THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE VHAVENDA

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

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In recent years Venda has suffered considerable environmental pressure as a result of overpopulation and agricultural and industrial expansion, which has led to indiscriminate destruction of vegetation and natural habitats.

The ethnobotany of the Vhavenda was studied with the aim of discovering their knowledge of, and dependence on mainly indigenous plants, and its impact on the local flora and vegetation. As the first comprehensive study of its kind in Venda, it also serves as a record of an important part of the cultural heritage of the Vhavenda. Personal observations and interviews with numerous Venda people have played an important role. Information from the literature on the uses of plants by the Vhavenda was also recorded and verified.

Herbarium specimens of more than 245 species of mainly indigenous, but also some exotic plants were collected and identified, and information on their uses recorded and analysed. Vernacular names for many taxa have also been recorded. The Vhavenda use indigenous plants for food, medicine, firewood, building, art, as sources of oils and dyes, for shade and as ornamentals. Despite the tendency to rely

increasingly on commodities available commercially, indigenous plants still play a significant role in the lives of many people in Venda.

A utilitarian system of plant classification exists among the Vhavenda. Most Venda names of plants are related to their traditional uses, morphology, anatomy, chemistry, behaviour, habitat or relationships with certain animals, while a few have onomatopoeic derivations. A traditional system of nature conservation has for long been responsible for the preservation of those plants considered to be important.

UITTREKSEL

THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE VHAVENDA
(DIE VOLKSPLANTKUNDE VAN DIE VHAVENDA)

deur

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Venda moes die afgelope aantal jare aansienlike omgewingsdruk verduur as gevolg van oorbevolking en uitbreiding op landbou- en nywerheidsgebied. Dit het gelei tot onoordeelkundige vernietiging van die plantegroei en natuurlike habitats.

Die volksplantkunde van die Vhavenda is bestudeer met die doel om insae te kry in hul kennis en afhanklikheid van hoofsaaklik inheemse plante, en die invloed daarvan op die plaaslike flora en plantegroei. As die eerste omvattende studie van sy soort, dien dit ook as 'n opgawe van 'n belangrike deel van die kultuurerfenis van die Vhavenda. Persoonlike waarneming en onderhoude met talle mense in Venda het 'n belangrike rol gespeel. Inligting in die literatuur oor die gebruike van plante deur die Vhavenda is aangeteken en gekontroleer.

Herbariumeksemplare van meer as 245 spesies hoofsaaklik inheemse, maar ook party uitheemse plante is versamel en geïdentifiseer, en inligting oor hul gebruike aangeteken en ontleed. Volksname is ook vir baie taksons aangeteken. Die Vhavenda gebruik inheemse plante as voedsel, medisyne, vuurmaakhout,

boumateriaal, vir die maak van kunsvoorwerpe, as die bron van olies en kleurstowwe, vir skadu en as sierplante. Ondanks die neiging om toenemend op kommersieel beskikbare goedere staat te maak, speel inheemse plante steeds 'n beduidende rol in die lewens van baie mense in Venda.

'n Plantklassifiseringstelsel wat op nuttigheidsoorwegings berus, bestaan onder die Vhavenda. Die meeste Vendaname van plante is ontleen aan hul tradisionele gebruike, morfologie, anatomie, chemie, gedrag, habitat of hul verhoudings met sekere diere, terwyl enkeles klanknabootsend is. 'n Tradisionele stelsel van natuurbewaring is lank reeds verantwoordelik vir die bewaring van die plante wat as belangrik beskou word.

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Finally, my children, Mbavhalelo, Phathutshedzo and Maanda, for their understanding and patience when I had to spend long periods away from them.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Ḍowelani Edward Ndivhudzannyi Mabogo was born on 14 June 1955 at Mphaila village in the Nzhelele Valley of Venda. He attended primary education at Raliphaswa Community School up to Std. II and then went to Nzhelele Higher Primary School where he passed Std VI in 1969. He matriculated from Mphephu High School in 1974. The following year he registered at the University of the North and obtained a B.Sc. degree in 1978, majoring in Botany and Zoology. In 1979 he obtained the University Education Diploma at the same university, with distinction in Science of Teaching.

From 1980 to the beginning of 1982 he taught Biology, Agricultural Science and Physical Science to Std. 9 and 10 at Tswime Secondary School. The latter two subjects and Mathematics at matric level were introduced at this school because of his efforts. In February 1982 he was appointed Senior Laboratory Assistant in the Department of Botany at the University of the North. In the same year he registered for B.Sc.(Hons.) in Botany at that university and the degree was awarded in 1983 with distinction in Morphology and Anatomy. In March 1985 he joined the staff at the University of Venda as Lecturer in Botany.

He is married to Germina Mabogo (nee Sikhweni). They have two sons, Mbavhalelo (9) and Phathutshedzo (5), and a daughter, Maanda (3). For relaxation he used to play soccer, the sport he still supports and promotes.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

There appears to be no unambiguous definition or description of the scope of ethnobotany, a relatively new and neglected field of study. Ethnobotanical research over the years has given rise to a number of definitions: Malan & Owen-Smith (1974) studied the ethnobotany of Kaokoland with the main objective of "...discovering the dispositions of botanical folk classifications encountered among the Herero-speaking peoples of Kaokoland in South-West Africa". According to them, it involves a study of all the significant features in a folk taxonomy of plants, including the relevant information about the utilization of the flora in the culture of a people. Kokwaro (1976) uses the term "ethnosystematics" to describe "a folk knowledge of botanical classification".

Ethnobotanical information has made appearances in a number of publications such as Quinn (1959), Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962), Kokwaro (1976, 1983), Liengme (1981, 1983), Sofowora (1982), Coates Palgrave (1983), Coates Palgrave *et al.* (1987), Cunningham (1985, 1987, 1988), Cunningham & Gwala (1986) and Rodin (1985). For references reflecting the state of ethnobotanical research in southern Africa, Liengme (1983) and Cunningham (1989) may be consulted.

It is evident that most researchers in this field tend to restrict their studies to one or a few aspects, notably the medicinal utilization of plants. In fact, it has been estimated that in intertropical Africa traditional plant medicines accounts for about 80--90 % of the medicinal needs of the population (Aké Assi 1983). It has the advantage of being near at hand and provides medical treatment at low cost. This is also the case in Venda where, despite all the advances in modern and orthodox medicine, traditional medicine still plays a significant role in the lives of many people.

Relatively little has been published on the ethnobotany of the Vhavenda (Liengme 1983). In addition to the scattered ethnobotanical information contained

in anthropological works (e.g. Van Warmelo 1960, Stayt 1968), information on plant usage by the Vhavenda is supplied by, amongst others, Netshiungani & Van Wyk (1980), Netshiungani (1981), Netshiungani *et al.* (1981), Arnold & Gulumian (1984), Arnold & Musil (1983), Crous & Borchardt (1986) and Odendaal *et al.* (1988).

The present study involves an investigation of the utilization of indigenous plants by the Vhavenda, with particular reference to their significance as sources of food, medicine, firewood, art and building materials. Principles, cultural and religious restrictions, and norms that regulate the use of plants, as well as the traditional systems of nomenclature, classification and conservation of plants, are also included.

Factors that have prompted the present study, include the following:

1. The role played by indigenous plants as sources of food for the Vhavenda, remains relatively unknown to the outside world. With a rapidly increasing population, it becomes more and more important to find new and efficient ways of feeding the people.

2. Traditional medicine has, and continues to play, an important role in the health of the Vhavenda, and there are many traditional medical practitioners who claim to be as capable of treating certain diseases as modern physicians. Such claims have never been tested efficiently. In the event of rising medical costs and frustrations caused by the unavailability of treatment for certain diseases such as AIDS, some forms of cancer and venereal diseases, it becomes necessary to explore all possible sources for solutions. Previous research has proved that traditional medicine is an important source of discoveries for new remedies and chemicals.

3. There is a rapid deterioration of the natural environments in rural areas in many parts of Africa, possibly as a result of over-utilization of plant material by people for firewood, building and art material, medicine and food.

4. Much of the folklore related to the utilization of indigenous plants by the Vhavenda is unpublished. The only means of transmitting this knowledge has

been through oral communication from generation to generation. Part of it has probably remained unchanged through several generations, but much is likely to have become distorted, or even lost. The influence of Western civilization has resulted not only in the loss of this vital information, but also in the widening of the communication gap between the older generation who possess the knowledge, and the younger generation to whom it should be imparted. Therefore, unless this knowledge is recorded in time, it is bound to be lost for ever.

5. The culture of a people is an important part of its historical and spiritual heritage. For this reason alone the documentation of the ethnobotany of the Vhavenda forms an important part of their rich and proud legacy.

The main objective of this study is the documentation of all information encountered with regard to the utilization by the Vhavenda of indigenous plants as food, medicine, firewood and source of materials for building and art. An analysis of such uses will be made in order to discover social or religious patterns and principles that influence the interaction between the Vhavenda and their natural environment. This also includes a broad study of their systems of plant nomenclature, classification and conservation.

In this thesis, information on the study area as well as the material and methods employed is given in Chapter 2. It is important to realize that one cannot truly or meaningfully evaluate the cultural, social and psychological facts about the ethnobotany of a people unless it is done in the context of their environment, culture and society. Therefore, a broad outline of the geography of Venda, as well as a concise review of the history and culture of the Vhavenda, is supplied in Chapter 3. Original information on plant usage recorded during the course of this study, and supported by voucher specimens of the species concerned, is reported in Chapter 4. Additional information (largely original, but also derived from the literature) and a discussion on the use and cultural significance of mainly indigenous plants by the Vhavenda, are presented in Chapter 5. Finally, an attempt has been made to combine the information on plant usage by the Vhavenda derived during the present study, with that already recorded by other authors in the literature. This is presented in the form of a comprehensive inventory in the Appendix.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY AREA, MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 STUDY AREA

The peripheral regions of Venda have been strongly influenced by the neighbouring cultural groups. The western and southern areas were in contact with the Pedi for a long time, while the southern to south-eastern parts later exchanged cultural habits with the Tsonga. The northern region has always had contact with the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe, and the easterners could not escape the influence of the neighbouring Tsonga culture. Today it is the Nzhelele, Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Thengwe, Rambuda and Khakhu areas that has remained the least influenced by other cultural groups. It is for this reason that these areas have been chosen as core study area for this research (Figure 1). However, it was found necessary to gather information from all the other regions of Venda to allow for meaningful generalizations and identification and comparison of the directions of change at these border areas.

2.2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Firstly, all knowledge acquired through being a Vhavenda by birth and upbringing, was recorded, and specimens of the relevant plants were collected for subsequent identification in the herbarium. Friends, relatives, and neighbours confirmed and added to the information recorded during this stage.

Much information has also been gathered by means of interviews. Villagers were questioned about the names and uses of certain plants growing in their areas. During such interviws, the plant in question was always illustrated by means of a branch or twig or a specimen growing nearby. Often the interviewee did not know the name, but could provide information on the use of the plant, or its edibility, the parts that are utilized or its locality, for example. This approach does not only help in finding the names of plants, but also their cultural uses, habitats, periodicity and

much more information. In many cases an argument would ensue when several people were involved, making it possible to gather valuable information on the diagnostic features of the plant, its uses, other plants used for the same purpose, or names used for the same plant by other people.

Some individual plants presented themselves as relevant material to be recorded as they showed signs of being used in one form or another, for example, the roots having been dug, or the trunk debarked. This obviously serves as a good starting point for enquiring about the use of such plants.

A discussion on the various common and rare diseases, as well as problems related to their treatments proved not only to provide information on remedies, but also on names of people who are more informed and capable of treating them, other names used to refer to such diseases, as well as their most important symptoms.

Several plant collection trips were undertaken with traditional medicinal practitioners of various ranks and specialities. Most traditional practitioners do not have own transport to some of the places where they can find the plants that they utilize. They are delighted to be offered free transport. There are, however, some traditional practitioners who have never seen some of the living plants that they have used for the better part of their practice as they rely on buying or exchanging plant parts or prepared medicines from those who are fortunate to have some. Such practitioners become excited and are most grateful when shown these plants, for two obvious reasons. Firstly, they get the opportunity not only to know the plants in such a way that they would be able to identify them in the future, but also to know where they can find them. Secondly, it is more economical to obtain the plants free of charge, with the possibility to become dealers in the materials themselves.

The cameraderie of collecting trips creates a peaceful atmosphere of mutual trust conducive to learning and sharing traditional knowledge, its limits and taboos. Good intentions and a fair attitude towards traditional practitioners make an outsider acceptable so that it becomes no problem to be allowed to enter their storage huts and inspect their medicines (surgeries), to observe their methods of preparation, compoundment and application of drugs. In short, the company of

traditional practitioners provided authentic information regarding the plants, their uses, collection methods and principles, preparation, application and storage of medicines.

During the course of the research it was realized that not every traditional practitioner, if there are any, knows about all the medicinal plants and their uses, and that it is to the researcher's advantage to know something about Vhavenda medicinal culture for at least two reasons. Firstly, it enables him to distinguish between what is likely to be the truth and what is guesswork and hearsay. Secondly, he is then in a position to exchange information for information. From the above it is clear that in order to obtain the true facts, the researcher has to apply more than formal interview approaches.

Much of the information was obtained accidentally. By observing the actions of the people closely, it was possible to learn about relevant cultural activities such as the gathering of wood, vegetables, fruits, art and building materials. The attitude of not judging interviewees by their appearance, rank, or reputation yielded a substantial amount of cultural information on plants. During the research some people were interviewed while busy carving wood, weaving baskets, thatching huts, among other things.

Some information was initiallly obtained from the literature and from herbaria. This type of information was subjected to confirmation and verification during interviews.

Herbarium specimens of all the species on which information was obtained, were collected by the author. These voucher specimens are deposited in the herbarium of the Department of Botany, University of the North, and the herbarium at the Department of Botany, University of Venda. Information presented in Chapter 4 is based on these collections, and in many instances represents the first recording of the particular plant usage in the literature. Original observations are also recorded in Chapter 5. Information collected by the author was combined with that in the literature and is summarized in the Appendix.

VENDA
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. KUTAMA IRRIGATION
2. SINTHUMULE/KUTAMA SISAL
3. GOGOBOLE IRRIGATION
4. MAGAU IRRIGATION
5. REDWING (VENDA)
6. CAPES THORNE IRRIGATION
7. V L B MANNAMEAD
8. MULIMA F S P
9. MODDERVLEI
10. MULIMA SISAL
11. VLEIFONTEIN/MUNUNZWU
12. MASHAMBA SISAL
13. MASHAMBA F S P
14. MASHAMBA COFFEE
15. MASAKONA SISAL
16A. LA ROCHELLE COFFEE
16B. MASHAU COFFEE
17. DE HOOP SISAL
18. DAVHANA IRRIGATION
19. TSHIMBUPFE SOUTH IRRIGATION
20. TSHIMBUPFE IRRIGATION & SISAL
21. TSWINGA
22. DIDIDI IRRIGATION
23. BAROTTA FRUIT FARM
24. TSHAKHUMA FARMER ESTABLISHMENT
25. TSHAKHUMA PACKHOUSE
26. TSIANDA FRUIT FARM
27. AGRIVEN TRAINING CENTRE
28. LWAMONDO SISAL
29. TSWIMBEDI
30. TSHIVHASE TEA ESTATE
31. DZINDI F E
32. MUKUMBANI TEA ESTATE
33. TSHINANE F E
34. TSHINANE PEPPER ESTATE
35. KHAKHU F S P
36. RAMBUDA RICE
37. TSHIOMBO RICE
38. TSHIOMBO IRRIGATION
39. DAMANI C E & F E
40. MAKONDE IRRIGATION
41. MUTALE ESTATE AND AGRITOX
42. MALAVULE F E
43. PHASWANA COFFEE ESTATE
44. TSHIKONELO IRRIGATION
45. TSHAULU IRRIGATION & EXTENSION
46. LAMBANI IRRIGATION & EXTENSION
47. MASETONI IRRIGATION
48. MALONGA FLATS
49. NWANEDI DATES
50. NWANEDI NURSERY
51. NWANEDI FARMER ESTABLISHMENT
52. LAURA IRRIGATION
53. FRIPP FARMER ESTABLISHMENT

MESSINA
Limpopo river
Nwanedzi river
MANENZHE
MUTELE
Masisi
Nwanedi National Park
TSHIKUNDAMALEMA
MAKUYA
Makuya National Park
Levuvhu river
Nzhelele river
Cross dam
Nwanedzi dam
Lupepe dam
THENGWE
RAMBUDA
Mutale
Mutale river
Nzhelele Nature Reserve
Nzhelele dam
Mutangudi river
MPHAPHULI
Mphaphuli Cycad Reserve
KHAKHU
Mbwedi river
MPHEPHU
Mphephu
Lake Fundudzi
TSHIVHASE
Makhado
Tshirovha dam
Mutshindudi river
Phiphidi dam
Thohoyandou
TSHIKONELO
Vondo dam
Levuvhu river
Zimbabwe
Botswana
Transvaal
Mozambique
Swaziland
OFS
LOUIS TRICHARDT
WAMONDO
TSIANDA
TSHAKHUMA
ITSHA
Dzindi
MULENZHE
Tshikwarani
Thohe dam
Dorp river
KUTAMA
SINTHUMULE
Madombidzha
Sand river
Mahovha
Albasini dam
NBSENGANI
Nuwani
Doornspruit
MASIA
MASHAU
SINTHUMULE
TSHIMBUPFE
DAVHANA
Mashamba
MASHAMBA
Little Letaba
NTABALALA
Nwandi
MULIMA
Ramuela
MASAKONA
MUKA

LEGEND
- 600 m
- 600-900 m
- 900-1200 m
- 1200 m
- International Boundary
- K N P Boundary
- Identified Projects
- Community Development Projects
- Agriven Projects
- Railway Lines
- Sisal Projects
- National Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Rivers
- Dams

10 5 0 10 20 km

N

Compiled and drawn by
Paul J van der Merwe
for
VENDA AGRICULTURAL CORPORATION
Sources:
Dev. Proposals for Venda; Inst. for Dev. Studies; R A U
D B S A
AGRIVEN

Figure 1. Map of Venda

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO VENDA AND THE VHAVENDA

3.1 GEOGRAPHY OF VENDA

Venda occupies the northeastern corner of the Transvaal, south of Zimbabwe and west of Gazankulu (Figure 1). It lies between 29°--32° E, 22°--24° S. The country comprises three units, with the largest one between the Limpopo in the north and Louis Trichardt in the southwest. The other two units are to the west and southeast of Louis Trichardt. The surface area of Venda, according to the consolidation proposals of 1975, is 6 500 km² (650 200 ha). These proposals also indicated that the area on the western side of Louis Trichardt would be exchanged for white farmland adjacent to the western borders of the other two blocks.

3.1.1 Topography

Venda comprises a broken to mountainous terrain with the Soutpansberg range stretching east-west through the country. The highest points in Venda are represented by the Tshiendeulu Mountains (1561 m) separating the Nzhelele Valley from the Limpopo basin in the north, followed by the Thathe Vondo Mountains (1439 m) to the east of Nzhelele which gently slopes into the Sibasa region. The southwestern border of the larger block is characterized by a portion of the main section of the Soutpansberg range that stretches from about Entebeni State Forest towards Louis Trichardt. The mountains north of Nzhelele slope gently northward into the Malonga Flats (586 m), ultimately ending in the lowest area of the northeastern part of Venda (below 400 m). The eastern side of this mountainous region also undulates into the hilly areas of the Thohoyandou/Mphaphuli Districts, and end with the lowest region along the eastern border of this large block (400--600 m). Much of the western block (west of Louis Trichardt) is a flat area with an the altitude of between 800 and 1200 m. The

southern block is also largely flat on the southwestern part at 800 to 1200 m and slopes down irregularly to between 600 and 800 m in the northeast.

A number of rivers flow through the country. The major ones are the Nzhelele, Nwanedzi and Mutale. They originate in the mountains of the southwestern part of the larger block, from where they flow northward to empty into the Limpopo River. All these rivers have numerous tributaries that form a network of streams throughout the country. The Luvuvhu River starts around Louis Trichardt, flows through the Albasini Dam and into the southern part of Venda (Vuwani District), from where it flows along the eastern border towards the Limpopo to the north. The Luvuvhu receives much water from its tributaries flowing from the high lying areas of Venda, chiefly from Mutshundudi, Tshinane, Ngwedi, Dzindi and Dzondo.

3.1.2 Climate

Venda has a subtropical climate with the rainfall ranging from 300 mm in the northern and western part to over 2000 mm on the eastern slopes of the Soutpansberg. Mean summer temperatures vary between 24° C and 26° C while mean winter temperatures exceed 15° C. The highest rainfall is in summer and Venda hardly experiences any frost (Weather Bureau 1986).

3.1.3 Geology

A number of geological systems are found in Venda (South African Committee for Stratigraphy 1980), and these are very briefly described below.

a) The Waterberg System

This covers much of the southern and western parts of the largest block of Venda and includes the Nylstroom Series of lava, sandstone, conglomerate, siltstone and greywacke. It occurs in the Nzhelele valley in the west, Tshakhuma and Sibasa in the south, and stretches northeastward to just

south of Klein Tshipise. The western and central portion of this system are heavily faulted in various directions. Within the Nylstroom Series an island of Tertiary to recent unconsolidated surface coolings of conglomerate, limestone, sandstone, marl and terrace gravel is found. This includes the Madala, Tshiendeulu, Dzamba, Tshixwadza, and Dzimauli areas.

b) The Archaean Complex

This complex includes the northern Cape and Transvaal region of metamorphism and granitization and covers the southern Vuwani District of Venda. It comprises migmatite, gneis and ultrametamorphic formations. Interspersed in this complex are islands of the Phalaborwa Igneous Complex and related regions of carbonitite, pyroxynite, syenite and forskorite. The Archaean Complex also extends through the Sinthumule and Kutama areas of Venda, west of Louis Trichardt, and here and there, are found islands of ultrabasic and basic intrusions as well as their metamorphic derivatives.

c) The Karoo System

The Karoo System occupies the northern part of Venda and can be divided into two portions. The Ecca Series which forms a belt bordering the Waterberg system in the south and the north-east. It includes areas around Klein Tshipise and Mukunude. It comprises shale, sandstone, coal and grit.

The Stormberg Series which stretches along the northern border of the Ecca Series and comprises sandstone, shale, mudstone, marl and coal. The northern part of the Stormberg Series also contains basalt, limburgite and pyroclast in the Masisi area.

d) The Limpopo Belt of metamorphism and granitization

A part of the northern region of Venda juts into the Limpopo belt of metamorphism and granitisation which comprises migmatite, gneis and ultra metamorphic formations.

A more simplified, geological map of Venda (Macmillan-Boleswa 1986) distinguishes four geological regions which largely coincide with the systems described above.

3.1.4 Geographical Regions

The inhabitants of Venda see their country as comprised of a number of regions. These regions appear to have been originally politically demarcated. They also tend to coincide with different vegetation types. The Vhutavhatsindi region is the land that originally belonged to the Vhatavhatsindi tribe and covers a greater part of the present Mutale District.

On the northern, north-eastern and western sides of the Vhutavhatsindi region is the Niani region that is characterized by mopani veld and is occupied by the Vhania. This region extends westward and ends in islands bordering with the Linzhelele in the west near the Rabali area. Here the mopani veld occurs only at low lying areas. The region east of Nzhelele and south of Vhutavhatsindi is referred to as Vhuphani and covers the area that was once ruled by the Vhaphani of the Tshivhase clan. In the northeast it borders with the Vhumbedzi region that forms a border with Gazankulu in the east, and Niani in the northeast.

South of the Vhuphani region is Vhuronga, which includes the Vuwani District and the area around Tshakhuma.

No clear boundaries appear to exist between these regions and no attempt has ever been made to draw them. The region referred to as Linzhelele appears to be the one ruled by the Vhanzhelele.

From the ecological point of view, the Niani region is characterised by the Mopani Veld of Acocks (1953). The North Eastern Mountain Sourveld occurs over the greater part of the Vhutavhatsindi and southern Vhuphani regions. The Sibasa area, which is part of Vhuphani, is covered by the Lowveld Sour Bushveld. The sourish Mixed Bushveld is characteristic of the western Nzhelele region and also occurs around Makuya, parts of Vhuronga and in the Sinthumule/Kutama areas.

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VHAVENDA

The name Vhavenda refers to all the people who live in the country called Venda, the centre of which lies around the Soutpansberg. These people speak Luvenda and live according to Venda customs and traditions. This description of a Muvenda may, however, seem to exclude those Venda people who live in other countries, or migrant workers who have left their country in search of work in other areas. For the purpose of this research, the name Vhavenda is taken to refer to those Venda people who live in Venda, as well as all those who maintain a reasonable contact with Venda or the traditions of the Vhavenda. For more detailed accounts on the history of the Vhavenda the following publications may be consulted: Wessmann (1908), Van Warmelo (1960), Stayt (1968), Mullan (1969), Ralushai & Gray (1977), Flygare (1979) and Beach (1980). The present account may not necessarily agree with some of the opinions expressed in these publications.

Homogeneous as the Vhavenda nation might appear to be, it is common knowledge that this nation comprises a number of subgroups or tribes with different origins and customs. Among these tribes are the Vhagona, Vhambedzi, Vhalembethu, Vhatavhatsindi, Vhatwanamba, Vhalovhedzi, Vhakwevho, Vhaluvhu, Vhalaudzi, Vhasenzi (Singo) and Vhalemba.

