots in either the northern or southern version.

Discussion

Overall the data showed that there are no significant differences among the three linguistic communities in Calabria. We observed good persistence of traditional ecological knowledge related, in particular, to culinary uses. However, we also observed the concurrence of other phenomena striving to the erosion of traditional ecological knowledge, such as limited intergenerational transmission

As pointed out by Gómez-Baggethun et al. (2010), traditional ecological knowledge is mainly held by community elders and intergenerational transmission is quite limited because of the low number of young people living in these villages. Traditional knowledge is often seen by young villagers as something “old and useless”, often requiring “too much time”. Indeed, wild food and medicinal plant gathering is a knowledge intensive practice, requiring specific ecological knowledge. Kalle and Sõukand (2016) proposed the term “unlearning debt” to describe this phenomenon in which specific knowledge on local practices is still alive in the memory of the older generation, but it is no longer transferred to younger generations and thus it is destined to be forgotten. The unlearning debt is a common occurrence in this study area, and the lack of interest among minority youths may also be due to the influence of the dominant culture (Tang and Gavin 2016).

The dismantling of the traditional rural way of life resulted in a high rate of the abandonment of farming and a shift toward a landscape characterized by forest expansion. This and an ageing population, no longer able or interested in accessing areas far from villages, resulted in more limited exposure to the ecosystem and the subsequent change in ecological knowledge (Benz et al. 2000; Reyes-García et al. 2007). Yet, in our study area, small family farming systems such as home-gardens and the breeding of pigs and chickens are common and often the basis of many social activities. For instance, slaughtering pigs is still a once-a-year event that has to be celebrated with family, friends and neighbors. Additional evidence of the relevancy of small-scale farming activities includes the importance of locally produced food to the household economy, as often most daily food is grown by the family or obtained through exchanges with other villagers.

However, this form of autarchy does not apply to medications, which may be due to a predominance of “formal” knowledge regarding traditional practices in the medicinal domain. During our study in Guardia Piemontese we found a small piece of unpublished research carried out thirty years ago among the elderly individuals of the village by some local young people. In the premise of the report, the anonymous authors stated “Guardia’s inhabitants figured out natural remedies because of both their pride in folk knowledge and the scarcity of economic resources”. The increase in economic resources, which allowed people to buy medicines, and the simultaneous introduction of free medical advice provided by the Italian health-care system that often prescribes “formal” medicaments far removed from local ecosystems have caused the greater erosion of traditional medicinal knowledge.

Despite the persistence of traditional ecological knowledge in rural Calabria, similarity indices among the three communities of this study show that ecological knowledge is following the pathway of homogenization and standardization toward the dominant model, which in this case is the Calabrian one. This phenomenon may occur because plant gathering is not perceived as being identitarian, and the people preserving such knowledge are not regarded as being guardians of the endangered Arbëreshë or Occitan culture. Indeed, Italian legislation on the protection of linguistic minorities (Act 482, 1999 “*Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche*”) focuses on linguistic preservation only, and does not consider other aspects of the minority culture such as traditions or local knowledge. Therefore, identity is mainly expressed only through language and sometimes religion as well. In fact, Arbëreshë is best preserved where Greek-Byzantine Religious rites are still widely practiced. In Guardia Piemontese there are no longer any people who follow the Waldensian faith, yet being Waldensian is still a crucial aspect of their identity. Culinary and medicinal uses of wild and semi-domesticated plants are not considered to be “special” or “different” from that of their neighbors, and thus not worthy of being preserved. This process, also observed by Menendez-Baceta et al. 2015, leads to the degradation of traditional knowledge without any social force to mitigate it.

The weakening of the importance of religion over the last several decades has brought about inter-marriages among the three communities, which has resulted in a homogenization of kinship relations and - attached to them - the oral transmission of traditional knowledge within these kinship networks. Homogenization of ethno-biological knowledge has been observed in other case studies (Zent and Zent 2004; Pieroni and Sõukand 2017) and may lead to a degradation of overall biocultural diversity. Homogenization of knowledge may be facilitated by the weakening of religious faith regulating kinship, but also by linguistic erosion and therefore vernacular mnemonics in the local language (McCarter 2012). Indeed, the centuries-old diffusion with Calabrian communities has influenced the language of the two minority groups we examined (Micali 2016). In line with Micali (2016), we found that many middle-aged individuals

have undergone a process of the “calabrization” of plant names and no longer even recall Occitan folk names for well-known local species.

Our overall data show the permanence of traditional ecological knowledge related to wild and semi-domesticated food and medicinal plants. However, we have highlighted a process of homogenization among the three studied communities.

Italian Act 482 on the protection of linguistic historical minorities has provided communities with some services in order to maintain their linguistic identity (e.g. some linguistic offices have been opened in each municipality). However, linguistic diversity is only one aspect of the complexity of biocultural diversity. Data presented in this study should find application in promoting the biocultural diversity, history and identity of Italian minorities. Moreover, our study calls for further field surveys in other isolated areas of Calabria to analyze how traditional ecological practices can be key tools in the development of local virtuous small-scale economies through initiatives such as eco-tourism, and the artisanal food entrepreneurship of wild food plant transformation. Indeed, the important role of wild food plants in the Mediterranean Diet is often neglected (Biscotti and Pieroni 2015; Leonti et al. 2006), even though they can be a crucial issue for promoting the dynamic conservation of the natural landscape, local resources and cultural customs.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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