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## **Friedrich Welwitsch and the knowledge of *materia medica* in nineteenth century Angola**

DURING HIS ACTIVITY AS a collector in Angola, the Austrian naturalist Friedrich Welwitsch (1806–1872) revealed a remarkable interest both in medicine and in the local *materia medica*. His compilation of informations on the utilization of medicinal plants is presented in *Sinopse explicativa das amostras de madeiras e drogas medicinais (...) coligidos na Província de Angola, e enviados a Exposição Internacional de Londres em 1862* (Lisboa: 1862) and other writings. Welwitsch did not publish all his notes on indigenous Angolan medicines, and several of them were used by Conde de Ficalho, in *Plantas úteis da África Portuguesa*, or published in the *Catalogue of the African Plants* collected by Dr. Friedrich Welwitsch in 1853–1861 by W. P. Hiern, concerning that part of Welwitsch's herbarium deposited in London at the Natural History Museum. Other authors also gathered information or wrote in the nineteenth century about Angolan *materia medica*, such as Father Augusto Severino Freire de Figueiredo, Agostinho Sisenando Marques e Joao Cardoso Júnior.

In this paper we aim to weigh the role played by Welwitsch and the other authors in the development of knowledge concerning Angolan *materia medica* in the nineteenth century. Welwitsch's studies were the apex of a new age of botanical exploration in Angola marked by a further investment by colonial authorities on the knowledge of the Empire's natural resources. This period put an end to a previous one (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) characterized by collections carried only by laypersons and outside European scientific production. During this new phase, initiated by Portuguese naturalist Joaquim José da Silva at the end of the eighteenth century, the interest in *materia medica* proper was often left aside in benefit of pure botanical studies, but still there was a considerable volume of data begathered concerning Angolan *materia medica*.

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