Information on the Vhavenda has appeared in a number of publications in which historical aspects are given as part of research in anthropology, ethnology, economics, and others. Moreover, much of what has been written on the history of the Vhavenda is restricted to one or a few tribes. This is supported by Ralushai & Gray (1977): "Research into their history has tended to concentrate on what has been termed the 'Venda tribes proper' in contrast to the aboriginal Mbedzi, Lembethu, and Ngona of the mountains, conquered by them and now largely assimilated". Furthermore, most writers have adopted what Beach (1980) calls the "old-style South African History: that the history of Africans was one of successive waves of people following each other from the north". This does not apply to all Venda groups. In short, the available historical information on the Vhavenda is not only incomplete and one-sided, but also highly fragmentary. A brief account of the historical background of each of the most popular groups among the people of

Venda could serve to highlight their relationships with one another and with others the world over.

According to Beach (1980), there is a tradition that the original inhabitants of Venda "were few and scattered with a great deal of country between their settlements". These were groups under many rulers and of different customs and clan names (*mitupo*). Their country was referred to as the Thovhela state, ruled by Thovhela, who was also known as Lavhelani or Machiwalaune. This state existed up to around the 1720s. Today the name Thovhela remains as an ordinary title for local rulers and as a greeting among the Sotho-speaking groups.

One of the aboriginal groups of the Thovhela state, the country that was from time immemorial known as Venda, was the Vhangona. It is uncertain where these people came from, but judging from Thovhela's residence, which was "a Shona-style Zimbabwe made of local stones" (Beach 1980), one may conclude that they came from the north, or at least had very close links with the people to the north. It is, however, also not known whether this Thovhela was a Ngona. One of the most popular rulers of the Vhangona was called Raphulu, who lived on the mountain Vuvha and ruled over Tshirululuni. He is also reported to have "extended his rule eastwards over the Mbedzi and Lembethu" (Ralushai & Gray 1977). Some of the Ngona proper areas include Damani, around Tshakhuma (in the Lutanandwa Valley), Thenzheni, Tshaulu, around the hill known as Tshitumbe, and Nzhelele.

The oldest remembered ruler at Damani is Radzaga I. He was probably succeeded by his grandson, Mphadza-a-Dovhoni, who was then succeeded by Ratshiuvhu. It was during Ratshiuvhu's long reign that the Masingo first settled in Venda. After his death, Radzaga II who married a Ndalamo woman ruler, Mutumbe, took over. Then came Rundani and thereafter, Raluthaga. Raluthaga was "a contemporary of the Singo ruler, Ramabulana, who died in 1864" (Beach 1980). He also died not long thereafter.

The founding ancestor of the Ngona group at Thenzheni was Ratshikuni, who was also known as Goko (the creator of people).

At Tshaulu it was probably Mabidzha, grandfather to Diwase, who was the first ruler. According to Ralushai & Gray (1977) he is the one who built the Ngona stone walls at the hill of Tshitumbe. It was during Diwase's reign that the Bohwana Dynasty was established at Tshaulu. Diwase was probably succeeded by Netshitumbe, whose name appears to be more dynastic than that of an individual.

The Ngona ruler in the Nzhelele Valley was Tshiwedzelele, who was conquered by the Vhatavhatsindi of Netshiendeulu.

Madzhadzhi was the first Ngona ruler to settle at Makoloni (Ralushai & Gray 1977), while Ramphaga ruled next to Mauluma hill and was probably under Raphulu. Unconfirmed reports suggest that the valleys surrounded by the small hills of the same size on the mountain called Zwavhumbwa, which is further to the west of the Nzhelele Valley, was the home of the Vhangona (Ramulongo, personal communication). Some Ngona people also settled at Tshiheni and Luheni.

The Vhambedzi occupied the Thovhela state to the east around Tshaulu and as far to the west as Mianzwi. Other areas of the Mbedzi include Matangari, Makonde, Zwaluvhimbi, Tshilavulu, Mukununde, Ha-Nemasetoni, Tshikweta tsha Luvhimbi, and Ha-Luvhimbi (where Luvhimbi was based at one stage). There is a tradition that the Vhambedzi came to Vhumbedzi (land of the Mbedzi south of Limpopo) from Malungudzi, north of the Limpopo. Their most popular ruler at the time was Luvhimbi, a rain-maker and priest. According to Ralushai & Gray (1978), Luvhimbi left Malungudzi probably as recently as the early 19th century. It is not known how long the Mbedzi stayed at Malungudzi, but there is evidence that they came to Malungudzi from south of the Limpopo. They arrived with their ruler, Mafukanoro, who led them "across the Limpopo and reached the great mountains of Marungudzi... They took with them a rain-cult derived from the Raluvhimba cult of that area " (Beach 1980). Malungudzi was formerly occupied by the Shona-speaking Pfumbi under the leadership of the Chikada dynasty. The Pfumbi were defeated and driven out of Malungudzi, leaving Mafukanoro to found a state that eventually became known as the Matibi dynasty. This name was probably derived from that of some ruler at one stage, Matibi, who was also known as Nemalungudzi. Luvhimbi left Malungudzi with his wife and his daughter, Tshubalale and Tshiembe, and probably some of his followers. "He settled first at Tshilavulu, where he found the

Vhatavhatsindi in the area of chief Nethengwe " (Ralushai & Gray 1977). From there he moved to Ha-Luvhimbi and then to Tswingoni, where he died.

At one stage Luvhimbi's granddaughter, Mufanadzo, left Ha-Luvhimbi to become chief at Mianzwi. There she had to request the help of Ligegise Tshivhase to chase out and kill her brother, Manikiniki Mantsha, who, like Mufanadzo, was a powerful rain-maker. From that time onwards, succession at Mianzwi became matrilineal and rulers used the title of Tshisinavhute.

The Vhatavhatsindi also lived in Venda from very early times. Their settlements were distributed all over the country. Some of their rulers were Nethengwe (Shakadza), Netshiavha (Khalavha and Tshiheni), Netshiendeulu (Tshiendeulu), Matidza (Luonde), Manenzhe (Ha-Manenzhe), and Nemaungani (Luvuvhu Valley). The Vhatavhatsindi claim to have found the Vhambedzi already living in Venda, but the latter also say they found the former. This uncertainty, according to Ralushai & Gray (1977), implies that these two groups had been in Venda for so long that they cannot remember who came first.

The Vhatwanamba lived at Vuvha, alongside of the Vhangona of Raphulu. There they were driven out, probably by the Ngona, and fled to the Blouberg-Saltpan Mountains. According to Beach (1980) their ruler at that time was known as Tshivula. After staying for some time at Blouberg, they migrated northwards across the Limpopo and founded the Chitawudze dynasty on the Tshabezi and Bubye Rivers.

Still in the Soutpansberg, a group of Lemba moved northwards "and occupied the area south of the Belingwe Peak not long before the fall of the Changamire state" (Beach 1980). These are probably the Vhalemba mentioned by Beach (1980): " One such group had evidently tried to oppose the Changamire conquest of the south-west in the 1680s, had failed and fled to the Thovhela state and was granted shelter." According to him they were probably the first group of the Vhalemba to migrate south of the Limpopo River as at that time the Masingo were still part of the Changamire state and the Thovhela state still existed.

Finally, there is the Vhalembethu who, according to Prof. Ralushai (personal communication), are the Vhanyai. If this is so, they are the Ghoya people reported by J.E. Mullan (1969) as the first to make contact with the Lemba Arabs when they arrived at Sena for the first time. They occupied the far north-eastern part of the Thovhela state, around Ha-Mutele, and probably occupied the areas on both sides of the Limpopo River. Some of them are reported by Beach (1980) to have been ruled by Mambo of the Changamire state, with their local ruler known as Nimakwali. They left Mambo to become the Kalanga during a civil strife.

The last and perhaps the most significant group of people who came to Venda was the one comprising the Singo dynasty and the Vhalemba. The history of the Vhalemba is traced back to a time when they lived as the Israelites. According to Phophi (unpublished), at the time when Abraham lived with his wife, Sara, they had a helper by the name of Hagara. During this time, Abraham and Hagara had a son called Ishmael. Sara was not pleased and she chased Hagara with her son from their home and out of the country. They left and landed in the desert, without food or water. As Ishmael was about to die of thirst and hunger, water came up from the ground next to him. He drank and survived. It became a permanent source of water, a spring that became known as Sen-sen. From that moment Ishmael grew up suprisingly fast. People who lived there then had a permanent source of water for drinking and agriculture. They therefore respected Ishmael and considered themselves as his people. They hated the Israelites, who had left him to die, and ambushed and killed them whenever they passed by. The Israelites, in return, hated the desert people and called them Arabs (i.e. people who waylay others and kill them without provocation). It was amongst these Arabs, or the people of Ishmael, that Mohammed, the prophet, was to be born. Mohammed had no surviving sons, but he adopted a boy called Za'id from close relatives, to become his heir. Mohammed died in 632 A.D. and Za'id remained a prince who was later removed from Yemen to Oman. According to Mullan (1969) " ...the Sheiks Sulaiman and Said of the house of Azd, who were removed from Yemen to Oman, rebelled against the overlordship of the caliph Abdul Malik ibn Marwan ...they failed as they were out-numbered ... they fought bravely ... rather than submit they fled to the land of Zanj on the East African coast". This is supported by Van Warmelo (1974): " In 696 A.D. the two princes of Oman, Sulaiman and Za'id were attacked by the strong forces Khalif Abd. al-malik ibn. Marwan of Damascus and forced to flee to the land

of Zanj. There we also find the tradition of the coming of the Arabs, who settled along the coast, and the name of their chief who was Haji Sa'id". These Arabs once again left Zanj because they felt insecure after the caliph had sent his Syrian followers after them. They built some towns along the East African coast, from where they could trade with the people inland. Africa was favourable for trade because it had raw materials, such as gold, copper, cotton, and clay. They were the masters of the art of smelting and working with iron, copper and gold, and they were skilled potters. The Arabs made regular visits to find customers inland and accepted grain, livestock and anything that they could use or sell for their products. Van Warmelo (1974) states:"...the Lemba came from a huge town somewhere across the seas, where dwelt many craftsmen in metalwork, pottery, textiles, and ship-building. They came to this country to trade their goods, especially for gold. They began leaving their men behind with unsold cargo and thus established trade posts. They moved further and further inland and became known to the natives, but did not mix with them as they deemed themselves superior. Then, one day came shattering news: the town had been taken by the enemy. They could not go back home. So they began taking native wives...". In Africa they finally settled at Sofala, where they built their capital and called it Sana, the capital name of their home country, the Yemen. This town later became known as Sena. When the Vhalemba (then known as the Emozaid) arrived at Sofala, they found the Ghoya or Ngoya living there. They conquered them and, according to Mullan (1969), made them their subjects -- the Ngoya had to work in their mines. According to Mullan (1969) the Ngoya probably moved into Sofala from the great lakes of Africa. Their capital at Sofala was referred to as Zumubany, Zunhauhy, or Sa Nhoya, later to become known as Sinoia. It was probably during this time that some of the Ngoya crossed the Limpopo into Venda, to become known as the Vhalembethu or Vhanyai. At this time the ruler of the Vhalemba was referred to as the Ameer (from *Amir* = Arab title for "governor").

The Vhalemba remained in a strong position up to around 1300 A.D. During this time, some group of people moving "on their journey to the Belingwe area" found the Vhalemba and Vhanyai (the Ngoya). They established good relations with the Vhalemba and their chief, Mposi. The name Mposi was corrupted from Kazi (chief of lesser status than the Ameer), to Mbozi, and eventually to Mposi. The Vhalemba called these new-comers the Vhasenzi (from Arab term *Zenj* =

derived from the attitude of Arabs and Mohammedans towards heathens, towards anybody whom they wish to treat with the utmost contempt). This was probably because they found them culturally different in so many fundamental aspects, especially religion.

The Vhasenzi were displaced by Tshombe, chief of Malawi who had moved from Congo. They left their home called Matongoni with their drum called "Errhohim". " Matongoni is identifiable as a place called Mtengula -- on the eastern side of lake Nyasa" (Mullan 1969). " Errhohim" (the drum that thunders) was given to them by Nwali, their supreme God. There is a tradition among the Vhavenda that when this drum was beaten, all those who are not Vhavenda fell asleep or became unconscious, thus giving the Vhavenda an opportunity to decide whether to kill or capture them. This drum later became known as Ngomalungundu.

It was around 1450, when the Vhalemba, with their Vhanyai and Vhasenzi lived relatively peacefully together, that the Bakalanga and Batonga came to Sofala. They came from the lake regions of central Africa where " their founder was Wat'hongwe Kapana ... their land extended northwards to Ukaranga ... and the Malangaradzi River " (Mullan 1969). These two groups conquered the people at Sofala and divided the Ameer's kingdom into two: the Vhalemba and Vhasenzi who left and went to live at Vhuhwa or Vhuxwa (the place of dying -- because their king, the Ameer, and many of their people had died there), as one group, and the Vhanyai who remained under the Batonga and Bakalanga, later to be incorporated into the new state, the Monomotapa. Vhuxwa was Mambo's country that formed part of the Changamire state. The Vhalemba and Vhasenzi were permitted by Mambo to stay in his country, although he was afraid of them because they were said to possess a very strong medicine. The people of Mambo referred to them as the " Haka " (from Congo: *haka-manga* = to make a powerful medicine. Hence *Bwanga* or *manga* = medicine). It is probably from this term that the word "ṅanga" (traditional medicinal practitioner) came into the Venda language.

The people of Mambo had come to Vhuxwa from the north. They were "fleeing from their original homeland -- Zambia or Congo ...fled from the wrath of their chief, Mwata Yamvo, chief of the Ba-Lunda, after collapse of a tower which he commanded them to build to bring the moon down from the sky for him " (Mullan

1969). The wooden tower had fallen, killing many people. The collapse angered the chief, who then killed many people in retaliation.

The local ruler of the Vhalemba at Vhuxwa was J. Mutenda, also called Mulemba or Nkalahonye. " He had his great place on the hill Belingwe " (Mullan 1969). His son, Ngwedzi, succeeded him and was later succeeded by Shimbani whose daughter became Mambo's wife. War broke out between the Vhalemba and Mambo's people. The Vhalemba wanted to seize Mambo's kingdom, but they were overcome and some fled to the Thovhela State, as explained earlier.

As a result of intermarriage between the Vhasenzi and Mambo's people, two sons were born to Mambo of a Musenzi mother. One was called Rozwi or Rozvi, and the other " Dyembewu (or Dyambeu), Chikura, Chikurawadyembewu, or Velelambeu". The two sons fought for succession after their father's death. Mambo's people supported Rozvi, and called themselves Barozvi (people of Rozvi), while the Vhasenzi and the remaining Vhalemba supported Dyambeu. The Barozvi were defeated and driven out " to the Mafungabusi Plateau and the Deka River " (Beach 1980). As a result of conflicts in the state and shortage of land, the Vhasenzi and Vhalemba left the Changamire state (Mambo's country) under Dyambeu's leadership. After staying at Belingwe, they crossed the Limpopo River and reached a place called Tshiendeulu, in the Nzhelele Valley of the Thovhela state. They built their first capital there and called it Dzata -- a resting place and a refuge. Netshiendeulu, a Mutavhatsindi chief was subjugated. It was from Dzata that the Vhasenzi and Vhalemba conquered the rest of the aboriginal tribes of the Thovhela state and assumed the name of Vhavenda.

It is not clear who succeeded Dyambeu, but Phophi or Masindi and his son, Tshisevhe, are all mentioned as rulers of the Vhavenda at Dzata. One of them adopted the title of Thohoyandou -- it was "probably Masindi or Phophi" (Beach 1980). Thohoyandou is the one who brought the Singo dynasty to its greatest glory. There is a belief among the Vhavenda that Thohoyandou did not die, but merely disappeared like Dyambeu. A split developed after his disappearance from Dzata. The Ramabulana house moved to Tshirululuni in the south-western flank of the Soutpansberg. Tshisevhe and his people settled at Makonde, while the Tshivhase house headed for the south-eastern flank of the Soutpansberg and settled north of

the Luvuvhu River, with their base near the Phiphidi Falls. A young ruler, who probably was supposed to be a Singo leader after the last Thohoyandou, "was defied by the houses of his brothers and uncles, in spite of the aid of the Mphaphuli house, he was beaten ... His disappearance was symbolised by the Venda myth of Thohoyandou's mysterious disappearance" (Beach 1980).

During their stay at Dzata, Singo rulers tried to counterbalance revolutions by other groups by intermarrying with them. Examples are the Ndalamo (Rozwi origin) and the Mphaphuli house, which were closely associated with the Singo dynasty but of different origins.

Hundred years after the fall of the Thovhela state and the subsequent establishment of the Singo dynasty in 1820, the first whites appeared, namely Coenrad Buys and his brothers. " They were half-caste sons of an Eastern Cape frontiersman of some notoriety in the generation before the Great Trek" (Marks & Atmore 1980). In agreement with Ramavhoya, they were allowed to establish the Mara settlement, now popularly known as Mara Buys. This marked the beginning of the end of Venda rule over their country. In 1836 the Buys family was joined by the first Trek of Louis Trichardt, who settled at the village they called Schoemansdal, named after Stephanus Schoeman, the last full commandant-general of the South African Republic. They were later joined by the trekkers led by Hendrik Potgieter, who arrived in the winter of 1848. They were groups of "Boers ... who had been unable to adjust to the pattern of affairs evolving in the white settlements further south" (Marks & Atmore 1980). Then came hunters, traders, and adventurers among whom were English, Scots, Irish, Dutch, Belgians, Germans, Portuguese of European and Asian extractions, Cape Coloureds, and Shangaans. They brought with them the gun, the Dutch-Afrikaans language, Calvinist religion, and Roman-Dutch law, as well as characteristic patterns of social relations and economic practices.

The relationship between the Boers and the Vhavenda had, from the beginning, been sour and based on the slave-master relationship. A Berlin Society missionary, Bernhard Beyer, who passed Schoemansdal in 1872 had the following reflection: "... the dorp itself now makes a gloomy impression on the visitor. No wonder too, for wickedness formerly had its residence here in the highest degree.

Here drunkenness and gluttony were the order of the day with the buyers and sellers of many valuable African products, among which slaves too were numbered. The market and the site of the town hall were manured by the thousands of tears and the blood of poor blacks who were lashed unmercifully, and of these doubtless a good many gave up the ghost under the beating. The Lord scented this offense; to that the ruins of the formerly prosperous spot now testify " (Marks & Atmore 1980). The Boers interfered in the succession disputes of the Ramabulana house at several occasions. In 1836, a so-called weak candidate of the house, Ramabulana, was assisted by the guns of Doris Buys and Louis Trichardt to kill his brother, Ramavhoya, who was then chief of the Venda group in the area, to become chief. He passed away in 1863 and, according to Marks & Atmore (1980), was succeeded by another weak candidate, Makhado. Makhado was supported by the Ramabulana's *makhadzi* called Nyakhuhu, his uncle Madzhie, and the landdrost, Jan Vercueil. The successor was supposed to have been Davhana, the eldest son of the first or great house of Ramabulana. His strongest supporter was Joao Albasini, a white trader from Delagoa Bay, who became superintendent of Native Affairs (*Superintendent van Naturellen*) from 1859 to 1868. Albasini brought along a large Tsonga following, among whom were the Maswanganyi of Munene.

Although it was not allowed to arm blacks with guns for security reasons, this was finally done for them to assist profitably in elephant hunting, where they were employed as *swart skuts* (black shots). In June 1864, Makhado, assisted by some *swart skuts* (mostly Tsonga) and his friend, Tromp, raided Davhana at Goedewensch, where he was then staying with Albasini. In 1865, the Boers demanded their guns back, and Makhado, formerly also a *swart skut*, refused to return them. He was supported by his friend, Tromp, and employee, Fleur, in this defiance of the white authorities. Wars ensued and the Boers were beaten at Schoemansdal. They came back in the 1890s and beat Mphephu, who had succeeded Makhado, at Tshirululuni -- driving him out of his country. Mphephu, with most of his followers, fled to a place in southern Zimbabwe called Vhuxwa, where some Vhavenda were still living. This marked the final stage in the subjugation of the Vhavenda, with the other Venda chiefdoms surrendering without fighting.

Mphephu was reinstated at his second Dzata in the Nzhelele Valley, a place now called Dzanani, after the Anglo-Boer war, probably around 1902. The Vhavenda tribe was, according to Wessmann (1908), the last to surrender its independence. From that time onwards, the Vhavenda were gradually transformed into being part of a westernized type of government until, on 13 September 1979, Venda was declared an independent state by the South African Government. This independence is presently being rejected by the majority of the Vhavenda in the form of passive resistance, youth unrests and boycotts.

3.3 DEMOGRAPHY AND POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Venda has a small population estimated at 459 986 in 1985. The greatest density was found in the Thohoyandou District with 195 740, while the most sparsely populated district was Mutale with 45 299 people. The greater population in the Thohoyandou District can be attributed largely to the recent urbanization and industrialization after Independence. Most Venda people are employed in South Africa and neighbouring white farms.

3.4 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The Vhavenda have always maintained a clear and unquestionable social hierarchy. At the head is a chief who rules the whole nation, like a king. The country comprises a number of villages under the leadership of headmen (*dzinduna*), usually brothers or close relatives of the chief. The number of villages depends on the number of people who deserve to be headmen and on the size of the country.

In the past the villages formed a borderguard all around the Chief's kraal. From these positions they detected any invasion before it could affect the Chief's kraal. Frequent invasions, especially during the period of the flights (*mishavho*), made the Venda people choose inaccessible places such as the mountain sides or hilltops. Mountain sides mostly preferred were those which enemies could approach from only one side, which was then heavily guarded.

Depending on the size, each village could be divided into subvillages under the *vhakomas*. Each subvillage then comprised of a number of homesteads. Apart from being sheltered and secured against invaders, a village also had to be as close to the source of water as possible because all the water needed for domestic use was carried by women on their heads, in heavy claypots. To secure the safety of women and children on their trips to and from the water, the land all around the source and along their way was used for agricultural purposes and livestock grazing. Precautionary steps were always taken so that the village people would never find themselves trapped between their homes and their sources of water or lands. Herdboys were always instructed to be on the lookout for intruders and usually had songs to warn their people. Older people spent much of their time either in the mountains and bushes collecting materials they needed for building, fencing, art and medicine, or in the lands, at the same time watching the surrounding country.

It was the duty of every *mukoma* to settle disputes in his village, allocate arable lands to individual homesteads, organize social, ritual and work parties, and ensure that the natural environment was well preserved. Owing to their responsibility to protect important indigenous plants, especially fruit-producing and medicinal ones, they came to be known as *zwilinda-mifula* (i.e. guardians of *Mifula* trees), probably because the *Mufula* tree (*Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*) was regarded as most important. It supplied edible fruits from which the marula beer (*Mukumbi*) was also made. The *Vhakoma* received privileges in the form of gifts of beer, meat and other foods from villagers. They, in turn, made similar offers to the headmen, and the headmen to the chiefs.

A typical Venda homestead includes a number of families living together (the word 'family' is used here in the sense of a married man, his wife and children). Each homestead (*muḓi*) is surrounded by an impenetrable fence of poles, saplings and brush. Thorny branches are commonly preferred and many of them are required for an average sized homestead. The fence has a main entrance and a private one. The main entrance is used by everybody who enters the homestead, inmates and their livestock. The private entrance is always at the back and is used by inmates for their private trips such as escaping if necessary, wood gathering by women, returning with other materials gathered from the veld or with meat from hunting, and for various other matters that should customarily not be made public.

The living quarter is at the centre of the fenced area and grows centripetally. It is usually divided into sites (*masia*). At the centre, and in line with the two entrances, is the site that belongs to the head of the homestead (*ṅemuḓi*). It commonly comprises a hut, which may be decorated with pillars (*thondwana*), and a cooking hut known as *tshiṱanga*, which may be the largest but always the first to be built (*themamuḓi*). This hut is customarily used for cooking and for sitting in the evening by women, girls and young boys. Sometimes it also accommodates small livestock (*khungwanḓuni*) such as goats or sheep. It is in this hut where one finds most of the household utensils especially kitchenware such as plates, stirrers, cooking spoons, pots and containers for water, sleeping equipment, etc. On one side, a raised platform may be erected and bigger containers, such as bags of grain, placed on top. The *thondwana* is a sleeping hut for *nemudi*. Unused or reserve materials, religious artifacts, weapons and other goods are safely kept in this hut. A platform may be made for hanging those materials rarely used, beautiful baskets reserved for trips, medicines for protecting the family and homestead, extra clothes, etc. One or two similar huts may be built for older boys who have been initiated and/or visitors. These are somewhat smaller and less decorated than the *thondwana*. The hut for boys is termed *tshiimamuḓana*. The area between sleeping huts and cooking huts (courtyard) is enclosed by either mud walls (*maguvha*) or walls of poles and saplings (*mipfunda*), and is called *muṱa*. The courtyard is kept clean by regular sweeping and polishing with cow dung. A shade tree, planted or left during clearing, provides shade in the courtyard. This is used as a reception area for visitors, as well as for resting, thrashing grain crops, spreading harvests and mealie meal for drying, traditional and religious dances, and other domestic activities. Similar sites are built on either side (sometimes only on one side) for other married peoples such as brothers, close relatives and friends (*vhasendelelwa*).

All cooking huts face to the side opposite the main entrance, while sleeping huts face the cooking huts. Walls may divide courtyards into two parts on each site. The courtyard in front of the sleeping huts are commonly raised higher than those in front of cooking huts (lower courtyards or *miṱa ya fhasi*). There are usually only two entrances (on opposite sides) into each courtyard. Passages are often left between any two sites.

