

DELIBERATE

CONSUMERISM

*ORIGIN STORY OF PLANT MEDICINES
IN THE US MARKETPLACE*

*(STOLEN INDIGENOUS IP, BIOPIRACY, THE LASTING
LEGACY OF COLONIALISM)*

*to understand how marketplace goods get on our store shelves,
in our homes, and into our collective awareness, we must first
look at the larger economic network through which they pass.*

the dark underbelly of the **capitalist socioeconomic system** explained

capitalism is riding on the coattails of imperialism

this system relies heavily on *exploitation* and *inequality*

AND YET,

exonerates itself for remaining at the
helm of technology and innovation

the wellness industry is one sector of the US market economy deeply rooted in
imperialist ideology because it was built on
monopolizing the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities.

dietary supplements,
herbal extracts, spiritual
ceremonies, medical foods
are a few examples.

Traditional Knowledge is knowledge, know-how, skills and practices
that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within
a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity
[World Intellectual Property Organization]

Traditional Knowledge has set the groundwork for the global economy.

industries shaped
by indigenous IP

- pharmaceuticals
- environmental conservation
- agriculture
- cosmetics

it is not uncommon for regional indigenous communities to inhabit *biologically-diverse* and *resource-rich environments*, making the knowledge, practices and innovations of these communities valuable currency for the global community

Land Management

The role of regional birds in fire management and fire ecology

The Aboriginal people of Australia have long observed and understood the significance of intentional fire-spreading by birds. The implications of this process are crucial for effective landscape management and restoration.

Agriculture

Rice-Fish Co-Culture System

A farming technique developed in southern China over a millennia ago. Fish are farmed in rice fields wherein, the fish and rice create a mutually beneficial ecosystem. The reduction in pesticides and fertilizers and increase in yield are significant to agro-culture systems at large. This type of synergism produced the same principles that govern aquaponics today -- an expanding sector of agriculture industry.

Plant medicine

Maca Root

An adaptogenic herb popularized as a “superfood” and performance enhancer. Native to the Andes Mountains of Peru, Maca root has been a food staple of the Peruvian highland communities for millennia. The use of this root by the indigenous people was documented in 1533 by European colonizers. Demand for Maca root has been on the rise since in the 90s and market size is expected to reach USD 61 million.

Other examples of Traditional knowledge are:

Rainwater harvesting, rotational farming, sustainable management of marine resources, & ancient grains.

BIOPIRACY

the act of privatizing and profiting off traditional knowledge.
exploiting the intellectual property of local or indigenous people,
an economically advantaged individual or institution exclusively
monopolizes biological resources for financial gain.

BIOPROSPECTING

looking for new biological resources for social and economic value,
by exploring, extracting and screening indigenous knowledge.

Step 1:

bioprospecting in remote, biologically diverse areas.
indigenous populations share their knowledge of
flora and fauna and bioprospectors take notes.

Step 2:

bioprospectors return to their country with organic
material in tow. they may isolate chemical compounds
or genetically modify the DNA of the material.

Step 3:

bioprospectors apply for a patent. if the patent is
granted, the “inventor” will receive exclusive rights to
their “new invention” with no compensation to the
communities from whom they have stolen.

Step 4:

the compounds are then synthesized for use in
pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, supplements, fuel
industry, and so on and so forth.

step by step walk through of how biopiracy works

patented
organic plant life

*Neem Tree
Turmeric root
Darjeeling Tea
Ashwagandha
Maca root
Ayahuasca*

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The poaching of intellectual property rights is but one way colonial mentality prevails in the capitalist economy. Local and indigenous communities remain impoverished, while companies in “developed” nations continue to profit.

Regulations, protocols, and roadmaps for scientists, corporations, farmers, and consumers must be created to navigate this ambiguous line between scientific discovery and theft to ensure equitable and unambiguous sharing of genetic resources.

~ Resources for further research ~

ONLINE DOCS

- Amazon Bank of Codes
- Action Group on Erosion, Technology & Concentration
- Nagoy Protocol
- United Nations Framework Convention on Biological Diversity
- World Intellectual Property Organization
- Tkarihwaié:ri Code of Ethical Conduct

BOOKS

- Global Biopiracy** by Ikechi Mgbeoji
- Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge** by Vandana Shiva
- Shattering: Food, Politics, and the Loss of Genetic Diversity** by Pat Mooney
- Seeds of the Earth: A Private or Public Resource?** by Pat Mooney