

2. *ABRUS PRECATORIUS* L. (FABACEAE) — Jequerity

Leaves can be used as a dangerous substitute for licorice. Bruised seeds have been used for poisonings. Boiled seeds have been eaten in famines. The red and black seeds are used in necklaces. Leaves are eaten as a potherb in East Africa. Powdered seed (ca 200 mg) used as an oral contraceptive in Central Africa, the single dose remaining effective for 13 menstrual cycles.

Seeds, seed hulls, and decorticated seed have been used for epitheliomas of the face, hand, mucosa, vagina and vulva, and for warts on the eyelids.<sup>4</sup> Decoction of the leaves and roots are used for colic, cold, and coughs. Leaves, high in glycyrrhizin, are chewed for hoarseness. Formerly a 5% infusion of decorticated seeds was dangerously used for granular eyelids and pannus. Infusion of the seeds, when applied to conjunctiva, may cause fatal poisoning. A suppository of the seed poultice brings on abortion. Zulu use a root decoction for pain in the chest. Luvale use vapor from crushed leaves in boiling water for inflamed eyes.<sup>3</sup> Fresh root chewed as an aphrodisiac. Yao use a plant decoction for gonorrhea. Ayurvedics consider the fruits aphrodisiac, tonic, and toxic, improving the complexion and taste perception, useful in biliousness, eye diseases, leucoderma, itch, skin ailments and wounds. Sharing these properties, the roots and leaves are also respected for their effects in adenopathy, asthma, caries (teeth) fever, head disorders, stomatitis, thirst, and tuberculous glands.<sup>26</sup> Yunani describe the fruit as ‘‘tonic to the brain and the body; harmful to old men’’,