A cattle enclosure is built on one side of the main homestead entrance. It is built from poles and saplings, and may be continuous with the outside fence on the outer wall. Further away from the main entrance a smaller enclosure for calves is built against the larger one. Still another enclosure, the *khoro* is commonly constructed next to the cattle enclosure. This is where men and older boys spend much of the evening discussing issues that affect them only and that cannot be shared with women, and where young men learn more about their adult roles. Here the older people make their braais, prepare their medications, assess the health of the younger men, count and admire cattle as they enter or leave the kraal, and guard them. Women and children spend much of their time in the cooking huts, enjoying folk tales, fables and playing various indoor games.

The back of the homestead is reserved for other permanent and temporary structures such as granaries (*maḓulu*), temporary grain stores (*zwiṱaṱari*), pounding huts (*magoha*), resting places and workshops. Grain pits may be made anywhere in the homestead, but preferably inside cattle kraals.

Among other duties, the leader of the homestead is responsible for the distribution of arable land, marula trees, anthills for collection of mushrooms, flying ants, etc., allocated to his homestead, among his inmates. He settles disputes in his homestead, organizes and presides at religious ceremonies as priest, reports visitors to the *mukoma*, attends traditional courts, etc., on behalf of his inmates. He is responsible for the doctoring of the homestead, inmates, livestock and their lands. He in turn enjoys gifts from his inmates.

Similar homesteads are scattered all over the village in an irregular way, but at some distance from one another to allow for privacy and control of neighbouring veld. Community and national celebrations and ceremonies are performed at the headmen's or chief's kraals, depending on the status of the ceremony. In such villages cultural norms are observed at all levels from the community, down to the families. Members of the various villages under one chief co-operate in work, religious and ritual celebrations and in wars with other tribes.

3.5 RELIGION AND EDUCATION

The traditional religion of the Vhavenda is basically the same as that of the other African tribes. They believe in one Supreme Being who is above all known gods and ancestral spirits. They call him by various names, the most popular one being *Ṅwali*. *Ṅwali* is believed to be able to control the fate of all the Venda people irrespective of tribe. He is reported to have been able to show his presence in various ways such as storms, earthquakes, as well as other unusual sounds. Some people claim to have met him unexpectedly in various forms. Whenever people experience problems beyond their control, they have to perform rituals to appease him. Problems such as droughts, floods, tribal warfares and epidemics need *Ṅwali*'s attention.

Ritual ceremonies related to national problems and disasters are performed at the Chief's kraal with him presiding as the priest. The Chief in such cases is considered to be a living representative of *Ṅwali*'s heavenly gods. His ancestors have chosen him to lead the people and they are the ones who are closer to *Nwali*. He therefore worships *Ṅwali* through them. The Vhavenda also perform other rituals such as the good harvest celebrations and first-fruit ceremonies when *Ṅwali* and the ancestral spirits have their share of the newly ripened fruits. During such ceremonies beer and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages are made and placed at sacred places for the ancestral spirits to drink.

The individual clans, however, do not only depend on the rituals described above, but each kin-group also has an infinite number of other subordinate gods, represented by their ancestral spirits. When a family member dies, he is believed to have been taken by his ancestors to become a god with more power and influence over the living. Kin-group ancestral spirits are concerned with the well-being of that group only. They bring peace or trouble for kin-group members as a whole, but they do not kill group members. They are not concerned with the individual's day to day struggles for survival.

The ancestral spirits of a particular family represent that family only and influence kin-group ancestors in favour of that family within the kin-group. A person is believed to have maternal as well as paternal gods. Maternal gods are

understood to be more lenient and protective, while paternal ones are strict and enforce legal and moral obligations. When a person is bewitched, it is believed that witches first persuade his gods, through magical performances, to hand him over. Divination bones are used to ascertain the handing-over before bewitching. This also confirms a successful undertaking without harmful consequences.

The various Venda tribes differ in the details of their ritual performances. The two popular rituals among the Venda are *malombo* possession dances (for Vhasenzi and most other tribes) and *mbila* and *tshanu* (for the Vhalemba). Reasons for the performance of these rituals range from tribal or kin-group misfortunes to death of a group member. In all these cases the ancestral spirits are invoked amidst singing, drum beating or mbila playing, dancing, and magical performances. Mostly women are possessed but sometimes men are also involved, especially when it is a man for whom, because of his illness or curses, the ritual is performed. Possessed people are considered as gods and are called *midzimu* or *vhakalanga*. They speak *tshikalanga* (a language related to Shona) and are asked about their names and complaints in that language. They also instruct the people on what to do to please them. Women possessed by male ancestral spirits are dressed in men's clothes. The *vhakalanga* may spend from one to ten days dancing to the accompaniment of drums, rattles and ululations and will then be sent back. Their food has to be strictly traditional, otherwise they would refuse to eat. Some of them require dagga (*Canabis sativa*) before they dance, especially those who used to smoke it during their lifetime. Venda ancestor cults are normally held during winter, when everybody is free from agricultural occupations. It is a convenient period after the harvests and people can brew large quantities of the various beverages required for religious ceremonies and celebrations. Initiation rituals for boys and girls also occur during this period. These, as well as the fact that it is the best period for building, collection of medicinal plants, migrations and resettlements, make winter as busy a season as summer for the Vhavenda.

Traditional education begins in early childhood and is largely informal. During the early stages the child learns mainly from the mother and baby-sitters. The child learns to respect and greet elders, listen and carry out instructions, and that misconduct is punishable.

The child's learning is facilitated by folktales, fables and folk songs, the tale often illustrating the wisdom of obedience and proper behaviour. Most folk stories are about the existence of supernatural forces and their powers. Animals are often impersonated in such stories, with the most popular figures being *Sankambe* (the hare) representing a wise person, and *Muzhou* (the hyaena) the slow-witted one. Lions, tigers, elephants and snakes also feature prominently in folktales. The child gradually comes to understand the use and meaning of proverbial expressions, similarities and comparisons, e.g. *mapfura a ṅwana ndi u ruṅwa*, meaning that a child grows well when he or she readily agrees to being sent around by elders, *Muṱali u ḽa kanwe, tsilu ḽi ḽa kanzhi*, meaning that a person who robs others often succeeds once. At these early stages children learn to count, memorise, recite, praise and sing songs. Later, when the child is able to follow elders, he meets others of the same age and makes friends, with whom he will later go out to play. Children play *ndode, tsetsetse*, hide-and-seek, *nkhetheni* and touch games (*bune*) in the vicinity of homesteads. Boys and girls mostly play together in the early stages but later separate. They imitate elders by cooking mud (porridge) and leaves (vegetables) and building miniature huts and baby-carrying smaller objects.

From about age eight to eleven children are introduced to some form of formal education by attending a series of initiation schools. Boys and girls are initiated separately. The first initiation school for boys is *murundu*, followed by *tshiṱambo* (or *thondo*) and, later, probably also by *domba*, a ritual normally known to be popular for girls.

Girls attend their first initiation ritual just over school-going age. Their earliest initiation is known as *u fumba musevhetho*. In the past this ritual was, however, attended only by the Vhasenzi girls. At puberty, all girls go to a puberty ritual known as *vhusha*, followed by *ludodo* and *tshikanda* and, lastly, by *domba*, the initiation ritual for girls leading them to marriage.

At all these rituals, boys and girls are taught separately. They learn laws of life, their sexual roles and responsibilities, playing manners and, most importantly, obedience to and respect for the elderly. They are taught and trained to observe the culturally accepted laws of love and marriage.

The ritual tone of initiation schools is always acknowledged and maintained. It is the responsibility of every initiated person to make these institutions an issue of primary importance through relentless participation, moral and material support. To ensure this, all people within the vicinity of *murundu* must avoid heavy and demanding activities such as ploughing, weeding and building when the initiation ritual is in progress, but may guard cattle, irrigate their winter crops and weave. No celebration of any other type may take place during this period. People must refrain from quarrels and fights. The only song allowed to be heard publicly is *hogo*, one of the many *murundu* songs that can be sung outside the initiation schools. Contravention of any of these restrictions is punishable and may carry a heavy fine. In case of such a violation of *murundu* laws, initiated boys and young and older men visit the home of the transgressor during the night. On arrival they would dance and sing *ngosha* for a whole night if no payment is made. In the process they may cause considerable damage to courtyard floors, mud walls and huts. The only way of getting them to leave, is to make an admission of guilt payment that will satisfy them, but they reserve the right to demand more than is offered. A verbal plight is insufficient and there is no opportunity for arguments, excuses or accusations. These missions are popularly known as *u tshinela*. During such missions to the villages, uninitiated men and boys who are over the initiation age, are captured and taken in for initiation. As a result of this legalized abduction, most uninitiated men go to areas outside the sphere of influence of *murundu*. Nowadays the urbanized areas are preferred for this purpose. Women must stay away from sites where men's rituals are performed and, similarly, men are not invited to those of women, except for *domba*.

Magical doctoring of all ritual institutions is a prerequisite. Venda ritual institutions are characterized by specific laws which are memorized and then used to prove that a person has been initiated. Uninitiated people are generally despised, isolated and looked down upon. They are referred to as *mashuvhuru*, a derogatory term, and are considered unfit to participate responsibly at tribal courts, and to marry. Initiated people generally do not feel free to discuss some of the most sensitive issues in their presence and express their irrelevance by saying: "*hu na makole*", literally meaning that it is cloudy.

A fully initiated person is regarded as a grown-up, man or woman, and may enjoy a limited company of adults. Boys and girls at this stage are gradually introduced into adult life. They are expected to appreciate adult roles and responsibilities, understand their country's economic ups and downs, national security position and, depending on availability and association with skilled elders, may learn such adult tasks as building, thatching, weaving, wood carving, etc. at a larger scale. Marriage is the next important step. It normally opens the doors to participation in most national issues such as tribal courts and religious ceremonies. A hierarchy of power and authority, based on age difference and year of initiation, continues to exist and young people are expected to listen to elders even after initiation.

The Venda culture is rich in music and games. There is music and games for certain age groups and some that are enjoyed by all. Some songs are sung only at specific occasions. There are songs related to ritual ceremonies, initiation schools, fist fighting, grain pounding, cattle herding, work parties, war parties, general entertainment, drinking get-togethers, *etc*. There are games of numbers for children and some for adults, the most popular ones being *ndode* (for young girls), *mutoga* and *tshimea* (for boys) and *mufuvha* (for men). Some games require strength and endurance while others employ tricks of different kinds. Swimming is done at pools in the rivers and includes touch games (*bune*), *tshinwi* (submersion), and other activities. Most of these games and songs are largely informal and based on voluntary participation.

3.6 VENDA MEDICINE, DIVINATION AND MAGIC

It is true that the Venda people have, for ages, depended on the natural environment for their health and survival. This dependence continued with modifications for many years up until the 19th century, when western civilization with its inherent Christian nature challenged its credibility, particularly with respect to the medicinal, magical, ritual and religious aspects that are part of it.

Almost all the medicines used by the Venda people are derived from plants and, to a lesser extent, also from animals. Everybody brought up in a traditional

Venda culture has a limited knowledge of those medicines used for the most common ailments such as colds, diarrhoea, colic, most sexually transmitted diseases, treatment of wounds, toothache, sore eyes, etc. This applies particularly to women, who tend to specialize in children's diseases.

3.6.1 Traditional medicinal practitioners, diviners and magicians.

Among the Vhavenda, some become distinguished as specialists in certain fields of medicinal practice. Such people may be referred to here as traditional medicinal practitioners. They pay special attention to the use of herbs in treating various diseases and rely on symptomatic diagnoses of diseases. Among these practitioners we find some who specialize in children's diseases, women's fertility problems, enemas and emetics, aphrodisiacs, sprains and fractures, fits, incurable ulcers related to cancer, or sexually transmitted diseases. There are also general practitioners who claim to treat all diseases, without specialization.

Diviners are people who normally do not treat diseases but who use their divinatory powers to determine causes and sources of people's health and social complaints. Generally, a set of divination dice made from bone and/or wood is used for this purpose. Each divination dice has two dissimilar sides with inscriptions which distinguish them from one another. It is the side on which a dice falls that is important in the interpretation of a throw. All the different types of dice make up a *mutavha*. Four of these together represent some sense or sentence termed *ḽiwa* (pl. *mawa*), the meaning of which depends on the combination of sides that show up. A complete set of divination dice must have eleven *mawa's* at a throw, i.e. it comprises 44 elements. Generally most people have less than this number and the divination set must be thrown down more than once to make up the required number of moves.

Some specialists do not use a divination set, but divine by means of a process known as *fembo* (meaning to smell). Those diviners who do not treat people usually direct them to other practitioners. The relevant practitioner is mostly also determined through divination or personal knowledge.

Magicians are those specialists who make use of natural objects, usually plant and animal products, to produce amazing effects. They mostly engage themselves in the doctoring of people, homesteads and other properties that may have been tampered with by witches, sorcerers and ancestral curses. Most Venda practitioners, however, combine some or all of the specialized fields mentioned above, and it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether any one of them is a medicinal practitioner (herbalist), diviner or magician. The Venda people still attempt to distinguish them by using loose terms such as *ṅanga* (medicinal practitioner), *mungome* (diviner) and *maine*. It is an honour to be called by the title of *maine* which is used to refer to a family 'doctor'. Traditional practitioners remain respected members of the community and are frequently called upon to render their services in rituals and religious ceremonies.

To become a fully fledged practitioner in the traditional sense, a person must undergo some formal training under the supervision of an experienced practitioner. Anybody may train for this occupation, but mostly practitioner's children of their parent's choice are trained. In such cases a child is trained from his early childhood until he is old enough to practice on his own. Men usually choose sons, while women prefer to train daughters. There are also some who enter the profession after a long illness, particularly when it could not be treated by all known practitioners. This normally happens by way of advice by a diviner, and hinges upon a belief that ancestors may choose any family member to train for the practice, especially when there was somebody in the earlier generations of the family, who practiced with their support but had no successor.

Training involves registration for a period of a few months to more than ten years. During this time the trainee stays with the supervisor. He is not allowed to go home except for reasons of serious health problems, death, or other misfortunes affecting close relatives. The training process is termed *u bikelwa* or *u thwasa*. The latter term appears to have been borrowed and assimilated from Xitsonga.

Most people spend much of their time in the homes of their supervisors during training, while others are said to stay under water in pools of local rivers for long periods. Some of these are said to come out after many years with reeds growing from their backs.

At first a trainee is basically taught to understand the ethics of the profession, diagnose illnesses from symptoms and interpret a set of divination dice. Initially a trainee accompanies his senior on medicine collection missions where he learns about medicinal plants their identification, geography and collection. At a later stage the initiates are sent out to collect required medicines on their own and, on returning, to prepare and have them ready for use. Towards the completion of the course, trainees are given an opportunity to treat patients, first those with minor complaints and later those suffering from complicated diseases.

When a patient arrives, it is the trainees who are expected to do all the spade work of collecting medicines, preparation and sometimes even its application. On completion of the course, the trainee is returned to his family in ceremony where animals are ritually slaughtered and people eat, drink and dance. At this stage he is equipped with enough medicines and experience to stand on his own, even though he may frequently have to seek advice from his trainer.

The traditional practice involves the identification of the problem (usually with the help of divination) first, and then treatment.. The divination set will not only inform the practitioner about the nature of the disease, but also whether he will be able to treat the patient. If he cannot do it, he should send him to somebody else.

In most treatments witchcraft is suspected, and medicines are included that will deal with that side of the illness. The same applies to cases where a person is believed to have been cursed by his ancestors, where medicines are used to remove the curse before the symptoms are treated. The role of ancestral spirits of both the practitioner and the patient is highly regarded in the successful treatment of patients.

The practitioner is paid for every treatment or consultation. The first payment to be made is the invitation fee termed *lutakuso*, the amount of which varies from one practitioner to another, followed by *luputululathevhele*, which allows the practitioner to open his bags of medicines and divination bones. This used to be half-a-crown (now 25c), but later changed to become R1.00. Practitioners may demand different amounts, but never less than R1.00. After divination and/or

treatment is finished, a payment known as *luphaso* is made. There is no excuse for not paying *luphaso* as it is a share for the practitioner's ancestral spirits. Lastly, the payment known as *tshidzimu* is made. This may be paid later, even long after the treated patient has recovered. He is not expected to make this payment before he is satisfied with the results of the treatment. Local customers are, however, allowed treatment without payment of the amounts as mentioned above, but must still pay in the end. Close relatives are exempted from these payments. This also applies to close friends and neighbours, who may thank the practitioner by offering whatever they have.

It is more expensive to divine for a dead person (termed *thangu dza nnḓa*) to find the cause of death than for a person who is ill or feeling insecure (*thangu dza ngomu*). It is even more expensive to divine for people accusing one another of witchcraft. The payments for divination in cases of death or accusations of witchcraft range from R200.00 to R1000.00, or even more, depending on the consultant's status and goodwill.

3.6.2 Witchcraft

Witchcraft is understood by the Vhavenda to be an evil act performed by people through the use of medicines of plant and animal origin. The term *muloi* is used to refer to any person who uses magical powers to do evil acts. It also refers to anybody who has ill wishes towards others, e.g. one who wishes to see others suffer, plans to make them suffer or die, or poisons others. Witches who use magical medicines or other supernatural powers are understood to be more active during the night, when people are asleep. The reason for bewitching others is not clear, but it is probably done out of jealousy, to eradicate any form of competition, or to get some superhuman beings to help with the day-to-day struggles for existence.

Witches employ various techniques in their practice, some of the most popular of which are described below:

a) *U shelela*: This is one of the most common and popular witchcraft acts. Any form of poison is put in another person's food or drink. This technique

is sometimes called *u l̂isa*. The most popular poison among the Vhavenda is *tshiganame*, which is rumoured to be a crocodile's brain or some other tissue obtained from that animal and is understood to be very poisonous in reasonably low concentrations. A small amount scraped under the finger-nail is reported to be able to kill a number of people by just dipping that finger into their cups of water or beer. It is sold at a reportedly very high price by people who were fortunate to obtain it at a reportedly very high price. It is therefore traditionally recommended that a dead crocodile must be burnt, not buried or it is insufficient to bury it. A poisoned person dies from uncontrollable vomiting but, if diagnosed quickly, may be saved. Medicinal practitioners claim to have potent medicines to treat poisoned people.

b) *Tshil̂iso*: A person is forced to swallow a piece of meat mixed with magical powders. On reaching the stomach, the meat is said to change into a living organism or object which controls the functioning of the body. It may cause vomiting, diarrhoea or pain. It may also cause undesirable discharges, either liquid or gaseous. Ultimately it may block the windpipe in such a way that the affected person is unable to breathe. After establishing itself in the body, it may show itself as an itchy skin rash, referred to by the Vhavenda as *mulilo*. A person is made to swallow this magically treated piece of meat when asleep at night, usually unaware of it the following morning as magical performances putting him/her into deep sleep are reported to be made before the meat is given.

The Vhavenda believe that a person has a central 'organ' in the body, possibly located in or very close to the stomach, that controls the whole functioning of the body -- strength, thinking, excretion, reproduction, etc. They call this 'organ' *n̂owa* (it means snake). Once this *n̂owa* can swallow the magical piece of meat or any "magical" medicine introduced into the stomach, it starts to behave under its influence. A person bewitched in this way cannot be treated successfully as he will vomit the medicines, or the medicines will pass through the alimentary system without being absorbed. Treatment involves application of medicines that will 'intoxicate' the *n̂owa* to allow for treatment, or those that will affect it in such a way that it returns to

normal functioning. This is why practitioners advise a patient during treatment to take a dose of medicine before meals, which would then be the first thing that the *ṋowa* will swallow. Absorption of food and medicines will then return to normal. It is believed that this 'organism' will swallow the medicine and die after a number of doses. With the 'organism' killed, it becomes necessary for the patient to take medicines that will remove it from the body. Venda practitioners claim to be able to treat this type of illness and others claim to have medicines (emetics) that can remove it instantly through the mouth, in such a way that the patient will be able to see it.

c) *U doba*: This is a "magical" practice in which a person is bewitched by making use of any discharges from his body, including sweat, hair, urine or faeces. In the extreme end also objects with which a person has had contact are also used, e.g. soil from a place where he was seated, 'fingerprints', foot prints, etc. Some people are said to have become crippled after stealing others' property. When this is done by a practitioner to retaliate against a thief, it is known as *u sikela*. People have come to learn that if one steals another's domestic animal, the stomach and intestines should not be eaten, because the one who *sikela* will make use of the manure from the kraal or enclosure where the animal was kept. When medicines are used to "doctor" some property in order to discipline anybody who illegally tampers with it, the practice is known as *u dzivhela*. Traditional practitioners most probably employ this technique in the magical protection of their countries, homesteads, property, and countrymen.

d) *U livhanya*: Here "magical" performances are made by witches to get others into trouble. Various techniques may be employed to bring about the effect that the victim appears to have met with an accident.

e) *U rea*: Medicines are applied on some stick or thread that is put across a person's frequented path, mostly one from his homestead or garden, in such a way that he will unknowingly touch it. Sometimes merely stepping over it is enough to produce the desired effect. If, by touching this object, a person develops some unbearable pain or an incurable ulcer in the leg, he is said to have been *pfulwa* (i.e. to be struck, as with a spear). Some people simply

sprinkle their medicines across the path to *rea* (trap) another person. It is said that the application of medicines in this way is always accompanied by other ritual performances and incantations to make sure that the medicines will affect the specific person, and nobody else who happens to come along. This technique is also reported to be used to make a passing or specific person lose his sense of direction and go to a place of their (witches') choice, where he will be at their mercy. He could be the victim of a ritual murder, converted into a *ḓuxwane* (see later in the section), or merely ill-treated. The latter is also known as *u kata*.

f) *U posela*: This involves throwing treated objects into other people's homestead in order to cause trouble. All or some selected people in the homestead may start to quarrel, fight or even kill one another. It may also cause a serious illness to some or all inmates of the homestead.

g) Most witches are believed to use familiars in their evil practice. Their familiars are reported to include polecats (*thuri*), baboons, owls, snakes and hyaenas. They may ride on some of these and use them as transport. They may even send them to go and bewitch others during the night. These familiars may have sexual relationships with unsuspicious persons of their choice. Some people think that witches make use of their "magical" medicines to change themselves into these familiars and that familiars are not real, but imaginary objects presented by the magic. The most popular familiar nowadays is *tokoloshi*, believed to have been imported from the Nguni tribes.

h) The use of "magical" lightning strikes is so popular among the Venda people that nobody is free during thunderstorms. Almost every homestead is treated against magical lightning, and in most of them lightning conductors are now fitted to protect families. Witches are believed to be able to strike a whole herd of cattle. Some forms of lightning are rumoured to snatch bags of mealie meal, furniture, or other property before burning the huts, or even without setting them alight. It is said that witches magically fly to their target, quickly complete the task, and return in one lightning strike. Some are said to smear the medicine on the target so that it will attract lightning,

while others direct the lightning to the target by other methods. In all cases it is believed that they make use of natural lightning as they operate only during thunderstorms. It is believed that after a strike the witch does not go home, but quickly runs or flies to the nearest river to wash off the medicines. This is why after every strike, some people run to the river, hoping to catch the culprit red-handed.

There are rumours of some people who got caught trying to strike other people's homesteads. At one occasion a man was killed at the river. He is said to have run to the river after striking a hut in which a woman was hurt. On arrival at the river he found women washing clothes, and boys playing by the river. They were amazed by his attire and his confusion on finding them there. They shouted at him mockingly. People from neighbouring villages on either side of the river converged to the area. It is said that he tried to scare them away by producing lightning flashes from his hands, followed by thunderclaps, but people scattered in various directions only to gather again. This drama attracted more attention and was terminated by an angry villager who snatched the man's axe and killed him. His body was anointed with red, black and shiny medicines, and he wore feathers on his body.

i) Lastly, it is believed that some witches take people to make them superhumans called *maḓuxwane*. A person bewitched in this way is said to have been healthy when taken, leaving behind his replica who is ill. This replica ultimately dies and is buried. The replica is believed to be an imaginary figure presented by magic. Some people simply disappear without a trace. *Maḓuxwane* are said to be used in any occupation including cattle herding, ploughing, weeding and fencing fields. Nowadays educated people are said to be sent away to get jobs with different names, where they work for their masters. Stories of some people coming back from death after they were buried, other people meeting them in towns, sending goods or money to their masters, and some 'witches' threatened with death or killed to bring back the people they took, are very common in Venda today.

Witches are believed to form clubs or societies with strong leaderships. They collaborate in their nightly errands. Some people are said to buy witchraft medicines, while others inherit them from their parents. Women are reported to make incisions around their daughters' waists and apply medicines that will automatically make them witches when they grow up. Witches are also diviners, or have diviners who determine the mixture to be used for specific homesteads or individuals. They are also believed to have magical mixtures which they use to appease other people's ancestors or gods and influence them to relax their protection so that they can be bewitched more easily.

The witch's identification is based on divination or circumstantial evidence. Practitioners are faced with the task of doctoring homesteads, people and their property, to protect them against all forms of witchcraft. Their medicines are said to operate in such a way that they make witches forget to visit their target, lose their way, be gripped with fear, or lose courage. Witches who are inmates of homesteads are made to oversleep. Some homesteads are doctored in such a way that witches will enter the homestead but will neither complete their tasks nor leave the premises. When found the following morning, they may be reported at the tribal court, or treated with "magical" mixtures that will kill them at their own homes, one by one. In most cases failure to overpower some people's magical protection may have fatal consequences. A person suffering as a result of retaliation is forgiven and made to pay a heavy fine, mostly an ox or two, if he goes to beg for clemency. Some traditional practitioners are also witches and go around testing other practitioners' strength. The loser must then pay heavily, usually secretly. Witches and practitioners who practice witchcraft are hated and isolated by the community. Many such people are killed or driven out of the country.

When a person is suspected of being a witch, the complainant goes to the headman to report the matter. This report must be accompanied by a payment. The headman or chief will then call his people, who will gather at a *khoro* and select representatives to accompany the complainant and the defendant to a *mungome* (diviner). This is called *u bva mungome*. In Venda the most popular diviners are found in the neighbouring Gazankulu homeland. The diviner will use his methods to confirm or refute the allegations. A person who is found guilty of being a witch must be made a *bemu* (removal of hair over a large part of the head) to help other

people identify him on arrival back home. People will gather at the headman or chief's kraal to wait for the outcome. Angry community members may do anything to a witch, but the traditional step is to drive the witch across a river. This is done because of the belief that a witch cannot cross a river on his/her way to bewitch people. Hence, a person who lives across the river will not bother them again. Nowadays community members take it upon themselves to discipline a person who is suspected of being a witch, because, according to the present law, it has become a serious crime to suspect or accuse another person of being a witch.

3.7 SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

The Vhavenda have for long depended on subsistence economy where they produced only enough to support themselves for a few seasons. They ploughed fields, reared domestic animals, hunted and trapped game, and gathered food from the veld. They also made various types of artifacts from clay, iron, grasses and wood. These articles were, and still are, either kept for domestic use or exchanged for other domestic requirements.

3.7.1 Soil cultivation

It is not known how long ago the Vhavenda started with agricultural occupations. Evidence from folktales, fables, proverbs, and ritual practices suggests that they have been agriculturists since the very remote past. Some of the crops mentioned in tales and proverbs, as well as those closely related to ritual practices of unknown antiquity, are still found growing in most agricultural holdings of the Vhavenda.

As mentioned before, agricultural land is traditionally allocated to homesteads by chiefs through their headmen and *vhakomas*. These lands are inherited from generation to generation originating from the first families and have always experienced centripetal expansion as a result of growing families. The number of fields per family depended to a large extent on determination, manpower and commitment to agriculture.

Agricultural holdings ranged from smaller plots along river banks, known as *miṱanga* and exposed to a semi-permanent supply of water drawn from these rivers, or seasonal flooding, through *zwikovha*, semi-dry areas on river valleys and larger than *miṱanga* to the largest *masimu* on the dry plains where dry farming is practised. until some few decades ago, any one family was entitled to receive all three types. Then conventional irrigation schemes were introduced, and river banks were declared buffer zones and fenced.

It is not known which crops are the oldest in Venda agriculture, but in the recent past grain crops such as maize, peanuts, groundnuts and beans were planted in *miṱanga* and *zwikovha*, while the drought-resistant cereals such as sorghum and various types of millet were grown in the larger and dry *masimu*.

The tilling and sowing in *masimu* took place seasonally and depended on rain. When no rain fell, rain doctors were consulted. These doctors "ordered for the extinction of all fires in the land ....followed by the doctoring of the land with medicines that purified the soil and finally attracted the fall of rain. If this failed, an expedition was taken to Malungudzi, Hatshinana, Hatshingoma, Hatshikwelengwe and even to Mubvumela and Matovha (Matopo Hills), places which could only be reached by the Manyusa who are Nwali Raluvhimba's High Priests. "The Manyusa, upon explaining the situation to Nwali, rain then did fall..." (W.M.D. Phophi, unpublished). Ancestral spirits also play important roles in ensuring good harvests.

Agricultural occupations were preceded by the ceremonial tilling of the Chief's special plot known as *gorosi*. Villagers also tilled special gardens known as *zwireṅwa-reṅwana*, for their headmen, while kin-groups or clans tilled gardens for their ancestral spirits in ceremonies known as *swonḍa*, to ensure good harvests. During the tilling of royal fields people also received small amounts of the doctored seeds, which they mixed with theirs to make them hardy and high-yielding.

The most important agricultural implement used was a hand hoe, followed by the recently acquired animal-drawn ploughs, spades, digging forks and rakes. Those who could not obtain rakes drew branches over tilled soil to level and to plant seeds sown after tilling. Tractors are also frequently used nowadays, but are still found too expensive to buy or hire by most subsistence agriculturists.

The Venda calendar year is divided into months, the length of which is equal to the period between one new moon and the next, and seasons represented by regular changes in weather conditions, especially by the fall of rain. It appears as if the Venda people did not know of things such as weeks and weekends. Their first season is *Luṱavula* (spring) which is marked by the first rains known as *mvula-tseuli* and development of new leaves and flowers in certain plants. It is a busy season characterized by grading and doctoring of seeds, clearing of lands, tilling and sowing. This season is followed by *tshilimo* (summer) and *tshifhefho* (autumn). *Tshifhefho* is marked by the first ripening of wild fruits and some vegetable crops in agricultural plots. Consumption of these first fruits and vegetables is prohibited until the performance of first fruits and vegetable ceremonies for the ancestral spirits, known to the Vendas as *u tungula* or *u lumisa*. After these ceremonies all fruits and vegetables may be eaten. Lastly, there is the season known as *Mavhuyahaya*, which coincides with winter and is characterized by the ripening and harvesting of all summer crops. During this period a further ritual ceremony known as *thevhula* is performed to provide the ancestral spirits with their share of the new harvests. It is a period of much eating, drinking, building, migrations, attending of initiation schools, traditional games, art etc., while people are waiting for the new tilling season.

Nowadays, relatively few people remain loosely attached to some agricultural sites, many of these being dry lands. The possibility of any reasonable number of people acquiring irrigated lands, without others losing some, is remote. People seem to be overgrowing their prescribed environmental occupations and tend to spread their settlements into what used to be their main sources of agricultural products. At first the Vhavenda moved from the hill tops and mountain sides to settle in the valleys in compliance with the new, more systematic and civilized settlement pattern of stands, wards and districts. For reasons of accessibility these blocks of stands (each with its own headman) always had a tendency to spread into the valleys and flat plains. Each village experiences centripetal growth and every time new stands are added, some families lose arable land. Through population increase and migration, some settlements have expanded so much that agricultural production in a civilized sense is impossible. In most areas the shortage of arable land is so serious that people are once again allowed to plough along river banks, calling these plots *zwidimana* or *ngade* (garden). Most Venda people who initially

relied on agriculture have lost interest in the practice and try to get employment in towns, shops or farms. Some people attempt to combine agricultural occupations and civil employment, attending their agricultural interests after hours or over weekends. Still fewer, those who have larger and fertile lands, either as a result of long standing commitment, political influence or financial assistance by government-subsidized institutions, remain to produce enough for subsistence and sometimes even for marketing.

3.7.2. Animal husbandry

The Vhavenda are semi-pastoralists and have practised animal husbandry side by side with agriculture. They reared cattle, goats and sheep. All these domestic animals are collectively referred to as *thakha*, something which gratifies, or brings some relief or well-being. Cattle are referred to as *thakha ya mutsindo* (heavy-hoofed animals), while goats and sheep are known as *thakha i sina mutsindo* (light-hoofed animals). At times these animals are referred to as *muhungo*, meaning what one owns at hand, that might be pointed at while fastened to a pole. Goats and sheep are also known as *khungwaṋduni*, because they are sometimes accommodated inside huts, where they are fastened to short poles. They are also called *zwibatanganyanga* because they are mostly handled by their horns. The Vhavenda never appear to have reared fowls.

Domestic animals, particularly cattle, are treated like human beings. They are also treated by medicines that protect them against witches and other evils. Their enclosures are provided with their own magical protections apart from the ones for the whole homestead. It is a very strict taboo for women who are still in childbirth to enter cattle enclosures. Every domestic animal (except sheep) is given a praise name while still young. Such names as *Thitkwa, Khwara, Phonze, Tshivhai* etc., and *Matsangaluwa, Maphongo, Mutshena, Tshiṋangatshivhi* etc., are common for cattle and goats respectively.

Cattle, goats and sheep play important roles in the religion of the Venda people. They represent a link between the living and their ancestral spirits. Some animals, usually black, are chosen to represent the ancestral spirits and are even

named after them. Such animals are called by the names of *Makhulu* or *Malume*. Cattle usually represent paternal ancestors while goats represent maternal ones; a male animal for a male and vice versa. During ritual performance these animals are taken from their enclosures and brought into the courtyard where people are gathering. Here they are poured with religious beverages, their reactions having much meaning: when they shake the liquid from their bodies, people become happy and ululate, saying the ancestors have responded.

A person's livestock represents his capital and is valued as a medium of exchange. It is important as a bride price during marriages and can be used to pay fines or make offerings to respected people like chiefs. Cattle are rarely slaughtered, and then only at the Chief's kraal for respectable visitors, especially those who come in organized groups like *tshikona*, *matangwa*, and *zwigombela*, as well as upon death or inauguration of a Chief. Commoners sometimes slaughter their cattle during food shortages, when meat is exchanged for grain, upon the death of an adult family member, and during ritual ceremonies. Goats and sheep are usually slaughtered to provide relish for visitors, work parties and initiates returning from rituals institutions.

Apart from meat, cattle and goats also provide milk (sheep milk is used only for medicinal purposes). Milk is used to relish porridge when fresh or sour. Horns of cattle, goats and sheep are used for various purposes such as drawing water, as trumpets and for holding medicines. Hides are processed to make clothes, mats, ropes, shoes, etc. Plumes from the tails of cattle are used as a framework for bangles and anklets for womenfolk. Fresh cow dung and sometimes that of goats and sheep is used to smear floors in courtyards and huts. When lightning strikes a place, the curd of sheep's milk is used for doctoring such a place. Newly built homesteads are doctored with medicinal preparations mixed with the curd of sheep's mlik, and sometimes also that of a goat to scare away all evils brought by witches and wizards. "The skull of a sheep is used ceremonially in the case of someone who died away from home. When his spirit gave trouble in that it wanted to be brought home amongst its people, this was used in proxy when a miniature grave was made to lay his remains, represented by the skull of a sheep" (Phophi, W.M.D., unpublished).

3.7.3 Hunting and trapping of wild game

The Vhavenda hunted wild game as a part-time occupation in times of peace and when other activities, especially agriculture, were at a standstill. They hunted large and small game, including birds, and used poisoned arrows, clubs and spears, as well as dogs. They often used snares of different types to trap and kill game. Birdlime was used only to trap birds. From game they obtained meat, hides, horns and fats. Carnivorous animals are not eaten but also supply hides for making clothes and fats for mixing with medicines. Nestlings and eggs of birds are also collected and used to supplement food.

3.7.4 Collection and gathering of fruits, vegetables, locusts and other insects, and extraction of bee-hives

"In all necessities for subsistence, the collection of fruit and berries preceded agriculture and hunting" (Phophi, unpublished). This probably also applies to the gathering of wild vegetables, insects and their products.

As the various fruits ripen at different seasons, they are gathered throughout the year. Fruits are classified as those that are gathered from mountains and mountain sides and those found in the valleys and along river basins. Some are considered as important famine foods and given more attention when they become available.

The Vhavenda also depend on gathering vegetables, mushrooms, locusts and insects such as "mopani worms" and other edible caterpillars found on plants such as *Burkea africana, Ekebergia meyeri, Diospyros pallens, Peltophorum africanum* and others (known variously as *mashonzha*, *mafhulu, mafhera,* etc.). They also gather termiterium and flying termites (known as *madzhulu, nṱhwa,* and *ṋemeṋeme* respectively) and also extract honey and other products from bee-hives as well as from hives of other insects known as *monga*, *done*, and *mbani*.

3.7.5 Miscellaneous requirements

Apart from obtaining food from their natural environment as mentioned above, the Vhavenda also harvest considerable amounts of medicines from the veld. They use these medicines to treat themselves relatively free of charge, but other patients pay varying amounts in the form of livestock, grain or money. Some medicines are exchanged for other valuable articles or medicines, especially with peoples from other parts of the country where these are unavailable or unknown. The natural environment also serves as the only source of firewood and materials for building, art and recreation (see also in Chapters 5 and 6).

3.7.6 Production

a) Role of magico-religious aids in production

The role of magic in the economy of the Vhavenda is illustrated by the doctoring of livestock, arable lands, seeds and crops by individual family groups, and of the land with its wild fruit-bearing plants and water bodies as a national responsibility. Performance of family and national rituals in relation to the ripening of wild indigenous fruits and agricultural crops indicates the recognition of the role played by the ancestral spirits.

At the burial of a family member, the Vhavenda sow seeds of various types of crops and "tell" the deceased that they have exhausted their seed resources and that he or she must remember that in the next season when they plant their corps.

Magico-religious powers are also believed to affect the people's luck during their hunting, gathering and trading trips. It is considered partly an ancestral curse if most of the clay pots break during burning, or if wooden crafts crack prematurely. The ancestors are always reminded to help make this art a success. There are some people who always catch more of everything (e.g. birds, fish, or game) than others who are trapping with them and using the same materials. Such people are despised and said to have a

magical medicine that attract these animals to their traps only; such medicine is called *mutzimbe*. Others generally avoid working with them.

b) Division of labour

Division of labour exists among the Vhavenda and is based on sex, age and, sometimes, also specialization. Duties such as cooking for the family, fetching water from rivers and streams, sweeping, plastering and polishing the homesteads, gathering of vegetables and firewood, sowing, weeding, harvesting and washing clothes have always been left to women. Men perform relatively heavy tasks such as construction of fences, thatching, ploughing with cattle, cattle herding, hunting and trapping as well as war. Within each of the two groups there also exist responsibilities for specific age groups, e.g. boys first look after goats and then later, cattle. Thatching is a responsibility only for adult men, but men never collect locusts and caterpillars. Certain individuals in the community enjoy the status of being specialists, especially those who excel in metal works, wood carving, weaving, etc.

Some tasks are done by individuals, e.g. weaving, woodcarving, iron smelting, thatching, trapping of game, etc., while others such as gathering of vegetables, wood and insects, cattle herding, hunting and tilling, weeding and harvesting of royal fields, are communal activities. The Vhavenda in villages co-operate in a variety of jobs and, in many cases, organize work parties where the people are rewarded with porridge, meat and beer.

c) Distribution of wealth

As mentioned before, the wealth of the Venda family is represented by livestock and arable lands. Cattle, goats and sheep are inherited from parents or acquired from marriage of daughters in the family. These are frequently exchanged for other domestic requirements, especially grain and artifacts made from wood, fibre and metals.

The marriage of any one woman has always been accompanied by the transfer of eight heads of cattle, known as *mamalo*. Livestock could also be acquired after some exceptional performance of duties for wealthy families such as building or medical treatment of members. They are sometimes farmed out to relatives or friends and, for looking after them, a person responsible may be given one animal after every two or more years. The Chief or Headman frequently receives offers from his subjects, and during periods of shortage or during national celebrations these are sometimes returned to some citizens. It had been a primary objective for most Vhavenda to work for many years towards the acquisition of livestock, and there was a time when very few Vhavenda did not have cattle, goats or sheep.

CHAPTER 4

PLANTS USED BY THE VHAVENDA

This chapter lists the species identified during the field work undertaken by the author. The identification of most taxa is based on voucher specimens and the scientific names follow Gibbs Russell *et al.* (1985, 1987). In a few cases definitive determination beyond generic level was impossible because of insufficient material.

Species have been grouped according to family. The families are arranged alphabetically, as are the species within each family. Some of the accepted scientific names are followed by one or more recent synonyms. For a more complete synonymy Gibbs Russell *et al.* (1985, 1987) may be consulted. Venda vernacular names are supplied for most of the species.

ACANTHACEAE

1. **Hypoestes aristata** (Vahl) Soland. ex Roem. & Schult. var. **aristata** *Mabogo 107*

(= *Hypoestes verticillaris* (L. f.) R. Br. ex C.B. Cl.)

Mukuluvhali

Fresh leaves are cooked into a potherb used for relishing porridge. It is commonly used during periods of shortage. It is not a very popular vegetable with most Vhavenda cooks.

AMARANTHACEAE

2. **Amaranthus hybridus** L. *Mabogo 22*

Vowa

a. Fresh leaves and tender shoots are cooked into a vegetable side dish called *vowa* which is eaten with porridge. The vegetable can easily and successfully be cooked with pumpkin leaves and flowers as well as with *Corchorus tridens*. When peanuts or marula seed kernels are available, their addition to the vegetable is highly appreciated. **b.** Leaves are used to test the suitability of a baby's type of food during the first three to four days. If the baby shows symptoms of diarrhoea, it is given soft porridge known as *khongo̍doli* instead of *ntsu* (liquid food prepared by soaking various types of roots). The baby in this case is given a decoction of boiled leaves. **c.** More often this plant is dried, burnt and crushed into powder known as *mukango*, which is an ingredient of snuff, but the most popular species for this use is *Amaranthus thunbergii* or *Phytolacca octandra*.

3. **Pupalia** sp. *Mabogo 148*
Maime

The root tuber powder is mixed with other medicines for luck. It is dried and ground into powder and then mixed with the powder of *Pyrenacantha grandiflora*. The mixture is believed to protect a treated person against attacks or provocation by other people, secure a better job opportunity and provide defence in court cases.

ANACARDIACEAE

4. **Lannea schweinfurthii** (Engl.) Engl.
(= *Lannea stuhlmanii* (Engl.) Engl. *Mabogo 161*
Mulivhadza

a. The Venda name indicates that the plant is used to make a person forgetful (from: *-livhala* = to forget). In fact it is a fungus associated with the root system of this plant which is obtained and mixed with other magical powders and then used for the purpose. The root of the plant may also be used in other cases, e.g. when family members are made to forget a relative who has just passed away. In this case a decoction of the root bark is mixed with the fungus as well as any root found crossing the grave site during digging. It is given to them to drink and also protects them against a sleeping illness known as *Vhulungwane* (see also *Equisetum ramosissimum*). It is also used to help people forget all unpleasant events. **b.** Mixed with others, it is used to discourage enemies from doing harm to a person by making them forget and postpone their plans. The fungus is also an ingredient of medicines used for keeping a married woman at home by making her less bothered by her previous social ties. It is similarly used to keep domestic animals from straying when they have been obtained from other areas as well as strengthen their relationship with the ones at their new home.

5. **Ozoroa engleri** R. & A. Fernandes *Mabogo 98*
Mudumbula

a. A decoction of the bark and leaves is used for soaking seeds as a means of treating them before sowing in order to make them resistant to dryness, heat and diseases and to improve the resulting crop. **b.** The bark decoction is also used as a remedy for venereal diseases. The same decoction, used for preparation of soft porridge, is a medicine for general cleaning for men.

6. **Rhus chirindensis** Bak. f. *Mabogo 108*
(= *Rhus legatii* Schnl.)
Muvhaḓelaphanga

a. The fruit might be eaten when ripe but it is not very popular. **b.** The wood is workable and used to carve smaller household utensils. The Venda name shows that it is used for carving wooden knives (from *-Vhaḓela* = to carve for + *-phanga* = knives).

7. **Rhus lancea** L.f. *Mabogo 11*
Mushakaladza

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe and is preferred mostly by children. **b.** Fresh leaves are stuffed into a pot and boiled to steam a person suffering from colds, headaches and related fevers. The patient must be wrapped in a blanket to prevent too much steam escaping. After steaming, the patient may drink the decoction of boiled leaves. Leaves are also boiled and the decoction used to bathe a baby suffering from the disease known as *tshifumbu* (related to smallpox). The baby is also washed and/or steamed with the decoction. This treatment is done to develop the symptoms of the disease as well as to heal it. People in areas where the plant does not grow usually collect it far from their homes in order to keep it for future use, even though the leaves would be dry. **c.** The wood is good for fire and **d.** for building.

8. **Rhus lucida** L. *Mabogo 74*
(= *R. lucida* L. var. *outeniquensis* (Szyszyl.) Schonl.)
(= *R. schlechteri* Diels)
Muthaguṱhagu

a. The ripe drupes are eaten raw, sometimes with milk or water. **b.** The plant is also a source of firewood.

9. **Rhus rogersii** Schonl. *Mabogo 73*
(= *Rhus dentata* Thunb.)
Muṱhasiri

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe but it is not much sought after because it is too dry. **b.** The wood is good for fire and is also sometimes used to build certain structures.

10. **Sclerocarya birrea** (A. Rich.) Hochst. subsp. **caffra** (Sond.) Kokwaro *Mabogo 1*
(= *S. caffra* Sond.)
Mufula

a. The fruit is eaten by people of all ages. **b.** The fruit is also used to make the beer or wine called *mukumbi* which is a fairly potent liquor. **c.** Seed kernels are extracted and used as cooking fat when pounded into *thanga*. When pounded, cooking oil is generally obtained through heating. This oil can also be used for other purposes besides being used to cook vegetables. Young and old people frequently enjoy cracking the shells to obtain kernels which they like to eat raw. **d.** An infusion of the bark combined with the bark of *Combretum krausii* is used to support pregnancy. **e.** It is also used for treating barrenness and illnesses related to fertility. **f.** A bark infusion is used for colds, headaches, malaria and stomach troubles (e.g. dysentery, indigestion, *etc.*). **g.** It is also a treatment for a noisy stomach and related diseases. **h.** When used to select the sex of an unborn child, a male plant is used for a boy and *vice versa*. **i.** The powdered bark is an ingredient of medicines used for chronic ulcers suspected to be caused by witchcraft. In this regard it is mixed with the

powdered bark of *Terminalia sericea* and other plants which are easily attacked by wood-borers. The use of this plant for chronic ulcers is related to its capacity to regenerate its bark rapidly when damaged. **j.** The wood is workable and preferred for carving drums, plates, spoons, milking pails, bowls, mortars, yokes, etc. **k.** The wood is not particularly good for cooking fire but is preferred for burning articles made from clay, e.g. pots, receptacles, dishes, etc. This tree has been traditionally protected for ages because of its importance as a source of food, beverage, medicine and wood.

ANNONACEAE

11. **Annona senegalensis** Pers. *Mabogo 86*
(= *Annona chrysophylla* Harv.)
Muembe

a. The fruit, called *maembe*, is edible when ripe and is much enjoyed by children and adults. **b.** Powder from the root bark is used as an antidote against snake-bite. **c.** A decoction of the root is a remedy for venereal diseases when taken with soft porridge as a base. **d.** It is also used in the treatment of bilharzia, the disease popularly known among the Vhavenda as *tshifunga*. **e.** The bark is chewed for stomach ache, diarrhoea, and dysentery. **f.** A cord made from the bark is smeared with magical powders to discourage any opponent or antagonist from harming the user, i.e. it slows down his progress by making him feel less prepared until it is too late. A semiparasitic plant growing on this plant, mixed with other powders, makes the user as well as his homestead more slippery, causing difficulty for anybody who wishes to do harm. **g.** Roots are a major ingredient of a baby's medicines kept in the clay pot known as *thufhana*, and used for making the baby's soft porridge more medicinal, apart from being nutritional. The medicines also improve the taste and flavour of the baby's food. Some of the other plants included in the above recipe are, to mention but a few, *Salix subserrata*, *Artabotrys monteiroae*, *Maytenus* sp., *Bauhinia galpinii* and *Syzygium guineense*. This plant, in particular, is included to keep the stomach conditions favourable by preventing constipation. It also regulates the upward and downward movement of the still soft fontanelle. **h.** The soft wood

has been used as a cow-stick during fire-making. **i.** The bark is a good source of fibre for cordage as well as ox-whips.

12. **Artabotrys monteiroae** Oliv. *Mabogo 90*
(= *A. nitidus* Engl.)
Mudzidzi, Munna mutswu

a. Commonly known as *Mudzidzi*, the plant is a source of juicy fruit enjoyed by young people and known as *madzidzi*. The fruit is dark bluish when ripe. The Venda name, *Munnamutswu*, has been given to this plant by traditional medicinal practitioners as a technical name. It refers to the colour of the root bark which is black (hence the name derived from *munna* = man, referring to its power, + *mutswu* = black, referring to its colour). *b.* The roots are soaked in a clay pot called *thufhana* together with other medicines, and the resulting infusion is used for making soft porridge known as *tshiunza*, which is given to a baby from birth until he/she is able to share food with other family members. The medicine is understood to keep the baby's stomach in good condition as well as cleaning the blood. **c.** A decoction of boiled roots is used to make soft porridge for older people who suffer from pelvic pains and a troublesome stomach. **d.** A semiparasitic plant growing on this tree is taken and used magically to trap evildoers, especially ones who visit other people during the night in the form of *tokoloshi*. Once trapped, the familiar must be taken to the traditional practitioner who arranged for its trapping. He will then use it to make medicines to prevent similar cases in the same or another homestead. Medicine collectors say that it is great luck to find the semiparasitic plant, and that if someone is lucky enough to get it at the beginning of his search for medicines, he will then be able to get all the others, i.e. it will help him see all the others. *e.* The flexible saplings are used in building, especially for the construction of roofs as withies as well as for holding the thatch. It is also preferred for pole walls called *mipfunda*, built to protect courtyards against winds and to secure privacy.

13. **Hexalobus monopetalus** (A. Rich.) Engl. & Diels *Mabogo 137*
(= *H. glabrescens* Hutch. & Dalz. ex Burtt Davy)
Muhuhuma

a. The juicy fruit is eaten, preferably by herdboys and wood collectors who frequently visit the mountainous areas. **b.** The wood is recommended as a good source of fire for cooking as well as for heating.

14. **Xylopia odoratissima** Welw. ex Oliv. *Mabogo 147*
(= *X. antunessii* Engl. & Diels)
Muvhulavhusiku

The Venda name relates to the fact that the plant is superficially similar to *Muvhula* (*Parinari curatellifolia* subsp. *mobola*). The powdered root is sprinkled over soft porridge or mageu (a slightly fermented bran) and then taken as a remedy for stomach pains, the cause of which is suspected to be witchcraft.

APIACEAE (UMBELLIFERAE)

15. **Heteromorpha trifoliata** (Wendl.) Eckl. & Zeyh. *Mabogo 140*
(= *H. arborescens* (Thunb.) Cham. & Schlechtd.)
Mu̱ha̱tha̱vhanna

a. Herdboys and young men chew the root fresh, with milk, beer or mageu (*mabundu*). The juice is swallowed and is said to make a man strong, powerful and hardy, in other words it is an aphrodisiac. The Venda name points at its use by men. **b.** The boiled root decoction is one of the medicines needed for treatment of a disease known as *ngoma*, which has a depressed fontanelle as one of its main symptoms. **c.** A leaf infusion is taken as a remedy for abdominal disorders as well as for general cleaning of stomach, kidneys and blood.

APOCYNACEAE

16. **Acokanthera oppositifolia** (Lam.) Codd *Mabogo 185*
(= *A. venenata* sensu Stapf non G. Don)
Musilili

Although this plant is considered poisonous in most respects, it is still used medicinally. In combination with other medicines, the infusion of the root bark is a remedy for long lasting and abnormal menstrual periods. It is tabooed as a source of firewood because it is said that if it is burnt, the women in the household will experience indefinite menstrual flow. In view of this understanding, sticks of this plant are included in the hedge fence to discourage women from obtaining wood from this source.

17. **Carissa bispinosa** (L.) Desf. ex Brenan *Mabogo 38*
Murungulu

a. The fruit is eaten fresh when ripe. **b.** Branches are cut and used for hedge fencing as well as firewood.

18. **Carissa edulis** Vahl *Mabogo 275*
(= *Azima pubescens* Suesseng.)
Murungulu

a. The fruit is sweet with a delicious flavour when ripe. It is enjoyed most by young people. **b.** The root is soaked, together with many others, in a clay pot to yield an infusion used for making the soft porridge known as *tshiunza* which is eaten by a baby from birth until it can eat hard porridge.

19. **Landolphia kirkii** T.-Dyer *Mabogo 76*

Muvhungo

a. The fruit, known as *mavhungo*, is enjoyed by both old and young. **b.** The latex is sweet and used for making birdlime sticky and strong, especially when prepared from the root bark of *Cassine aethiopica*. It is once again used to restore stickiness in birdlime when it becomes weak after long periods of exposure to heat (i.e. when laid to catch birds) as well as constant chewing. **c.** The root, combined with roots of *Albizia adianthifolia*, *Ricinus communis* and fruit from *Solanum incanum*, is dried and powdered to make a remedy for the diseases known as *nowa khulu* (piles) and *nowagudu* (a type of rheumatoid arthritis). **d.** Sticks from this plant are anointed with magical medicines and placed across entrances to homesteads, cattle byres, huts, etc. to protect them against witchcraft and magical attacks. When used for magical purposes it is called *luvhambo*. **e.** Thin saplings are preferred for basket rims and for construction of thatch roofs as wattles or binders.

20. **Rauvolfia caffra** Sond. *Mabogo 70*

(= *R. natalensis* Sond.)

Munadzi

a. An infusion of the bark is taken and used for killing maggots in wounds. **b.** A decoction from the bark is used for making soft porridge which is eaten for abdominal and pelvic troubles, especially when boiled with the bark of *Parinari curatellifolia* subsp. *mobola*. It is also known as *Muhatu* because it arrests development of many diseases while the relevant medicines are still being prepared, especially where *Tabernaemontana elegans* is scarce or not known (the name is derived from *-hatula* = to stop short). **b.** The wood is workable and used for household utensils such as spoons, bowls, etc.

21. **Tabernaemontana elegans** Stapf *Mabogo 216*

(= *Conopharyngia elegans* (Stapf) Stapf)

Muhaṱu

a. The fruit is edible and some people like it when it is ripe. The pulp is frequently added to vegetables as a condiment. **b.** A decoction of the root is reported to have a physiological effect of arresting and even calming down most diseases, especially when the correct medicines are still to be prepared. The name *Muhaṱu* refers to this function in the medicinal field (from: *-haṱula* = to stop). **c.** The milky latex is added to birdlime to improve its strength and stickiness, more often when the birdlime is prepared from the latex of *Ficus burkei*. **d.** The latex is also used for curdling milk and making its taste sour. **e.** Powdered fruit medicine is reported to be effective against venereal diseases. When this species is not available most people normally substitute it with *Rauvolfia caffra* for other uses.

22. **Wrightia natalensis** Stapf *Mabogo 206*

Musunzi

Roots are chewed fresh and the juice is swallowed by herdboys and young men. It is understood to have aphrodisiac properties and is, as such, used medicinally in this regard.

ARALIACEAE

23. **Cussonia spicata** Thunb. *Mabogo 276*

Musenzhe

a. A new-born baby is washed with the infusion of the root so that it would grow into a strong, heavy and vigorous child. It is commonly used as a substitute for, or in combination with, *Adansonia digitata*, especially when the latter is scarce or unavailable. **b.** The bark is pounded in water and the infusion taken orally for internal ulcers. Powdered bark is included in the treatment of magically caused

ulcers called *zwipfula* and *pfuko*. In general it is used for or against magic. **c.** Leaves were worn to cover the body during ritual cults.

24. **Schefflera umbellifera** (Sond.) Baill. *Mabogo 167*
(= *Cussonia umbellifera* Sond.)
Mukho

The wood is soft, white and workable. It is used for household utensils such as knives, spoons, plates, bowls, etc.

ARECACEAE

25. **Phoenix reclinata** Jacq. *Mabogo 66*
Mutshevho, *Mutshema*

a. The ripe fruit is enjoyed by all age groups. Sometimes the unripe fruit is also collected and stored in clay pots until ripe. **b.** A fermented beverage (palm wine) is made from the sap that oozes from the stem when the crown is cut off. This is collected in large containers and kept until it is fully fermented and then drunk or sold. A number of trees may be affected in order to get enough sap. The wine that is made is also known as *mutshema*. Leaves are used as gutters for sap collection. **c.** The use of leaves obtained from this palm for thatching is considered inferior and ugly and are used only in times of shortage. **d.** Parts of the rachis are occasionally chewed at one end and then used as toothbrushes.

26. **Hyphaene coriacea** Gaertn. *Mabogo 230*
(= *H. natalensis* Kunze)
Mulala

a. Petioles and leaves provide an important source of structural fibre used for weaving baskets and a variety of receptacles. **b.** They are also used as thatch. **c.**

An intoxicating beverage, called *mutshema*, is also made from the sap of this species.

ASCLEPIADACEAE

27. **Asclepias fruticosa** L. *Mabogo 234*
Mutshulwa

A decoction of the root is used to organize the stomach and reproduction in women, especially when there is some difficulty with falling pregnant.

28. **Pentarrhinum insipidum** E. Mey. *Mabogo 124*
Phulule

Leaves are cooked into a potherb which is eaten with porridge. It is normally cooked with other vegetable leaves as a spice.

29. **Sarcostemma viminale** (L.) R.Br. *Mabogo 277*
Mutshiso

Powdered root and stem are applied through incisions made by a sharp instrument (e.g. a razor blade) on breasts of a woman who has problems with lactation. It is also a major ingredient of the medicine used to stimulate production of milk even in women who have never given birth. If the mother cannot breast-feed her own child, say because of some illness, this treatment is given to any close relative, preferably the grandmother, so that she can feed the child until he can share porridge with the rest of the family. Such cases are not uncommon among the Vhavenda, and probably also among other African tribes. This medicine is also used in animals for the same purpose.

ASTERACEAE

30. **Athrixia phylicoides** DC. *Mabogo 278*

Mutshatshaila, *Mubosotie*

a. An infusion from the root is reported to have aphrodisiac properties. People who know the effect of the plant, discourage its use by bachelors when they say *Mutshatshaila muri u sa ḽiwi nga khombe*, meaning "it is a medicine that should not be taken by a bachelor". **b.** The extract from soaked roots and leaves is taken as an anthelmintic. **c.** The dried or fresh leaves (including stem tips) are boiled and the extract is drunk with sugar as a tea. The name, *Mubosotie*, means that it is a wild tea plant.

31. **Bidens pilosa** L. *Mabogo 23*

(= *B. leucantha* (L.) Willd.)

Mushidzhi

a. Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. It is also included as a piquant in most other vegetables. It is more delicious when cooked with some condiment, such as marula seed kernels or peanuts. **b.** The infusion of boiled leaves is drunk to stop long lasting menstruation. This infusion is also understood to promote conception. **c.** The same infusion is also used to test whether the new-born baby needs soft porridge or liquid food.

32. **Brachylaena discolor** DC. *Mabogo 126*

Mufhaṱa

a. The infusion of the leaf is used for the treatment of roundworm infection. **b.** The plant is popular for its strong and durable wood. Its Venda name relates to its important use in building (from *-fhaṱa* = to build). It is preferred for roofs, fencing posts, wall posts, tool handles and as firewood.

33. **Dicoma zeyheri** Sond. *Mabogo 239*

Tshitoni, Thoni

Flowers and fruits are burnt and powdered for use against an infection in women by the disease known as *goni*, which interferes with fertility and also causes early infant deaths. The main symptoms are sores in the vaginal canal and nail biting behaviour in the child. The sores in the mother are scraped off and mixed with the medicine described above which is applied on the site of sores and also taken orally. The child is also given this medicine orally. It is traditionally recommended that women who fail to fall pregnant or experience miscarriages or scanty menstruation must be checked and treated for it if infected. The name *goni* refers to the martial eagle which catches chickens and seems to warn women that they might lose their children in a similar way if they are not treated when infected. The plant name *Tshitoni* is related to the thorny appearance of the flower heads which look like hedgehogs.

34. **Gerbera ambigua** (Cass.) Sch. Bip. *Mabogo 201*

(= *G. kraussii* Sch. Bip.)
(= *G. discolor* Harv.)
(= *G. elegans* Muschl.)
(= *G. lynchii* Duemmer)
(= *G. nervosa* Sond.)
Ito la ndau

The Venda name relates to the resemblance of the flower to a lion's eye. The leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge, preferably as a spice.

35. **Helichrysum nudifolium** (L.) Less. *Mabogo 156*

The root is boiled and the decoction given to a child to encourage weaning.

36. **Senecio longiflorus** (DC.) Sch. Bip. *Mabogo 99*

(= *Kleinia longiflora* DC.)

Mushavhavhakadzi

a. Green and fresh branches are chewed and the juice swallowed as an emetic, especially when poison has been taken accidentally. **b.** Chewing the soft branch is also understood to induce love in women whom a man may meet. The name *Mushavhavhakazi* refers to this magical effect (from: *-shavha* = to buy + *-vhakazi* = Shona for women). **c.** Stems are also used as an ingredient of snuff.

37. **Senecio** sp. *Mabogo 171*

Tshiṱanzisanngwa

The leaf is pounded into a paste which is used as an emetic. The Venda name has been derived from this use but relates to a dog (from: *-ṱanzisa* = to cause to vomit + *-nngwa* = dog). Some people use it to stop drinking. It is said that vomiting beer mixed with sap from this plant causes one to dislike drinking.

38. **Senecio** sp. *Mabogo 160*

Tshifaṱafaṱane

Dried leaves are burnt and smoked for colds and related ailments. They may be crushed, rolled in paper and smoked like tobacco or smoked in a pipe.

39. **Sonchus oleraceus** L. *Mabogo 26*

Shashe

The leaf is preferred alone or used to add a piquant taste to cooked vegetables. It may also be dried and stored for future use. The inclusion of some condiment makes it all the more delicious.

40. **Vernonia neocorymbosa** Hilliard *Mabogo 240*
(= *Vernonia corymbosa* (L.f.) Less.)
Phathaphathane

a. An infusion of pounded leaf and root as well as softer parts of stem is used as a remedy against intestinal worms in domestic animals. **b.** The infusion is also taken to facilitate abortion, but it may have fatal side effects if not properly used.

41. **Vernonia stipulacea** Klatt *Mabogo 134*
(= *V. ampla* O. Hoffm.)
(= *V. podocoma* Sch. Bip. ex Oliv. & Hiern)
Mululudza

An infusion of soaked or boiled root is drunk as a contraceptive two or three times a day. It is normally kept in a bottle or clay pot for daily use. Termination of use is said to result in the immediate end of contraception.

BALANITACEAE

42. **Balanites maughamii** Sprague *Mabogo 71*
(= *B. dawei* Sprague)
Mudulu

a. Fruit of this plant is considered inedible. **b.** The wood is beautiful, workable and used for spoons, stirrers, bowls, dishes, etc. **c.** Thorns are used magically to protect homesteads when anointed with magical powders in fat.

BIGNONIACEAE

43. **Markhamia acuminata** (Klotzsch) K. Schum. *Mabogo 241*
Mulakholomo

The leaves are preferred for cattle fodder. The Venda name expresses the fact that it is eaten by cattle (from: *la* = to eat + *kholomo* = cattle)

BOMBACACEAE

44. **Adansonia digitata** L. *Mabogo 120*
Muvhuyu

a. Growing in the drier areas of the Northern and North-western Transvaal, this plant provides food for people who may experience years without a sound harvest from their lands. The pulp around the seeds is eaten fresh or dried. It is usually soaked in milk or water and eaten as such. The fruit is not picked from the tree, but is allowed to fall. However, impatient herdboys sometimes resort to hitting them down with stones and poles. The surplus fruit is generally dried and stored for use during periods of food scarcity. The seeds are removed by stamping the dry fruit contents in a mortar. The resulting powder is kept sealed in clay pots until it is needed for cooking the popular porridge known as *phwambwali* or *khwangwali*. The powdered pulp may also be eaten in powder form as *mugumo*. **b.** An infusion of the bark is added to the water used to wash a baby so that he or she can grow fast with thick bones, like the trunk of the tree which grows to become very thick. **c.** Any plant growing on this one (either semiparasite or epiphytic orchid) is taken (the process is called *u rwa tshilimbo*), mixed with other magical powders (*phambas*), and used to protect a homestead against witchcraft. Because it is not easily climbed and is rarely struck by lighting, it is believed to be able to protect a homestead against lightning strikes, especially ones caused by magic. It is believed to present the image of a horrible and aggressive snake to witches when they visit the homestead at night, probably because the trunk of the tree is smooth like the skin of a snake. **d.** The bark of the tree has long been a great source of fibre used for cordage, beer sieves, ropes, mats, snares, etc.

BORAGINACEAE

45. **Ehretia rigida** (Thunb.) Druce *Mabogo 35*
Murovherovhe, Mutepe

a. The ripe fruit is eaten, but is not in great demand because of its sickly sweet taste. **b.** A stick from this plant is anointed with plant and animal medicines and used

magically as a protective rod when long and dangerous journeys are undertaken. This protective rod is termed *ṱhamu* and is held by the leader of the trip who is known as *phangami*. It is believed to ward off enemies and dangerous animals along the way. **c.** The root is burnt, powdered and mixed with similarly treated root of *Protasparagus falcatus* and applied on cuts around sprained joints. Some people maintain that a powdered bone from the leg of a dog must be included if anything has to work. The powdered root bark is also an ingredient of the medicine used for the disease called *pfuko*. **d.** Sticks from this plant were used to make bows as well as 'bull-sticks' for fire drilling. **e.** A roasted lash from the plant does not break easily. **f.** The wood is good for fire.

BURSERACEAE

46. **Commiphora marlothii** Engl. *Mabogo 203*
Mufhafha

The infusion of the bark is drunk for treatment of pellagra, especially when it involves drying and peeling of skin. The use of this plant for the disease appears to be related to the peeling of the bark on the stem of the tree.

47. **Commiphora mollis** (Oliv.) Engl. *Mabogo 149*
(= *C. welwitschii* Engl.)
Muukhuthu

a. The wood is light and workable. It is used for a variety of household utensils. **b.** The wood is not suitable for making fire. **c.** This plant is generally used as an ornament and wind-breaker.

CACTACEAE

48. **Opuntia ficus-indica** (L.) Mill. *Mabogo 279*
Mudoro

a. The fruit is enjoyed by both young and old people. The fruit has stinging spines which must be removed before it can be eaten. Consumption of too much of the fruit leads to constipation. **b.** A decoction of the root is applied drop by drop to treat toothache. It is applied to the affected tooth only.

CAESALPINIACEAE

49. **Bauhinia galpinii** N.E. Br. *Mabogo 89*
(= *B. punctata* Bolle)
Mutswiriri

a. The root is soaked, together with other medicines, in the clay pot called *thufhana*, and the infusion used for the soft porridge known as *tshiunza* which is given to a baby as his or her staple food from birth. **b.** The flexible saplings are gathered and used as wattles in construction of roofs and other structures such as courtyard walls, *etc*.

50. **Burkea africana** Hook. *Mabogo 138*
Mufhulu

a. The plant is popular for the caterpillars gathered from, and named after it (they are called *mafhulu*). These are fried and eaten with porridge or stored for future use. **b.** The wood is good for carving mortars, pestles as well as other household items. **c.** The wood is also good for fire. **d.** The tree is commonly left for shade in fields and around homesteads. It has been reported as a medicinal plant but the information in this regard is not as yet available.

51. **Bolusanthus speciosus** (H. Bol.) Harms *Mabogo 152*

Mukambana

a. Root and stem bark are boiled to obtain an infusion applied as an enema to treat venereal diseases and for general cleaning of blood and kidneys. It is also included in the preparation for *divhu*, a disease caused by sexual intercourse with a woman who has had an abortion or miscarriage. **b.** The use of this plant as a source of firewood has been tabooed for ages. Reasons for this may be its medicinal importance, its lack of good fire, and foul-smelling smoke.

52. **Cassia abbreviata** Oliv. *Mabogo 118*

Muboma, Mulambadivhu

The name *Muboma* refers to the sjambok-like shape of its fruit (*mboma* = sjambok). The other Venda name stresses its importance as an ingredient of the medicines used for treatment of the disease known as *divhu* (from *lamba* = reject + *divhu*). The disease *divhu* or *devhu* is explained under *Pouzolzia mixta*. Here the root bark is boiled and drunk with other medicines.

53. **Cassia petersiana** Bolle *Mabogo 28*

(= *C. delagoensis* Harv.)

Munembenembe

a. Pods are eaten when ripe but are not very palatable and are picked only out of hunger and shortage of other fruits. **b.** A decoction of the root is used as a mouthwash for toothache. **c.** Combined with a decoction of *Terminalia sericea* and *Corchorus tridens*, it is used for gonorrhoea and syphilis. **d.** It is also used as a remedy for stomach ache and a treatment for sterility and barrenness.

54. **Colophospermum mopane** (Kirk ex Benth.) Kirk ex J. Leonard
(= *Copaiba mopane* (Kirk ex Benth.) Kuntze *Mabogo 242*
(= *Copaifera mopane* Kirk ex Benth.
Mupani

a. The plant is popular for the caterpillars gathered from it and known as *Mashonzha*. These mopani worms are gathered, roasted and stored for future use, or sold. They are now also sold in shops and supermarkets. **b.** This plant is an important source of wood for fire, fencing posts and building materials.

55. **Peltophorum africanum** Sond. *Mabogo 43*
(= *Brasilettia africanum* (Sond.) Kuntze)
Musese

a. An infusion from soaked bark is taken orally as an anthelmintic as well as a treatment for stomach troubles. When boiled, the decoction is a remedy for colds and other chest complaints. **b.** Caterpillars found on this plant are also fried and eaten or stored for future use. **c.** In the past leaves were used to cover the body (as clothes), especially during ritual ceremonies.

56. **Piliostigma thonningii** (Schumach.) Milne-Redh. *Mabogo 272*
Mukolokote

Roots are cut to size and soaked together with roots from other plants in a clay pot known as *thufhana*. The resulting infusion is used for making the soft porridge called *tshiunza*, which is the staple food for most Venda babies. The inclusion of this plant makes the porridge sour and pleasant to eat. It also has the effect of organizing an infant's stomach.

57. **Schotia brachypetala** Sond. *Mabogo 37*

(= *S. brachypetala* Sond. var. *pubescens* Burtt Davy)

(= *S. semireducta* Merxm.)

Mulubi, Mu̯nunzwu

a. Young and old people enjoy the nectar which drips in abundance from the dense flower heads produced on the older branches of the plant. The name *Mu̯nunzwu* refers to this sweet nectar. *b.* A decoction of the bark is taken for heartburn as well as dysentery in children. Adults also take it for dysentery and diarrhoea. Because of its effectiveness in the treatment of diarrhoea in children, it is commonly included in the *thufhana* medicines from which the infusion is obtained for preparation of the child's soft porridge. **c.** The wood is collected for fire, but it is not very good. **d.** The tree is generally preferred for shade and beauty, and is usually left standing in fields and around homesteads.

CAPPARACEAE

58. **Boscia albitrunca** (Burch.) Gilg & Ben. *Mabogo 68*

(= *B. pauchellii* Kuntze)

(= *B. transvaalensis* Pest.)

Mu̯thobi

a. The fruit is edible but is less preferred because of the sickly sweet taste. **b.** Roots of this tree were gathered and ground into powder and used for porridge by the Vhavenda during drought periods, especially during the famine period popularly known as *nda̯la ya mi̯thobi*. During this period of food scarcity, the Vhavenda, as well as other neighbouring nations, depended largely on this plant for their survival. This may also explain why, until very recently the plant was tabooed as a source of firewood.

59. **Cadaba aphylla** (Thunb.) Willd. *Mabogo 220*

Tshikuni, Munnamutswu

The two Venda names refer to the colour of the root. The name *Tshikuni* is normally used to refer to a piece of wood burnt on one end. The root bark of this plant is used magically to bring luck.

60. **Capparis tomentosa** Lam. *Mabogo 204*

(= *C. corymbifera* E. Mey. ex Sond.

Muobaḓali, Muombanḓadzi

The Venda name has been derived from *-omba* = to grab + *-ndadzi* = lightning. *Muobaḓali* has a North Sotho tone showing that the North Sotho call it by a similar name. The derivation of its name is related to its function. It is used magically to protect homesteads against lightning, especially when caused by witchcraft. The root bark is powdered into a reddish powder which is dried and mixed with other magical powders and used to guard the homestead against other evils or to activate it. It is said that the plant should not be collected during the rainy season because it may attract lightning instead of driving it away. The reddish powder is used for discouraging opponents and witnesses from counter-evidence in courts and arguments.

61. **Cleome monophylla** L. *Mabogo 30*

Muṱohoṱoho

Leaves are cooked into a palatable pot herb known as *muroho wa muṱohoṱoho*. It is generally mixed with *Cleome gynandra*. Most people prefer it with pounded peanut or marula kernels, known as *thanga*, or some other condiment, which tends to minimize its sharp taste and make it softer and more delicious.

62. **Cleome gynandra** L. *Mabogo 29*

(= *Gynandropsis gynandra* DC.)
(= *G. pentaphylla* (L.) Briq.)
Murudi

This herb generally grows as a weed on cultivated soils, especially around homesteads. It either grows as a weed from the dumpings of the previous seasons, or as a result of purposeful planting. Leaves and young shoots are cooked and eaten with porridge. It may be cooked on its own or with other vegetables, preferably with a condiment. It may also be added to other vegetables as a spice or for its piquant taste. Any surplus may be cooked and dried to be stored for future use as *mukusule*, the name given to a dried form of every cooked vegetable.

63. **Maerua angolensis** DC. *Mabogo 153*

Mutambanamme

a. The leaf and bark are scalded in a clay pot and heated without water. When heated sufficiently a child suffering from convulsions is covered, together with the mother, with a blanket and the clay pot is opened to let the steam off. The disease is popularly known as *misho* and the blanket is used to contain the steamy smoke. **b.** A decoction of the leaf and bark is taken as a remedy for stomach ache. **c.** Crushed leaves are used as a remedy for headache through steaming. **d.** A decoction of the bark also serves as a purgative. **e.** Wood of this plant is tabooed for use as firewood, probably because of its medicinal importance and short-lived fire.

64. **Maerua caffra** (DC.) Pax *Mabogo 243*

Mutapatila

The root and stem bark is used magically to protect a homestead against witchcraft. It is believed to scare away witches by causing them to fight amongst themselves when they arrive at the homestead. It is also believed to bring chaos and fights to

the homestead if used as fuelwood and therefore women avoid collecting it with their wood.

CELASTRACEAE

65. **Cassine aethiopica** Thunb. *Mabogo 48*

(= *C. pubescens* (Eckl. & Zeyh.) Kuntze)
(= *C. schlechteri* (Loes.) Davidson)
(= *C. sphaerophylla* (Eckl. & Zeyh.) Kuntze)
(= *C. velutinum* (Harv.) Loes.
(= *Mystroxylon aethiopicum* (Thunb.) Loes.)
Mugugunu, Mukwatule, Mukwatikwati

a. The fruit is edible, but it is bitter when not fully ripe. It is much enjoyed by herdboys and other young people. The name *Mugugunu* relates to the edible fruit that is enjoyed when ripe. **b.** The name *Mukwatule* refers to the use of the root bark of the plant for making birdlime (from: *-kwatula* = to peel off). The bark is pounded and washed to remove unpounded material. The resulting paste (now called *vhulimbo*) must first be strengthened by mixing with latex of *Landolphia kirkii*. The strengthening process is known as *u kumulula*. Birdlime may also be strengthened with latex from *Ficus burkei*, especially when *Landolphia kirkii* is not available. **c.** The third name, *Mukwatikwati*, is commonly used by traditional medicinal practitioners and refers to its use as an ingredient of the magical medicine used for keeping people together (i.e. to promote unity and love for one another). **d.** The wood is good for knobkerries and tool handles.

66. **Cassine transvaalensis** (Burtt Davy) Codd *Mabogo 4*

(= *Crocoxylon transvaalense* (Burtt Davy) N.K.B. Robson)
(= *Pseudocassine transvaalensis* (Burtt Davy) Bred.)
Mulumaṋamana, Mukuvhazwivhi

a. The fruit is eaten by young people when ripe. They also enjoy sucking a whitish substance that is found on the upper surfaces of the leaves. The sugary substance is

probably deposited by some insect. **b.** The name *Mukuvhazwivhi* relates to the medicinal use of the plant. It is popular with only a few people. The root bark is boiled and the decoction used to treat the disease known as *nowa-khulu* (piles or haemorrhoids) in humans and domestic animals. The symptoms are blood in stools as well as loose bowels at times. The decoction, which is very bitter, is drunk in cupfuls three or four times a day. The disease is normally healed within a day or two. **c.** This medicine is also used against venereal diseases and as an anthelmintic.

67. **Hippocratea** sp. *Mabogo 36*
Mukolomo, Mutshilari

a. Roots are soaked in a clay pot known as *thufhana*, and the liquid, called *tshiunza*, is used for making food for a baby from birth up to crawling stage. **b.** It is an ingredient of medicines used for invoking ancestors during *malombo* ritual. **c.** A semiparasite growing on this plant is mixed with *Securidaca longepedunculata* and *Pleurostylia capensis* and used to return the effects of witchcraft to the person who bewitched the other. **d.** The oppositely branched stems are used as toy cattle by children.

68. **Hippocratea crenata** (Klotzsh) K. Schum. & Loes. *Mabogo 187*
(= *H. kirkii* Oliv.)
Luuvhu

This plant is abundant in the mist belt forests of Venda where it is used for binding thatch on roofs as well as for wattling.

69. **Maytenus senegalensis** (Lam.) Exell *Mabogo 45*
(= *Gymnosporia senegalensis* (Lam.) Loes.)
Tshiphandwa

a. This is one of the plants that are popular for workable and durable wood for making stirrers (*phetho*) and cooking spoons (*mpfo*). **b.** Thorns receive their fair

share of use in removing seed kernels of the marula. **c.** Roots are soaked, together with those of *Artabotrys monteiroae*, *Cassine* sp., *Rhoicissus tridentata* and many others, to yield an infusion used for cooking soft porridge known as *tshiunza* that is food for a baby until late childhood. This infusion is understood to play an important prophylactic and remedial role in the health of the child. The plant under discussion is, particularly, known to be a remedy and prophylactic for the disease called *tshilala*, which is characterized by diarrhoea and a sunken fontanelle. **d.** Roots are used for nerve pains, especially when mixed with *Ziziphus mucronata*. **e.** Thorns are anointed with magical medicines and nailed all along the fence of the homestead to keep away witches and others with ill wishes. **f.** The wood is used for fire when dry.

70. **Maytenus tenuispina** (Sond.) Marais *Mabogo 224*
(= *Celastrus tenuispinus* Sond.)
(= *Gymnosporia botshabelensis* Loes.)
(= *G. tenuispina* (Sond.) Szyszyl.
Ntsatshilambe (male), *Dira*

This is considered the male variant of *Salacia rehmannii* and is mixed with it for magical purposes to make a person slippery or unnoticeable in case of trouble. *Salacia rehmannii* grows shorter and propagates through long, fleshy rhizomatous stems. Many upright-stemmed individuals or patches of plants may arise along the length of one root. It is probably due to this thickness of root bark as well as its rapid vegetative reproduction that the Venda people consider and name it as a female *Dira*. The female one is generally treated and valued as the most effective of the two types (see also under *Salacia rehmannii*)

71. **Maytenus undata** (Thunb.) Blakelock *Mabogo 225*
Tshibvukahalwa

Fresh branches are used to prevent beer from spilling when carried in a clay pot. The wood is also good for fire.

72. **Pleurostylia capensis** (Turcz.) Oliv. *Mabogo 223*

Murumelelwa

The name *Murumelelwa* is a technical one used by medicinal practitioners to indicate that it can be sent away (from *rumela* = to send). This particular species is considered to be a male in traditional medicinal circles. The female *Murumelelwa* has not as yet been identified for the purpose of this project. It is more broad-leafed, with a fresh, thick, and orange-coloured bark. The stem and root bark is powdered and mixed with powdered parts of semiparasitic plants and other ingredients of either plant or animal origin to make a magical mixture which is blown away to affect a remote target. Blowing is preceded by prayers (incantations) and calling by name of a distant person who is a victim. It may kill him, make him mad or encourage him to do anything else depending on what is wanted. This plant is considered to be so important that it is sold (by one traditional practitioner to another or by any collector of medicines) at a very high price per piece.

73. **Salacia rehmannii** Schinz *Mabogo 159*

Dira, Musasalabwa, Ntsatshilambe, Tavhatapano, Tavhatapi, Phaṱhatshimima

This is one of the plants with the greatest number of vernacular names. The multitude of names indicate its popularity amongst most African tribes. What is interesting about most of these names, is that they all suggest its magical powers. For example, *Dira*, derived from Sotho, is actually a short naming for something close to *Dira a di bonwi*, which means that it is either impossible or difficult to see a person who is using or has been doctored by this medicine, and this happens at a time and place at the discretion of the person using it. The term *dira* is a plural for *sera* and refers to something bad such as a war party, an enemy or anything that is dangerous and likely to be difficult to tackle. The medicine is used in this sense to escape notice by anybody with a negative motive. In southern Africa, the African groups (including the Vhavenda), use the powdered bark of the root, or piece of root for luck in job seeking, influx control (i.e. to evade arrests related to pass offences), to escape notice by the police, to evade hooliganism in large cities while looking for jobs or travelling between job and home. However, it is also used by

wrong-doers such as criminals, witches and thieves to escape notice. *Phaṱhatshimima* is a name derived from the use of this plant for beating traps and plots (from *-phaṱha* = to disrupt + *-tshimima* = a party or group of organizers thereof). In this sense it is believed to operate by discouraging and misdirecting a person's attention. Lastly, *Tavhatapi* and *Tavhatapano* have evidently been borrowed from Shona and literally mean: 'Where do I sleep ?' and 'I sleep here' respectively. This is because a person who is properly doctored by this medicine, or who possesses it, is supposed to be able to sleep anywhere and nothing, be it a snake, a wild beast or an enemy, will bother him. It is of common use amongst people who periodically take journeys through dangerous and unknown places. The same applies to hunting trips and warfares. This plant is also an ingredient of many magical mixtures. It is traditionally considered as a female variety of *Maytenus tenuispina* (for reasons given under the latter species), and as more effective. It is rare and any person who possesses it, finds himself in a position to do business through exorbitant prices or exchanges.

CHENOPODIACEAE

74. **Chenopodium album** L. *Mabogo 20*

Ḍale-ḍale

Leaves are boiled to make a pot herb called *dale-dale*. Fresh leaves are generally added to other vegetables. The vegetable is relished with porridge, which is commonly served separately.

75. **Chenopodium** sp. *Mabogo 222*

Muthathathuri

The name *Muthathathuri* (from: *thatha* = chase or ward off + *thuri* = polecat) refers to this plant as the one that, if used medicinally or magically, will get rid of magical 'polecats' introduced into a human being's life through witchcraft. The soft stem and leaves are pounded together, mixed with other substances of plant and animal origin to produce a paste called *tsemo*. This paste is burned and the patient

inhales the resulting smoke, which then chases away the witch's familiars, particularly the ones known as *thuri* (polecats).

CLUSIACEAE (GUTTIFERAE)

76. **Garcinia livingstonei** T. Anders. *Mabogo 244*
Muphiphi

a. The fruit is eaten and has a pleasant-tasting, sweet-acid pulp. Both children and adults find it very palatable and refreshing. **b.** The root is reported to be used for the prevention of particular events, depending on mixture used, e.g., preventing wars or fights, as contraceptives, etc.. **c.** The wood makes a rather good fire.

COMBRETACEAE

77. **Combretum collinum** Fresen. *Mabogo 245*
Muvuvha

a. The plant is preferred for firewood and **b.** shade saplings may be used as temporary building material.

78. **Combretum erythrophyllum** (Burch.) Sond. *Mabogo 246*
(= *C. glomeruliflorum* Sond.)
Muvuvhu

a. The bark, removed from both the east and west side of the trunk, is boiled with other medicines to produce a decoction which is given to a woman with problems concerning pregnancy, especially when witchcraft is suspected. The treatment is termed *mbuso* (meaning to bring back to normal, or to restore). The medicine continues to be taken, even after conception, in order to maintain the pregnancy. **b.** Long and straight branches always tempt people to use them in the construction of roofs and wattles, although they are easily attacked by wood-borers and termites.

79. **Combretum hereroense** Schinz *Mabogo 232*

Mugavhi

a. A decoction of the root bark is used as a remedy for heart diseases. **b.** The long and flexible branches are used as wattles in the construction of thatch roofs.

80. **Combretum imberbe** Wawra *Mabogo 83*

Mudzwiri

Large quantities of wood from this plant are collected for various purposes. **a.** Thick and straight branches or tree trunks are required for building as fencing posts, roof poles, etc. It is considered to be one of the best sources of firewood. It burns so well when dry that it provides a good fire and relatively little ash and smoke at a time. **b.** Unconfirmed information suggests that it is used with *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*, *Diospyros lycioides*, *Combretum erythrophyllum* and other species to restore or revive fertility in women. For this purpose it is said that only roots growing horizontally, especially those that cross footpaths, may be used. **c.** Grain mortars, tool handles, etc. are carved from its heartwood.

81. **Combretum molle** Sond. *Mabogo 51*

(= *C. gueinzii* Sond.)
(= *C. holosericeum* Sond.)
Mugwiti

a. This plant is used mostly as a source of firewood, for construction and building material. **b.** It is an ingredient of medicines used to encourage and maintain pregnancy. **c.** Leaves are boiled and the resulting decoction is taken for colds.

82. **Combretum mossambicense** (Klotzch) Engl. *Mabogo 210*

Mulandou

Because it is known that the plant is eaten by elephants, it is believed that its inclusion in medicines that protect and guard a human body and life, makes a person as strong and fearsome as an elephant. The Venda name has been derived from the relationship of the plant with the elephant (from *-la* = eat + *-ndou* = elephant).

83. **Combretum zeyheri** Sond. *Mabogo 249*

Mufhatelathundu

The Venda name indicates that the plant is used by recent immigrants or new-comers to build their homes. This is because local inhabitants already know that its straight and beautiful branches do not possess the essential qualities of a building material. The plant is too susceptible to attacks by wood-borers.

84. **Terminalia sericea** Burch. ex DC. *Mabogo 97*

Mususu

a. The root is included in the medicine used in a baby's soft porridge called *tshiunza*. This medicine in the soft porridge stops and prevents diarrhoea and dysentery. **b.** It is used to arrest purging in adults. **c.** A cow with protracted parturition or a hanging placenta is forced to swallow a decoction of root from this plant. **d.** It is also reported to be a reliable remedy for venereal diseases.

CONVOLVULACEAE

85. **Ipomoea obscura** (L.) Ker-Gawl. *Mabogo 131*

(= *I. demissa* Hallier f.)
(= *I. fragilis* Choisy)
(= *I. longipes* Engl.)
Muduhwi

a. Not only the leaves of this plant, but also the caterpillars which feed on it are cooked to be eaten with porridge. These caterpillars are known as *maḓuhwi* in most areas and are commonly fried instead of cooked. The surplus may be dried and kept for future use or shared with neighbours. **b.** Bundles of flexible stems are often used as temporary binders as well as for skipping games by young people.

86. **Evolvulus alsinoides** (L.) L. *Mabogo 195*

The dried leaves and stem are a remedy for flu, colds and related ailments. The medicine may be rolled in paper like tobacco or stuffed into a pipe to be smoked. Others prefer to burn it on hot coals and inhale the smoke while covered in a blanket.

CUCURBITACEAE

87. **Cucumis africanus** L.f. *Mabogo 202*
(= *C. hookeri* Naud.)
Tshinyagu

a. Fresh and tender leaves are picked and cooked with other vegetable leaves. **b.** The seed has purgative effects and it is usually used with *Trichilia emetica* as an enema. Only two or three seeds are enough for one dose. The use of more seeds is said to be fatal.

88. **Momordica balsamina** L. *Mabogo 25*
(= *M. involucrata* E. Mey. ex Sond.)
Tshibavhe

a. Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. More often it is included to give a piquant taste to other vegetables. **b.** The infusion of the leaf is drunk as an anti-emetic.

89. **Momordica boivinii** Baill. *Mabogo 121*

(= *Raphanocarpus boivinii* (Baill.) Chiov.)
(= *R. tuberosus* Dinter)
Tshifhafhe

a. Cooked leaves are eaten with porridge, especially as a spice. **b.** The root tuber, soaked in water, is used to bathe a baby so that it can grow bigger.

90. **Momordica foetida** Schum. & Thonn. *Mabogo 61*

(= *M. cordifolia* E. Mey. ex Sond.)
Nngu

a. Leaves are preferred as spices. They are mostly dried and stored in powder form for future use. **b.** The infusion of the leaf is a remedy for earache.

CUPRESSACEAE

91. **Widdringtonia nodiflora** (L.) Powrie *Mabogo 136*

(= *W. cupressoides* (L.) Endl.)
Thaululo

a. Together with the flowers and seeds of *Eucalyptus* sp., the root is used for the treatment of gonorrhoea and syphilis. **b.** A decoction of the root is also used for menstrual and uterine problems.

CYPERACEAE

92. **Cyperus esculentus** L. *Mabogo 253*

Ngowe

The corm of this sedge is edible and is preferred by young herdboys.

93. **Cyperus latifolius** Poir. *Mabogo 247*
Dzhesi

Leaves and stems are collected and dried before they are moistened and used for weaving mats. Where it grows in abundance, it is also used for thatching, especially as an underlayer.

94. **Cyperus sexangularis** Nees *Mabogo 248*
Mutate

The stem is a good temporary source of structural fibre used for bondage. It may also be used for binding thatch as well as for making ox-whips, but it can be used for the latter purpose only for a day or two, unless it is kept moist.

EBENACEAE

95. **Diospyros lycioides** Desf. *Mabogo 212*
Muthala

a. The infusion of the root is used as an ingredient of medicines kept in a clay pot (a *thufhana*) that is used to make *tshiunza*. An infusion of a number of plants, including this one, is given to a child as *ntswu*, the nutritious fluid used to feed a child instead of soft porridge. **b.** Straight stems are used as lashes by herdboys and teachers.

96. **Diospyros mespiliformis** Hochst. ex A. DC. *Mabogo 39*
Musuma

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe, either fresh or dry. When dry it is commonly preferred soaked in water or milk. The dried fruit may be stamped into powder, with seeds removed, to be cooked into a type of porridge, especially during periods

of food scarcity. **b.** A decoction of boiled root is taken for dysentery and as a febrifuge. **c.** The wood is good for fire.

97. **Diospyros whyteana** (Hiern) F. White *Mabogo 178*
(= *Royena whyteana* Hiern)
Munyavhili

The infusion of the leaf and root is used to treat a disease known as *munyavhili* which produces an itchy rash on the skin, especially under cold conditions.

98. **Euclea divinorum** Hiern *Mabogo 12*
Mutangule

a. The fruit is edible and much enjoyed when ripe. **b.** Sticks from branches are chewed at one end and then used as toothbrushes. **c.** A decoction of the root is used as a purgative when taken orally. For a troubled and noisy stomach, headaches as well as for general purification of blood it should be taken as an enema. It is also used as a remedy for *divhu*. For toothache, the root is boiled and the decoction dropped into the ear to cure it for good. **d.** The infusion of the root is taken orally for general ill health.

99. **Euclea linearis** Zeyh. ex Hiern *Mabogo 172*
Mutangule-musekene, Mukwatikwati

The vernacular name *Mutangule-musekene* reflects the smaller size of this species when compared to *E. divinorum*. **a.** It has smaller fruits which are also eaten when ripe. **b.** The other name, *Mukwatikwati*, is popular with medicinal practitioners who use it to treat sprained joints and fractured bones. It is also taken as a purgative and for toothache.

EQUISETACEAE

100. **Equisetum ramosissimum** Desf.
Vhulungwane

This plant is uprooted and boiled in milk and taken orally for a sickness known as *vhulungwane* which is said to arise as a result of a person having missed the necessary purification treatments after the death and burial of a family member. Such a treatment is to help those left behind forget about the deceased. Symptoms of this sickness are in the form of persistent fatigue and sleepiness. The name of the plant is derived from the way in which nodes of the plant fit into one another, i.e. like beads in a thread, from *vhulungu* = beads. The name of the sickness has apparently been derived from the name of the plant.

EUPHORBIACEAE

101. **Androstachys johnsonii** Prain *Mabogo 164*
Musimbiri

The Venda name is derived from the strength, durability and hardness of the wood of this plant. It refers to the fact that the plant is as hard and strong as iron (from *-simbi (or -tsimbi)* = iron + *-ri (or -muri)* = tree). **a.** Straight branches and saplings are preferred as fencing posts as well as for the building of houses (walls and roofing) and other enclosures that require durable poles. It is recommended because it is not prone to attack by termites and wood-borers. Its resistance to attacks by these insects is largely ascribed to the bitter taste of the wood. **b.** This plant is not preferred as a source of firewood because it produces heavy smoke with an unpleasant smell.

102. **Bridelia micrantha** (Hochst.) Baill. *Mabogo 67*
Munzere

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe. **b.** The powdered bark is applied to burns. **c.** The decoction of the bark is used to treat gonorrhoea and other venereal diseases. **d.** Long, straight branches are laid across the rivers to make bridges and are also used for building huts.

103. **Bridelia mollis** Hutch. *Mabogo 9*
Mukumbakumba

The sweetly flavoured fruit is enjoyed by young and old Vhavenda. Only the pulp is sucked.

104. **Croton gratissimus** Burch. *Mabogo 116*
Mufhorola

Leaves are dried, crushed and then smoked for colds, flu and associated fevers. Dried leaves may be burnt on hot coals, in which case one covers oneself with a blanket; or the dried leaves rolled in paper and smoked like tobacco. A smoking pipe could also be used if available.

105. **Croton megalobotrys** Muell. Arg. *Mabogo 101*
(=*C. gubouga* S. Moore)
Muruthu

The seed is stamped and taken with water as a purgative. It is important to follow expert dosage instructions since there is a possibility of fatal side effects due to overdose. It is commonly recommended that an adult should take one or three quarters of a seed at a time. It is reported that in case of an overdose, it is advisable to drink beef gravy in order to minimize the harmful effects. People are advised to drink the gravy as a precautionary measure, even before realising that an overdose

has been taken. The purgative is generally used for venereal diseases as well as for regular purification of blood and kidneys. Only adults may use this purgative, the quantity depending on the health and strength of the user.

106. **Croton** sp. *Mabogo 233*
Muthathakhubi

a. The plant is popular for its relationship with a certain type of green locust which is collected at certain times of the year. The locust is called *thathakhubi* and it is not clear whether the name of the plant has been derived from that of the locust or *vice versa*. **b.** The shrub is also used as a source of firewood.

107. **Euphorbia ingens** E. Mey. ex Boiss. *Mabogo 23*
(= *E. natalensis* sensu Berg. non Bernh.)
(= *E. similis* Berg.)
Mukonde

The bark is used as a remedy for chronic ulcers and cancer, especially for the ulcers popularly known as *pfuko*, which the Venda people believe is caused by witchcraft. Some people call this illness *thahala* which may literally be interpreted as 'becoming tattered or disintegrating'. People become suspicious when it does not respond quickly to normal medical treatment and when it heals at one part of the body only to develop at another. The bark is heated in a clay pot which is sealed with a potsherd and cow dung. The affected part is then exposed to the hot steam of the heated bark several times. It is said that after some time, some bony material, believed to be bones of a mole introduced into the body through witchcraft, will start to appear piece by piece, indicating that the mole is dead as a result of the treatment. The bones are collected, ground into powder and mixed with the burnt bark of *Euphorbia ingens* as well as *Ehretia rigida* so that it can be applied to the ulcer. The process of bone collection, application of the powdered medicine and steaming continues until no more bones appear and, by this time, the ulcer will have been healed completely and permanently. The steaming process must be done

outside the homestead, preferably at a junction of foot-paths. I was shown a collection of bones said to have been collected from an ulcer after such treatment.

108. **Euphorbia tirucalli** L. *Mabogo 236*
Mutungu

a. An infusion of the root is used as a remedy for pains in the body. Although said to be toxic, it is still used medicinally in small concentrations. **b.** Leaves are burnt and ground into powder which is then used prophylactically against poisoning. It is reported that after treatment a person will vomit whenever he has consumed poison.

109. **Manihot utilissima** Pohl *Mabogo 250*
Mutumbula

Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. To improve the flavour and texture of the potherb, a condiment is added in the form of pounded peanuts or marula kernels. Pulp from the fruit of *Trichilia dregeana* may also be added when available. Any surplus that is collected may be dried and stored for future use, but it should first be cooked. The root tuber is also eaten after prolonged boiling. It is said that the tuber is poisonous if it is not boiled longer than other foods. Even when properly boiled, the tuber causes constipation if too much is consumed. In most cases the central root core or rind is removed before cooking because it is suspected to be the most poisonous part of the tuber. The tuber is cut into thin strips before cooking.

110. **Pseudolachnostylis maprouneifolia** Pax *Mabogo 226*
Mutondowe

a. The root or stem bark extract is used as a purgative as well as a general body searcher for other diseases that cannot be easily identified. **b.** It is also taken for venereal diseases and noisy stomach. The use of this plant as described above, results in side effects in the form of itching boils and pimples which exude a liquid

substance all over the body. **c.** The burnt roots are sometimes used to treat pneumonia through smoking. **d.** The plant is also used for magical purposes in various mixtures (hence the name *Mutondowe* = to force through). **e.** The infusion of the bark and leaves is also used for trapping animals, especially kudus which incidentally feed on its fruit. The infusion is used for washing the traps so that they retain its flavour.

111. **Ricinus communis** L. *Mabogo 47*
Mupfure

a. A decoction of the root is a remedy for toothache. **b.** Leaf infusion is a purgative. The seed is crushed and swallowed as a very strong purgative. The use of seeds of this plant must be very well understood, otherwise a person may die. The recommended dosage for adults is normally one to one and a half seeds. **c.** A decoction of boiled root is used for making soft porridge which is sprinkled with the powdered fruit of *Solanum panduraeforme* as well as corn meal to be eaten for the disease known as *tshiliso*, which is caused by witchcraft and can show itself in the form of a variety of symptoms including headache, vomiting, loss of appetite, *etc.* **d.** The oil prepared from the seed is used for mixing powdered medicines for sticky application. **e.** It is also used for earache as well as **f.** for polishing and softening of leather skirts (*zwirivha*) worn by women.

112. **Securinega virosa** (Roxb. ex Willd.) Pax & K. Hoffm. *Mabogo 10*
(= *Fluggea microcarpa* Blume)
Mutangauma, Mavhelematshena

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe. **b.** A decoction of the root is given to children for general body health. The name that is related to its medicinal use is *Mavhelematshena* (from *mavhele* = corn grains + *matshena* = white), and it refers to the fruit which is round and white when ripe. *c.* The flexible saplings are used for building and fencing.

113. **Spirostachys africana** Sond. *Mabogo 238*
Muonze

a. The root or stem bark is boiled to obtain a decoction used for making soft porridge for anybody suffering from stomach pains, noisy stomach, diarrhoea, or dysentery. Two or three spoonfuls of the soft porridge are considered enough. **b.** The bark is also soaked to obtain an infusion that is used as an enema for the general purification of blood and kidneys. **c.** It is never used for firewood because of the unpleasant smell of its smoke, which is also suspected to affect the eyes.

114. **Synadenium cupulare** (Boiss.) L.C. Wheeler *Mabogo 237*
(= *S. arborescens* Boiss.)
Muswoswo

a. Latex from this plant is a remedy for black quarter disease in cattle, known to the Venda people as *mali*. The name *mali* has been borrowed from Sotho and it means 'blood'. The latex is collected into some container. The hollow 'tail' of a calabash is properly cut and dipped into the latex. It is then pressed on the thighs or shoulders of the affected legs. Usually the coat of the animal on the part on which the latex has been applied, is burnt to form rings of hairless areas. To minimize this burning effect, these parts must first be smeared with oil or preferably pig fat. **b.** The same application is maintained for treatment of troubled eyes as well as sprained legs in cattle. **c.** It is said that if some two or three drops of the latex are added to bathing water, a person who uses the water becomes capable of running long distances without becoming tired. **d.** The plant is said to have other medicinal uses like for cramps, nerve pains, etc., but in very low concentrations and mixed with other medicines which neutralize its harmful effects. **e.** Pieces of stem are boiled and the infusion given to fowls.

115. **Tragia rupestris** Sond. *Mabogo 251*
Tshitondovhe

The fruit is used to aid the emergence of teeth in children. It is used to rub the gums when combined with other medicines and burnt into powder. One medicinal practitioner maintained that it is the chief medicine for this purpose and that the others are included only to confuse its identification.

116. **Tragia** sp. *Mabogo 60*
Dzaluma

a. Fresh leaves are cooked into a pot herb which is more tasty when taken with sour porridge (*mutuku*). If the leaves are washed before cooking, bicarbonate of soda must be added to facilitate proper cooking. The importance of this climber has encouraged people to collect it from its habitat in the cooler mountainous areas and plant it around their homesteads and gardens. The vegetable is commonly cooked with leaves of *Obetia tenax* and/or *Pouzolzia mixta*. **b.** The infusion of the leaf is rubbed on the forehead as a remedy for headache. **c.** It is also used in the treatment of gonorrhoea.

FLACOURTIACEAE

117. **Dovyalis caffra** (Hook. f. & Harv.) Hook. f. *Mabogo 252*
(= *Aberia caffra* Hook. f. & Harv.)
Mutunu

a. The fruit is edible but not much preferred. **b.** Thorns are used to remove pieces of wood or tips of thorns that may happen to pierce and penetrate the soles of feet and hand palms. They are also used to extract kernels from seeds of marula fruit when the closing caps (opercula) are broken. **c.** Traditional practitioners use the thorns magically to protect homesteads against witchcraft.

118. **Trimeria grandifolia** (Hochst.) Warb. *Mabogo 174*
(= *T. alnifolia* (Hook.) Harv.)
Muhashaphande, Muthethenya

The name *Muhashaphande* refers to the way in which the branches spread sideways while the other Venda name indicates the brittleness of the wood. **a.** The fruit is edible although it is not much preferred by the local people. **b.** It is used as a source of firewood as well as for **c.** carving spoons, knobkerries and other household utensils.

GUNNERACEAE

119. **Gunnera perpensa** L. *Mabogo 63*
Shambodavhadzimu

a. Fresh leaves are gathered and cooked to be eaten with porridge. It is less preferred and generally cooked in combination with other vegetables. **b.** The rhizome is an ingredient of "magical medicines" used to protect a homestead against witchcraft. It is said that when used with water and sand from standing water, the witch who visits the homestead during the night sees the homestead as a dam of water with this plant spreading all over the surface. The witch will then think that he/she is lost and turn back.

ICACINACEAE

120. **Pyrenacantha grandiflora** Baill. *Mabogo 209*
Bwere

The root bark is pounded into powder which becomes an ingredient of magical powders used for luck as well as peaceful feasts. It is used for the same purpose with a view to winning court cases, escaping danger, *etc*.

LAMIACEAE

121. **Leonotis mollis** Benth. *Mabogo 190*
Mu̯nunzu

The sweet nectar is sucked by young people.

122. **Plectranthus laxiflorus** Benth. *Mabogo 255*
Bunganyunyu, *Sin̯dambudzi*

The vernacular names refer to the smell of crushed leaves and stems which are used for warding off mosquitoes during summer.

LILIACEAE

123. **Aloe marlothii** Berger var. **marlothii** *Mabogo 254*
Bindamutshe, *Tshikhopha*

a. Leaves are pounded and the resulting sap is used to soak seeds especially cereals, before they are sown. This treatment is known as *u suka mbeu* and is believed to make them more resistant and productive. **b.** The sap is also an ingredient of the medicine used for the treatment of *divhu*, a disease characterized by a sunken "fontanelle" (in adults) and a malfunction of the alimentary and urinary systems. **c.** A decoction of the root is used as a purgative in a mixture called *falo* for treatment of stomach troubles and infection by tapeworms.

124. **Aloe microcantha** Haw. *Mabogo 259*
Tshikhopha tshi̯tuku

The Venda name indicates that it is a smaller type of aloe. The infusion of the leaf is a remedy for dysentery in children. Depending on the suspected cause of the

disease, it may be used on its own or with other magical powders, especially when witchcraft is not excluded.

125. **Protasparagus buchananii** (Bak.) Oberm. *Mabogo 256*
(= *Asparagus buchananii* Bak.)
Lufhaladzamakole

a. The infusion of the root is used to treat vomiting in children and adults. **b.** Herdboys and other young people burn the stems and leaves of this plant to chase away clouds when it is cold. The Venda name refers to this suspected effect of the smoke on the clouds. At Nzhelele the people also sing *duvha, duvha i da ngeno, murunzi, murunzi i ya Ha-Matsa*, meaning that the sunshine must come to them and the cloudiness must go to Ha-Matsa, the area west of Nzhelele.

126. **Protasparagus falcatus** (L.) Oberm. *Mabogo 181*
(= *Asparagus falcatus* L.)
Govhakhanga

The Venda name relates to its hooked spines. Besides being used for **a.** the treatment of vomiting in children, **b.** the burnt and powdered root is applied to cuts around sprained joints.

127. **Sansevieria hyacinthoides** (L.) Druce *Mabogo 280*
Savha

a. Small pieces of the root are soaked with other medicines in the clay pot known as *thufhana*. The resulting infusion is used for making the soft porridge called *tshiunza*, which is eaten by an infant from birth until he/she can take hard porridge. **b.** The infusion of the leaf is a remedy for diarrhoea in young children. It is also used to treat babies who become ill as a result of their mothers falling pregnant when still breastfeeding. **c.** The leaf is a source of fibre used for making baskets of different

types and sizes used as containers by the people of Venda, especially the ones known as *zwisisi* and *zwithatha*.

LOGANIACEAE

128. **Strychnos pungens** Soler. *Mabogo 281*
Mukwakwa

a. The fruit is eaten fresh or dried. The dried fruit pulp is separated from the seeds and then stored in sealed clay pots for future use. During periods of food scarcity the powdered fruit pulp is cooked into a porridge known as *phwambwali* or *khwangwali* which is sour to the taste, or it may be eaten in powder form as *mugumo*. **b.** Dry wood is collected for making fire for both cooking and heating.

129. **Strychnos spinosa** Lam. *Mabogo 78*
Muramba

a. The fruit is eaten fresh or dried like that of *S. pungens*, but it is less popular. **b.** The fruit is often dried, crushed into powder, burnt and soaked to prepare *swanzwo*, which is used to bathe a person after a long illness. This is made to help him/her to regain liveliness and a shiny complexion. Leaves may also be used for this purpose. **c.** The fruit is normally boiled without being cracked and the infusion is used for making soft porridge that is given to a woman just after child-birth. This is said to stop any pains that may follow parturition. It is believed that the movements of the fruit in a pot when the water boils, resembles that of a foetus before it is expelled from the uterus.

130. **Anthocleista grandiflora** Gilg *Mabogo 282*
Mueneene

a. A decoction of the bark is used as a remedy for malaria, diarrhoea, diabetes, high blood pressure and venereal diseases. **b.** The stamped bark is soaked in water

together with seeds, especially cereal grains. This process is understood to make the grains produce abundantly when sown. It also makes them more resistant and hardy. The process is known as *u suka mbeu*. **c.** The large and smooth leaves are taken to cover millet grains soaked to encourage germination when malt is prepared. **c.** Old Venda people used to wear the leaves of this plant to cover their bodies, especially during ritual cults.

131. **Nuxia floribunda** Benth. *Mabogo 214*
(= *Lachnopylis floribunda* (Benth.) C.A. Sm.)
Mulaṋotshi

The Venda name expresses the observed nutritional relationship of this plant with the bee (from *la* = to eat + *ṋotshi* = the bee). This is because bees are attracted to the nectar produced by its flowers very much. The wood is harvested for fire as well as for fencing posts.

MALPIGHIACEAE

132. **Sphedamnocarpus pruriens** (Juss.) Szyszyl. *Mabogo 139*
Azwiili, Tsimambe

a. The Venda name, *Azwiili*, is a medicinal one. It literally means "it is not a taboo". According to Venda tradition a mother should not sleep in the same hut as her husband when the baby is still young, because if she falls pregnant the baby will become ill. The use of this plant as a preventive measure protects the baby against the effects of any unexpected pregnancy when the mother and father sleep in the same hut. Pieces of roots are tied together and smeared with saliva from both parents before being cooked with mealie meal for making the soft porridge that is given to an infant. The roots are then hung on the wall or roof of the hut in which the parents sleep. **b.** The infusion from the root is an instant remedy for diarrhoea in children and adults. **c.** It is also taken, together with other medicines, for venereal diseases.

MALVACEAE

133. **Hibiscus praeteritus** R.A. Dyer *Mabogo 283*

Makhulu wa mutudo

The Venda name indicates that this plant is considered to be so closely related to *Sida cordifolia* that it is taken as its ancester (from *Makhulu* = granny + *wa* = of + *mutudo* = *Sida cordifolia*). **a.** The fibre is used for making sieves as well as for weaving household articles and cordage. **b.** Sticks are used to clean the hollows in stems of reeds.

134. **Hibiscus trionum** L. *Mabogo 13*

Delele mukhwayo

The leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. They are, however, rough and should be cooked with other vegetables or condiments. The name shows that it is considered as the rough type of *Corchorus tridens*. *Delele* is the name given to the latter species and *mukhwayo* has been derived from *hwaya*, which means rough.

135. **Sida cordifolia** L. *Mabogo 284*

Mutudo

a. Fibre from this plant is used to weave a sieve for making beer. The name *Mutudo* literally means that which is used to sieve. The fibre is also used for weaving other articles used by the Venda people as well as for cordage. **b.** Sticks of this plant are used to clean the hollows inside reed stems before they are used for making musical instruments.

136. **Pavonia** sp. *Mabogo 192*

Tshiteaḓuvha

The name *Tshiteaḓuvha* refers to the tendency of the stem tips of this plant to point in the direction of the sun. Fresh leaves are cooked and eaten as a vegetable.

MELIACEAE

137. **Entandophragma caudatum** (Sprague) Sprague *Mabogo 207*

Munzhounzhou

a. The pericarp of the fruit is used for making playing instruments known as *zwihwilili* with which children like to play. **b.** The tree is favoured for its shade.

138. **Ekebergia capensis** Sparrm. *Mabogo 88*

(= *Ekebergia meyeri* Presl ex C. DC.)

(= *Trichilia ekebergia* E. Mey. ex Sond.)

Muḓouma, Muṱobvuma

a. The bark is used as a remedy for headaches as well as an emetic. **b.** This is one of the largest trees native to Venda and is usually left standing for its shade and beauty.

139. **Melia azedarach** L. *Mabogo 96*

Muserenga

a. The fruit is edible but is less preferred because of its unpleasant flavour. **b.** The tree is commonly planted as a wind-break, for shade and as an ornamental.

140. **Trichilia dregeana** Sond. *Mabogo 91*

Mutshikili

a. The fruit content is cooked with vegetables as a condiment. **b.** The fruit pulp is also eaten like milk (sour). **c.** Cooking oil is made from the fruit pulp and then used for vegetables and other relishes. **d.** The oil made from the fruit pulp and seed is known as *mudo* and is used to polish women's leather clothes called *zwirivha* to keep them soft and pliable. The same oil is used to polish furniture and other articles made from wood. **e.** Often the bark infusion is used as an enema for general cleaning.

141. **Trichilia emetica** Vahl *Mabogo 93*

(= *T. roka* Chiov. nom. illegit.)

Mutuhu

a. The Venda name is related to short animal horns which are used to suck 'bad' blood through incisions made on the body. This is because the plant is used as an enema for general cleaning, gonorrhoea, syphilis, *divhu*, and stomach complaints. The plant is considered to be the source of an important enema treatment and is protected in areas where its medicinal use is popular. The bark is pounded and soaked in water for at least one day before use. For more effective application one or two seeds of *Cucumis zeyheri* may be added. It is sometimes mixed with a small amount of *Spirostachys africana* bark. **b.** The plant is used for shade as well as ornamental purposes.

MELIANTHACEAE

142. **Bersama tysoniana** Oliv. *Mabogo 285*

Sando

The root, leaf and semiparasite of this plant are known to cause hatred towards any person who has been bewitched with this plant as an ingredient. Such a person will be hated, attacked and criticized by anybody whom he meets. The Venda name

(from *sanda* = to hate) gives some indication of this effect, and many people who know it, try to avoid contact with it.

MENISPERMACEAE

143. **Cissampelos torulosa** E. Mey. *Mabogo 125*
(= *Menispermum capense* Thunb.)
Lukandululo

a. Leaves and flexible stems are boiled and the resulting decoction is taken for sore throats. **b.** The infusion of soaked leaf and stem is a remedy for dysentery and diarrhoea. **c.** It is believed by the Vhavenda that when a family member dies, all other members become spiritually contaminated. This process is termed *u kandea*. After the funeral, all relatives of the deceased enter the house or hut from which he/she died, or where he/she was placed before burial if he/she did not die at home. The stem and leaves of this plant are then soaked in water in a potsherd and everybody is sprinkled with the infusion on the inside and outside of hands and feet as he or she leaves the hut. The coiled stems and leaves of this plant are used as a sprinkling brush during the process. **b.** Leaves may be eaten but must be cooked together with other vegetables.

MIMOSACEAE

144. **Acacia albida** Del. *Mabogo 186*
Muhoṱo

a. The bark is an ingredient of the medicines soaked in the clay pot called *ṱhufhana*, the unfusion of which is used for making soft porridge for an infant. This soft porridge, which is the staple food for an infant from birth, is known as *tshiunza*. Its inclusion in this mixture is said to be beneficial because it keeps an infant's stomach conditions favourable. **b.** Its bark is also a remedy for venereal diseases when boiled and the decoction drunk.

145. **Acacia ataxacantha** DC. *Mabogo 122*

(= *A. eriadenia* Benth.)
(= *A. lugardiae* N.E. Br.)
Muluwa

a. The root bark is an ingredient of *dzovheyo*, taken by men as an aphrodisiac as well as for general body cleansing. **b.** The flexible saplings, decorticated and longitudinally split into thin band-like strips, are used for weaving baskets of different types and uses, e.g. winnowing and storage baskets. **c.** The thorny branches are also used for hedge fencing around cattle enclosures and homesteads. **d.** It is a good source of firewood.

146. **Acacia burkei** Benth. *Mabogo 150*

(= *A. ferox* Benth.)
Munanga

a. Straight branches are cut to suitable sizes and used as fencing posts and for building hut walls. The thorny branches are preferred for hedge fencing. **b.** The plant is threatened because of its excessive use as a source of fuelwood. It is considered to provide good fire for cooking as well as for heating.

147. **Acacia karroo** Hayne *Mabogo 286*

(= *A. capensis* (Burm. f.) Burch.)
(= *A. hirtella* E. Mey.)
(= *A. horrida* Willd.)
(= *A. inconflagrabilis* Gerstn.)
(= *A. natalitia* E. Mey.)
(= *A. reticulata* (L.) Willd.)
(= *Mimosa capensis* Burm. f.)
(= *M. leucacantha* Jacq.)
Muunga

a. Although the pods may be eaten by people, they are mostly preferred by goats. **b.** The gum and bark are chewed and said to be sweet to the taste. Some compare the

gum to toffee. **c.** In the eastern parts of Venda, reportedly the area known as Malamba, it is said that the dry wood of this plant was cracked to obtain worms (probably insect larvae) called *malamba* which were fried and eaten. They are said to be so delicious that they were also collected in abundance to be taken to the headman of the area as a form of thanksgiving. **d.** The bark is a good source of fibre used for binding wattles around roof poles. The fibre is collected and hung in rolls around the roofs of huts during autumn for use during winter, the building season. Just before they are used, they are stuffed into a large clay pot and then boiled in water for a long time. This is said to make them pliable as well as more resistant to wood-borers, since boiling removes the sap or gum preferred by wood-borers. **e.** Thorns are anointed with magical powders and nailed down along the fence of the homestead to keep out evildoers such as witches and sorcerers. Sometimes they are placed with tips facing upwards. **f.** The wood is good for fire.

148. **Acacia nigrescens** Oliv. *Mabogo 287*
(= *A. pallens* (Benth.) Rolfe
(= *A. passargei* Harms)
(= *Albizia lugardii* N.E. Br.)
Tshinangana

The name *Tshinangana* shows that the plant is considered to be a smaller variety of *Acacia burkei*, i.e. the use is diminutive. It is used for fencing posts, hedge fencing, and for firewood.

149. **Acacia tortilis** (Forssk.) Hayne *Mabogo 231*
Musu

a. The gum and bark are chewed like chewing gum and are said to be sweet. **b.** Pods are collected for goats and sheep. **c.** The bark is a source of fibre used for binding wattles on roof poles as well as for building other structures. The fibres are, like those of *Acacia karroo*, boiled or soaked for making them pliable and to keep them resistant to wood-borers. **d.** The wood is collected for fire, but it is difficult because

of the presence of thorns. **e.** Owing to its thorny nature, it is preferred for hedge fencing.

150. **Albizia adianthifolia** (Schumach.) W.F. Wight *Mabogo 144*

(= *A. fastigiata* (E. Mey.) Oliv.)
(= *Inga fastigiata* E. Mey.) Oliv.)
(= *Mimosa adianthifolia* Schumach.)
(= *Zygia fastigiata* E. Mey.)
Muvhaḓangoma, *Muelela*

The Venda name *Muelela* refers to the flat shape of the crown (from *-elela* = to flow). **a.** A weak decoction of the leaf and root bark is taken as a purgative as well as for toothache. **b.** The same decoction, when mixed with a similar decoction from *Landolphia kirkii*, *Solanum incanum* and *Ricinus communis*, is used as a remedy for a disease known as *ṋowa khulu* which is mostly suffered by women and is related to piles or haemorrhoids. The symptoms of this disease are pain in the rectum as well as blood flow with stools. **c.** An infusion of the bark, together with other ingredients, is also used by medicinal practitioners to help them remember, as well as dream about, the use and collection sites of the various medicines that they have come across. For this purpose the medicine is also mixed with portions of the vulture's heart. **d.** The other Venda name for this plant, *Muvhaḓangoma*, has been derived from *vhaḓa* = to carve + *ngoma* = drum, because the wood is commonly used for carving the different types of wooden drums. The wood is also good for making doors, door frames, wooden plates, spoons, tool handles and other household utensils. Drumsticks are also made from the wood of this tree.

151. **Albizia brevifolia** Schinz *Mabogo 102*

(= *A. parvifolia* Burtt Davy)
(= *A. rogersii* Burtt Davy)
Mupalakhwali

a. The root bark is included in an infant's medicines which are given to him either as an infusion or in soft porridge as a base. **b.** It is also used for restoring fertility in

women. **c.** The fruit and leaf decoction is taken for abdominal pains. **d.** The wood may be taken for firewood but is not recommended.

152. **Albizia versicolor** Welw. ex Oliv. *Mabogo 75*
(= *A. mossambicensis* Sim)
Mutambapfunda, *Muvhambangoma*

The name *Mutambapfunda* refers to the medicinal use of this plant and is derived from *tamba* = to wash + *pfunda* = face. **a.** The infusion of the bark is used for washing the face for troublesome eyes, shortsightedness as well as for bringing luck. **b.** This infusion, together with that from *Annona senegalensis*, is drunk as a remedy for gonorrhoea, syphilis and bilharzia. **c.** When soaked with many other roots of different plants, they make a mixture known as *dzovheyo* which is drunk as an aphrodisiac as well as for general cleansing and keeping the stomach conditions favourable. *Dzovheyo* is either made in water or *mageu* (Venda: *mabundu*, a fermented bran). **d.** The foamy infusion from the bark of this tree is also given to a person with the disease known as *divhu* or *devhu* which is suffered as a result of having had sexual intercourse with a woman who had committed abortion or experienced a miscarriage. It is believed to give him power and sustain him until the appropriate mixture is prepared. Because of this multitude of uses, the plant is generally referred to as *muri wa vhanna*, which literally means that it is a medicine for men. **e.** It is also an ingredient of protective medicines used to guard the homestead against witchcraft. **f.** The second name, *Muvhambangoma*, has been derived from *vhamba* = to stretch + *ngoma* = drum. This name is related to the use of pieces of wood obtained from this plant to keep the hide stretched over the mouth of a drum. These pieces are nailed around the rim of the mouth of the drum (in ready-made holes) to serve as hooks which keep the hide tightly stretched. **g.** The wood is also used for carving drums, doors, door frames and other household utensils.

153. **Dichrostachys cinerea** (L.) Wight & Arn. *Mabogo 52*
Murenzhe

a. Pieces of root are tied together and soaked to give an infusion which is applied to a new-born baby's fontanelle until it hardens. The purpose is to ensure that the bones of the skull will close properly and to hasten this closure. When certain diseases resulting in the resoftening of this area arise, e.g. the disease known as *ngoma* which is also characterized by diarrhoea, the medicine may once again be applied drop by drop. **b.** A decoction of the root bark is taken for toothache and stomach troubles. **c.** The infusion of the leaf and bark have been used for treating sore and painful eyes. **d.** Powder from the root and bark is also used for treating snake-bites and scorpion stings while that from the fruit is used for festering sores and scabies. **e.** Because the semi parasite growing on this plant is said to be used by witches in their night activities, it is used by traditional medicinal practitioners against them. **f.** The plant is also believed to indicate good or bad luck to herdboys. They split a branch from the point where it forks, and if it continues through a longer portion it indicates that they will find the cattle or goats, but if it breaks it shows hard luck. **g.** The hard and durable wood is used for making tool handles as well as for building courtyard walls and hedge fencing. **h.** It is an excellent source of wood for fire.

154. **Elephantorrhiza elephantina** (Burch.) Skeels *Mabogo 288*
(= *Acacia elephantina* Burch.)
(= *A. elephantorrhiza* DC.)
(= *E. burchellii* Benth.)
(= *E. dinteri* Phillips)
(= *Prosopis elephantina* (Burch.) E. Mey.)
(= *P. elephantina* (DC.) Spreng.)
Musesekufa, *Tshisesana*, *Gumululo*, *Gumbathakha*

The first two Venda names indicate the similarity between this plant and *Peltophorum africanum*, which is purely based on morphological resemblances. The third name, *Gumululo*, relates to the use of the plant in **a.** washing a recovering patient to help him or her recover liveliness and complexion and to accelerate the

formation of blood in the body. The treatment is known as *u kumulula*, and also includes drinking the infusion of the root bark. **b.** The name *Gumbathakha* refers to its use in treating venereal diseases and promoting general blood purification. It is derived from *kumba* = to gather + *thakha* = (in this context) all dirt in the body. In this sense it is understood to gather all undesirable and harmful substances in the body and make them available for excretion. **c.** It is also used for regulation of menstruation when boiled (root) and drunk.

MORACEAE

155. **Ficus thonningii** Blume *Mabogo 49*
(= *F. burkei* (Miq.) Miq.)
Muumo

a. Figs, called *nyumo*, are edible when ripe and are usually infested by insects when over-ripe. **b.** The latex, especially from fruits, is used for making bird-lime, or strengthening bird-lime made from the root bark of *Cassine aethiopica* and for making it more sticky and elastic. Sometimes the latex from *Tabernaemontana elagans* is added to coagulate and strengthen bird-lime prepared from this plant. **b.** A semiparasitic plant growing on *Ficus burkei* is required as an ingredient in the remedy for insanity. The plant is likely to be used for many other medicinal purposes, judging from removals of bark on most stems.

156. **Ficus ingens** (Miq.) Miq. var. **ingens** *Mabogo 205*
Tshikululu

The fruit can be eaten when ripe but they seem to be preferred by animals, especially baboons and monkeys. No medicinal uses have been reported for this plant in spite of a wide range of uses recorded for other members of the Moraceae.

157. **Ficus sycomorus** L. *Mabogo 42*

(= *F. exasperata* Vahl)

Muhuyu, *Mutole*

a. Two types of edible fruit are commonly produced by this plant: the larger ones, called *mahuyu*, and the smaller, pinkish and sweeter ones, called *thole*. The two types are apparently produced at different periods of the fruiting season. Smaller and sweeter fruits may be eaten fresh or dried. The variation within this species, as well as the manner in which it produces fruit, requires further investigation. **b.** The decoction from the root bark is taken for chest troubles and colds in general. **c.** When included in medicines placed in the *thufhana* (a clay pot containing medicines, the infusion of which is added to the water used for making an infant's soft porridge), it is understood to organize an infant's stomach as well as prevent diarrhoea (the disease referred to as *u shela*). **d.** Fresh fruits are boiled and used as a pressing for the teats of cattle and goats to encourage lactation, probably because the fruit has substantial amounts of milky latex. **e.** The bark is a source of fibre required for cordage as well as for weaving a variety of materials, e.g. sieves used in making traditional beer. **f.** The plant is generally preferred and conserved for shade and beauty.

158. **Ficus** sp. *Mabogo 81*

Mutambvu

a. Ripe fruits are enjoyed by young people. **b.** The plant is used medicinally as suggested by extensive removal of bark where it grows near human settlements, but the use is still unknown. **c.** The tree is generally preferred for the shade it provides in fields and at resting places.

MUSACEAE

159. **Ensete ventricosum** (Welw.) E.E. Cheesm. *Mabogo 132*
Mulolo

a. Leaves and leaf sheaths are used as fibres for weaving baskets and other receptacles. **b.** They are also of temporary use for cordage and binding. **c.** Leaf sheaths are commonly folded for keeping snuff because of its porous nature.

MYROTHAMNACEAE

160. **Myrothamnus flabellifolius** (Sond.) Welw. *Mabogo 257*
Mukangambanzhe, *Mafavuka*

The plant is commonly known as the resurrection plant and prefers dry and rocky mountainsides where it remains like a dead herb. In Venda it is known as *Mukangambanzhe* because, in its fresh state, it cannot be easily distinguished from the dagga herb, *Canabis sativa*. The second name, *Mafavuka*, relates to its resurrection capacity because, when dry, it always looks like a dead plant, but after some few hours in water, it becomes fresh again. **a.** An infusion of boiled leaf is taken for colds and flu. More often the leaves and twigs are crushed and rolled in paper to be smoked like tobacco for colds, flu and other chest complaints. **b.** It is also sometimes smoked for nose-bleeding and scurvy. **c.** Some traditional practitioners use it together with other medicines to treat fainting, because, as they say, it also dies and resurrects.

MYRSINACEAE

161. **Maesa lanceolata** Forssk. *Mabogo 258*
(= *M. angolensis* Gilg)
Muunguri, *Mutibammela*

a. The Venda name *Mutibammela* refers to the use of the leaves of this plant to cover malt before beer-making (*tiba* = to cover + *mmela* = malt). The covering of

malt creates the heat that is needed for fermentation and germination. **b.** These leaves are of considerable use at initiation schools as a dressing. **c.** The plant is usually left to grow as an ornamental.

162. **Rapanea melanophloeos** (L.) Mez *Mabogo 146*
(= *Myrsine melanophloeos* (L.) R. Br.)
Tshididiri

The bark is chewed or stamped and soaked or powdered for sore throats as well as for wounds.

MYRTACEAE

163. **Eugenia natalitia** Sond. *Mabogo 170*
(= *E. rudatisii* Engl. & V. Brehm.)
Museri

The Venda name refers to the interwoven nature of its xylem strands in the wood. Because of its compact and strong wood, it is used for **a.** fire, **b.** furniture, household utensils, **c.** fencing posts, etc.

164. **Syzygium cordatum** Hochst. *Mabogo 15*
Mutu

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe. **b.** A cold infusion of leaves is taken for stomach troubles, colds and fevers.

165. **Syzygium guineense** (Willd.) DC. *Mabogo 69*
Mutumadi

This is considered to be related to *S. cordatum* in many respects, but is restricted to wet areas and has more watery fruit. The fruit is eaten by young people.

166. **Syzygium legatii** Burtt Davy & Greenway *Mabogo 56*
Mutawi

a. The stem and root is probably used for medicine. **b.** The fruit is generally gathered in large quantities and long distances have to be covered to find it. It ripens at the same time as *Mimusops zeyheri* and they are therefore usually collected together.

OCHNACEAE

167. **Brackenridgea zanguebarica** Oliv. *Mabogo 189*
Mutavhatsindi

The root and stem bark as well as the leaf are used magically to protect homesteads as well as territories. The Vhatavhatsindi of the north-eastern Venda used this plant to protect their area against invaders. The name *Mutavhatsindi* was probably derived from the tribal name of these people. It is understood to magically discourage enemies from entering the treated area or homestead by making them feel frightened and unprepared for the invasion. The plant is tabooed from entering any homestead unless a certain ritual is performed. The same applies to the collection of medicines from the plant. Anybody who fails to observe the taboo may get into trouble. He may become sterile or something bad such as a fatal accident may happen to him. It is this horrible taboo that keeps most people away from it, even from knowing the plant. It is also prohibited from being used for purposes such as firewood and hedge fencing, building or wood carving. The plants growing in Venda appear to produce few seeds -- most flowers fall early.

OLACACEAE

168. **Ximenia americana** L. *Mabogo 82*
(= *X. rogersii* Burtt Davy)
Mu̯thanzwa, *D̯adzwangome*

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe but it is more sour than that of *Ximenia caffra*. **b.** An infusion of the bark or powder of the root bark is used as a remedy for dysentery in children. The infusion is cooked with mealie meal for making soft porridge while the powdered medicine may only be sprinkled over it. **c.** It is also used as a remedy for diarrhoea and febrifuge in adults. **d.** The semiparasite or epiphyte associated with this plant is mixed with powder from *Salacia rehmanii* and *Pleurostylia capensis* to attract people who do not want to return home from their places of work far away. The medicinal (magical) powder is simply blown away with the accompaniment of proper incantations.

169. **Ximenia caffra** Sond. *Mabogo 5*
Mutshili, *Mu̯thanzwa*

a. The sour fruit is enjoyed by children when ripe. Only the pulp around the seed is eaten (i.e. sucked) after removal of the outer skin. The seed may also be eaten but it has an astringent taste which makes it less popular. **b.** Seeds are mostly preferred for making oil called *mudo* or *muvhamba* which is used for polishing women's leather clothes known as *zwirivha* (sing. = *tshirivha*) made from goat or other animal hide to keep them flexible and soft. It has to be a domestic animal, because Venda women do not wear clothes made from the hide of a wild animal. The oil is made by burning seeds and then crushing the kernels. Although *mudo* has an unpleasant smell, it is preferred because smell is believed to repel wild animals and dangerous beasts of prey, protecting women when they are out in the veld gathering wood and vegetables. **c.** A decoction of the root is taken for stomach troubles in both children and adults, especially when stools containing blood are discharged. The medicine is taken in half-cup doses twice or three times a day. It is also used as a febrifuge as well as a remedy for diarrhoea. Pieces of root are included in an infant's *thu̯fhana* medicines. **d.** Branches of this plant were long preferred for hedge fencing but were

never used as firewood because it was tabooed, apparently because of its medicinal value.

OXALIDACEAE

170. **Oxalis semiloba** Sond. *Mabogo 113*
Mukulungwane

Fresh leaves are chewed by a person suffering from a tart or sour feeling, usually after eating unripe fruit.

PAPILIONACEAE

171. **Crotalaria** sp. *Mabogo 84*
Murundelatshotshi, *Nḓuhushango*

The Venda name *Murundelatshotshi* points to the relationship of this herb to ants which are always moving over and around it (*rundela* = to urinate on + *tshotshi* = ant). The other Venda name relates to the morphological similarity of this plant to peanuts (*nḓuhu* = peanuts + *shango* = earth or wild), but it also indicates that it is a wild species. **a.** The infusion of the root is taken for stomach pains. The fastest method, which could be followed in an emergency, is to chew the root. The root infusion is also used for alleviating all other stomach troubles as well as *divhu*. The root is included in the medicines used for making an infant's soft porridge food. **b.** It is also an ingredient of medicines for venereal diseases.

172. **Eriosema ellipticifolium** Schinz *Mabogo 260*
Muṋdodzi

The fruit is edible when raw but has an unpleasant flavour which encourages people to cook or boil it first.

173. **Erythrina lysistemon** Hutch. *Mabogo 129*
Muvhale

a. The infusion of boiled, soaked or chewed bark is a remedy for toothache. Chewing is an emergency treatment. **b.** The tree is favoured as a wind-break and is generally planted as an ornamental. **c.** The wood is not considered to be an important source of firewood.

174. **Indigofera arrecta** Hochst. ex A. Rich. *Mabogo 123*
Muswiswa, Mualigatsibi

The name *Mualigatsibi* has been derived from Sotho to literally mean that the plant is used for frying iron but the origin of this derivation is not clearly understood. **a.** An infusion of the root is given in teaspoonfuls three or four times a day to treat a disease known as *tshilala* or *ngoma* which is characterized by an 'abnormal' form of diarrhoea and a sunken fontanelle. It is also applied drop by drop to the fontanelle. It is often used as a prophylactic for making children immune to many other diseases as well as to accelerate the hardening of the fontanelle. **b.** The plant has been used as a dye for fibres and other woven materials including mats, anklets, bangles and garments.

175. **Millettia stuhlmannii** Taub. *Mabogo 215*
Muangaila

The root bark is used magically to protect persons and homesteads against supernatural forces such as witchcraft and sorcery. It is said that in order to obtain any medicine from this plant, the person must perform a certain ritual. The person must be naked and should do it in the darkness, relating to the manner and time of witchcraft. This stops many people from tampering with the plant and probably played an important role in its protection and preservation.

176. **Mucuna coriacea** Bak. *Mabogo 261*

Mulaḓa

a. Crushed and boiled root fibres are used to treat toothache through pressing. **b.** The fruits have stinging hairs and children are warned against any contact with the plant. The hairs were notorious for their use among the people within the distribution range of the plant, more often for weaponry and disciplinary purposes than for medicine. Frequently one finds people talking about the stinging hairs of this plant with regard to ill treatment and suffering. It is for this reason that the plant is not only avoided, but also hated. Furthermore, for the same reason, people do not care for the plant enough to protect it. It is not unlikely that its physical appearance has been responsible for its own preservation.

177. **Mundulea sericea** (Willd.) A. Chev. *Mabogo 262*

(= *M. suberosa* (DC.) Benth.)
(= *Cystisus sericeus* Willd.)
(= *Tephrosia suberosa* DC.)
Mukundaṋḓou

a. The root bark is an ingredient of the medicine applied into the body, through incisions, as a protection against witchcraft and other magical practices. The Venda name indicates that the plant is such a strong magical medicine that it can evade or subdue even the strongest power brought magically, hence its derivation from *kunda* = to conquer + *ṋḓou* = elephant --- here referring to the strongest animal. The medicine is generally applied with animal and plant fats as a base. **b.** The wood is soft and unsuitable for use as a source of fire.

178. **Ormocarpum trichocarpum** (Taub.) Engl. *Mabogo 263*

(= *O. setosum* Burtt Davy)
(= *Diphaca trichocarpa* Taub.)
Mugogodwane

This plant is also known as *Mukundaṋḓou* for reasons explained under *Mundulea sericea*. **a.** The plant is usually qualified as *Mukundaṋḓou* of the low-lying and dry

areas and can be a substitute for *Mundulea sericea* in its magical use to protect against witchcraft. The treament is referred to as *u fara muvhili*. **b.** Fresh leaves are chewed or soaked and served as a vegetable in family imitation games. **c.** The wood is good for fire but its use is not strongly recommended.

179. **Pterocarpus angolensis** DC. *Mabogo 115*
(= *P. bussei* Harms)
Mutondo

a. A decoction of the bark is taken to accelerate blood formation in men and women. In women it is commonly used after heavy menstruation, miscarriage or childbirth. In men, as also in women, it is used after any loss of blood. The same decoction, mixed with others in different combinations, is used to stimulate and regulate menstruation. The red, blood-like sap that oozes from the broken bark of the plant appears to be related to the medical use of the plant. **b.** A decoction of the bark is taken orally for piles. **c.** The wood is good for carving household materials such as doors, door frames, spoons, tool handles, furniture and other decorative objects.

180. **Vigna vexillata** (L.) A. Rich. *Mabogo 264*
(= *Phaseolus vexillata* L.)
Musivha

Root tubers are eaten raw or cooked but they are preferred as a supplement to food, especially during periods of drought and food shortage. During the famine period known as *ndala ya matshona* this plant was of great nutritional importance.

PASSIFLORACEAE

181. **Adenia digitata** (Harv.) Engl. *Mabogo 197*
(= *Modecca digitata* Harv.)
Dundu

a. Fresh leaves are picked and cooked into a potherb. It is usually cooked as a spice when mixed with other vegetables. **b.** The stem and leaf infusion is given to a woman for delayed childbirth (to induce labour). It is said to be more effective when mixed with some animal products. **c.** The tuber is boiled in water to steam a patient with earache, especially when the ear has a boil or ulcer.

182. **Adenia spinosa** Burtt Davy *Mabogo 213*
Tshivhuyudumbu

The infusion of the bark is used to bathe children to stimulate growth and strength of body. Infants washed with the infusion become fresh-looking and healthy like the stem of the plant which is thick.

PEDALIACEAE

183. **Dicerocaryum eriocarpum** (Decne.) Abels *Mabogo 154*
(= *Dicerocaryum zanguebaricum* (Lour.) Merr.)
Museto

a. Soaked leaves are frequently used as a soap substitute. **b.** The infusion from soaked leaf and stem is used to quicken the expulsion of hanging placenta in cattle as well as in humans. **c.** It is also considered an important medicine for the blood disease in cattle known as *mali* (black quarter evil). The infusion is administered orally.

PHYTOLACCACEAE

184. **Phytolacea octandra** L. *Mabogo 17*
(= *P. americana* L. var. *americana* L.)
Vowa, *Thebe*

a. Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. The vegetable is not very tasty on its own and is usually cooked with other vegetables as a spice. **b.** Leaves and shoots are dried, burnt and mixed with snuff to serve as a stimulant as well as to give flavour. When used for this purpose, it is known as *mukango*.

POACEAE

185. **Cymbopogon validus** (Stapf) Stapf ex Burtt Davy *Mabogo 266*
Benzwa

This is one of the most important thatch grasses, especially as an under-thatch where it is used as *bofhelo*.

186. **Cynodon dactylon** (L.) Pers. *Mabogo 265*
Tshitanzhela

Leaves and stems are boiled and used as a hot pressing on udders of cattle and goats for making them softer and to encourage the flow of milk. It is usually used immediately after the cow has calved when the udder is still hard.

187. **Phragmites mauritianus** Kunth *Mabogo 64*
Lutanga

The straws are collected in abundance and used for a variety of purposes. **a.** It is preferred as an under-thatch for roofs and as cover for goat and sheep enclosures. It is first weaved into a mat known as *likhenya* before it is laid on the roof. Some

people prefer to use bundles of reeds as withies in the construction of roof frames. Sometimes it is cut into suitable sizes for making reed doors and courtyard enclosures. **b.** Because of the hollowed stems it is preferred for making musical instruments such as flutes, as well as smoking pipes, *etc*. **c.** Long and thick stems are used as fishing rods. **d.** When cut into strips the stems are used for weaving a variety of baskets, hats and other receptables.

188. **Sporobolus africanus** (Poir.) Robyns & Tournay *Mabogo 267*
Mushingidzhane

a. This grass is important as a source of structural fibres for making different types of household utensils such as mats, baskets, receptacles, and amulets, for example anklets, hats, *etc*. **b.** Children tie the flexible stems (culms) across footpaths to trip one another.

POLYGALACEAE

189. **Securidaca longepedunculata** Fresen. *Mabogo 157*
Mpesu

a. The infusion from soaked root bark is drunk as an aphrodisiac as well as for general purification of the blood. It may be chewed for emergency or convenient use, especially by boys and young men. **b.** The root infusion is also taken with other medicines as an emetic. **c.** Traditional practitioners maintain that it is used more for magical than for medicinal purposes. They say it is the one that convert magical powders into living familiars, especially into animals from which the mixing fat has been obtained. When used as an ingredient in *dzovheyo* it is believed to activate the other medicines and to form the characteristic foam normally observed in *dzovheyo*. **d.** A decoction of the root is also used as an anthelmintic as well as a purgative.

POLYGONACEAE

190. **Oxygonum dregeanum** Meisn. *Mabogo 194*
Mu̯thanyi

Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. Because of its bitter taste, the vegetable is usually cooked with others as a spice and normally only small amounts are needed.

PORTULACACEAE

191. **Portulaca oleracea** L. *Mabogo 268*
Makhulu-wa-luvhisi

Cooked leaves are eaten as a vegetable. It is usually prepared in a mixture with other vegetables and rarely on its own.

PROTEACEAE

192. **Faurea saligna** Harv. *Mabogo 176*
Mu̯tango

a. The infusion of the leaf is a strong remedy for *divhu* or *devhu*, an illness suffered by a man who had sexual intercourse with a woman who had recently committed an abortion or had a miscarriage. It is combined with other medicines such as *Peddiea africana* and *Canthium mundianum* (root bark infusions). **b.** The wood is workable and durable.

RHAMNACEAE

193. **Berchemia discolor** (Klotzsch) Hemsl. *Mabogo 24*
(= *Phyllogeiton discolor* (Klotszch) Herzog
Munie, Mukhukhuma

a. The fruit is eaten fresh, or dried. When fresh it may be soaked in water or milk for making it more palatable. Dried fruit has been used by the Venda people to supplement their food supply during periods of famine. The fruit is stamped into powder in a mortar. This powder may be eaten as *mugumo* or cooked into some porridge known as *phwambwali* or *Khwangwali*, depending on the regional dialect. **b.** The wood is used for building as well as for fire. **c.** At times the bark is used as a dye through boiling with woven articles or fibres to give them a purplish colour. **d.** The wood has also been used as a cow-stick during fire-making by the Venda people.

194. **Berchemia zeyheri** (Sond.) Grubov *Mabogo 40*
(= *Phyllogeiton zeyheri* (Sond.) Suesseng.)
Munieniane

The vernacular name indicates that this is a smaller type of *Berchemia discolor* (*Munie*). It is the fruit and leaves that are smaller. **a.** The fruit can be eaten fresh or dried. When dried, it may be stamped into powder and mixed with mealie meal to be cooked into a porridge very similar to *phwambwali* (described above). **b.** The wood has more or less the same qualities as that of *B. discolor* regarding fire, furniture, building, *etc.* **c.** The bark is also a source of a purplish dye for fibre and woven materials.

195. **Helinus integrifolius** (Lam.) Kuntze *Mabogo 111*
(= *H. ovatus* E. Mey. ex Sond.)
(= *H. scandens* (Eckl. & Zeyh.) A. Rich.)
Mupupuma

The leaf and stem are pounded and soaked in water to produce a soapy foam that has been used as soap. The Venda name relates to the formation of this foam when the plant is soaked.

196. **Ziziphus mucronata** Willd. *Mabogo 16*
Mukhalu, Mutshetshete

The vernacular names point to the fact that the plant has piercing and tearing thorns. **a.** The fruit is edible but less preferred. It is only eaten out of hunger and when other fruits are scarce. **b.** In the treatment of nerve pains leaves are chewed and the juice swallowed, while the resulting paste is smeared in the palms of both hands and clapped simultaneously on both sides of the abdomen. Roots are also boiled and the decoction drunk to strengthen the treatment. Others prefer to grind the dried root in order to get the powder that can be sprinkled over soft porridge eaten for the same purpose. **c.** An infusion of the root bark is taken by women to enhance fertility. **d.** The thorny branches are preferred for hedge fencing around homesteads, cultivated lands, cattle and goat enclosures. **e.** It is a good source of firewood when dry.

ROSACEAE

197. **Parinari curatellifolia** Planch. ex Benth. subsp. **mobola** (Oliv.) R. Grah. *Mabogo 112*
Muvhula

a. Fruits are eaten when ripe. They are more delicious when stamped in water or milk. **b.** The people of Venda also make some alcoholic beverage from the fermented pulp of the fruit. **c.** The bark from the stem, together with the stem bark

of *Rauvolfia caffra*, is boiled and the decoction used for making soft porridge eaten for general cleansing related to pelvic pains, venereal diseases as well as cleaning of the kidneys.

198. **Rubus pinnatus** Willd. *Mabogo 59*
(= *R. kinginsis* Engl.)
(= *R. pappei* Eckl. & Zeyh.)
Munambala

a. The fruit is edible and preferred by young people when ripe. **b.** A decoction of the root is taken for the relief of chronic diarrhoea and chest complaints.

RUBIACEAE

199. **Psydrax livida** (Hiern) Bridson *Mabogo 269*
(= *Canthium huillense* Hiern)
(= *C. lividum* Hiern)
Muvhibvelashaḓani

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe. **b.** The wood is good for fire and for carving certain tools.

200. **Canthium mundianum** Cham. & Schlechtd. *Mabogo 128*
(= *Plectronia mundiana* (Cham. & Schlechtd.) Pappe)
Mutomboti

a. The fruit known as *thomboti* is much enjoyed. **b.** The leaf, when boiled with that of *Faurea saligna*, is a remedy for the illness known as *divhu* (explained earlier).

201. **Canthium** sp. *Mabogo 3*
Mulimakhoda

a. The fruit is liked by all, especially when soaked in milk or water. **b.** Thorns are preferred for removing kernels from the marula seeds as well as for **c.** magical purposes.

202. **Cephalanthus natalensis** Oliv. *Mabogo 143*
Murondo

The fruit, called *thondo*, is collected and eaten fresh.

203. **Conostomium natalense** (Hochst.) Brem. *Mabogo 141*
Ndilele

The root is used magically for all types of luck including job seeking, avoidance of confrontations with the police, court cases, etc.

204. **Fadogia tetraquetra** Krause *Mabogo 145*
Tshiliso

Roots are boiled with others in milk and the decoction drunk for the disease called *tshiliso*, which is characterized by a variety of symptoms including vomiting. The Venda name of the plant refers to this disease.

205. **Gardenia volkensii** K. Schum. *Mabogo 100*
Tshiralala

a. The fruit is soaked in a clay pot (*thufhana*) and soaked with other medicines to produce an infusion used for making soft porridge for a baby (*tshiunza*). The plant is said to have a prophylactic effect against several diseases. An extract of the root

and leaf is given to a child who is old enough to be weaned to encourage him to forget about breast-feeding. The same applies to one who should be walking but forgets to keep on trying. The latter is provided with a walking stick so that he would remember. This stick is anointed with magical medicines of plant and animal origin. **b.** Some people pick leaves of this plant in order to forget some unpleasant things of the past. People say, "*Tshiralala*, I will tell others at home that I have seen you" or "I will pick your leaf on my way back", but they forget to do either of these. **c.** It is a great *phamba* (magico-medicinal mixture) for protecting the homestead and other enclosures. Short sticks are sharpened at one end and nailed down on both sides of all entrances into the homestead. It promotes forgetfulness and is preferred to deter witches, who will believe that they have become lost. Those who manage to enter the premises will either forget to go out and will be found the following morning, or forget their way out. **b.** The fruit is used for making *mi̓tuhu*, which are used to suck blood through incisions made on certain parts of the body. In this case two small holes are made on either end of the fruit, the outer one being the smallest. This outer opening is closed with paste or porridge after the initial sucking of the blood.

206. **Hyperacanthus amoenus** (Sims) Bridson *Mabogo 289*
(= *Gardenia amoena* Sims)
Murombe

a. The edible fruit called *thombe* is eaten fresh, either on its own, or soaked in milk or water. **b.** The wood is good for fire and hedge fencing.

207. **Rothmannia capensis** Thunb. *Mabogo 183*
(= *Gardenia rothmannia* L.f.)
Murathamapfe̓ne

The wood is preferred for fire. The Venda name refers to its association with baboons, which are frequently found on its branches.

208. **Vangueria esculenta** S. Moore *Mabogo 44*
Muzwilungala

The fruit is eaten fresh or dried, preferably with milk or water. The Venda name not only stresses that this species is related to *Vangueria infausta*, but also that it differs from it because of its long vertical branches.

209. **Vangueria infausta** Burch. *Mabogo 33*
(= *V. tomentosa* Hochst.)
Muzwilu

a. The fruit, called *mazwilu*, is eaten fresh or dried. It is, like *mazwilungala*, also enjoyed with milk or soaked in water. **b.** The powdered root bark is an ingredient of the mixture prepared to enhance fertility in women. It may also be boiled for this purpose. **c.** Short sticks are sharpened on one side and nailed down all around the fence of a homestead. These are first treated with other "magical" powders to protect the homestead.

RUTACEAE

210. **Zanthoxylum capense** (Thunb.) Harv. *Mabogo 175*
(= *Fagara capensis* Thunb.)
Munungu

Root and stem bark is used for treating sore throats. The bark is pounded into powder and licked. It is also used for other chest complaints, boils, pimples and blood poisoning.

211. **Vepris undulata** (Thunb.) Verdoorn & C.A. Sm. *Mabogo 217*
(= *Vepris lanceolata* (Lam.) G. Don)
(= *Toddalia lanceolata* Lam.)
Muhondwa

The wood is strong and durable for making tool handles and hunting clubs.

SALICACEAE

212. **Salix mucronata** Thunb. *Mabogo 94*
(=*Salix subserrata* Willd.)
Munengeledzi

a. The infusion from boiled root is taken to feed a baby from early childhood up to walking stage. The thick, black infusion is known as *ntswu*, and is generally considered to be not only very nutritious but also an important medicine which keeps the stomach conditions of an infant favourable. *Ntswu* feeding serves as a supplement to breast-feeding. Roots of other species such as *Syzygium guineense*, *Artabotrys monteiroae*, *Ficus sycomorus*, *Diospyros lycioides*, *etc*. are normally added to enchance the medicinal power and taste of the food. The food is kept in a small clay pot called *thufhana* to which water is regularly added. The water is boiled and then cooled before it is added to an infant's food, probably to kill germs. The clay pot remains covered with a clean cloth to keep out dust. New roots might be used when necessary. During the first three days the child is given an infusion from boiled leaves of *Amaranthus hybridus* to test whether *ntswu* food can be given to an infant. If an infant suffers from diarrhoea, he is given soft porridge instead of *ntswu*. **b.** The infusion from the root is given to a child as well as older people for burning stomach pains. The medicine is understood to cool down the stomach because the grows in the water. **c.** Powder from the bark of the root is an important ingredient of the magical mixture used, for protecting homesteads against witches and wizards. When such magical powder is used the whole homestead will appear (to the witch) as a dam or river with this plant growing along the banks.

SANTALACEAE

213. **Osyris lanceolata** Hochst. & Steud. *Mabogo 173*
(= *O. abyssinica* Hochst. ex A. Rich.)
Mpeta

a. The name *Mpeta* means to fold or bend. The plant is used magically to discourage evildoers such as witches, sorcerers or any other person who enters the homestead with an undesirable attitude. It is believed to make such a person lose all strength and courage to harm others. Generally a stick of this plant is anointed with other magical powders and then placed across the entrance of the homestead in such a way that everybody who enters would go over it. The same is done for cattle and goat enclosures as well as all other important structures. When used in this way, it is called *luvhambo*. The use of the stick at the entrances does not only work against outsiders, but it also keeps the emotions and attitudes of inmates favourable, in that way encouraging peaceful co-existence with family members in the homestead. The same applies to its use regarding animal enclosures. This same type of stick, smeared with different combinations of magical powders is also used as a protective rod by people undertaking journeys through troublesome areas. The rod protects them against dangerous wild animals and enemies by way of discouraging them. When the rod is used for trips, it is called *thamu*. The root bark powder is an important ingredient of the mixture prepared for luck, especially for job-seekers, gamblers or anyone who wants to keep out of trouble. **b.** A thicker rod is used for stirring traditional beer (*Mahafhe*) so that people would drink peacefully, without quarrels or fights when drunk.

SAPINDACEAE

214. **Pappea capensis** Eckl. & Zeyh. *Mabogo 8*
Murodololo, Muvundambado

The Venda name *Murodololo*, refers to the appearance of the fruits which look like red eyes partly covered by "eyelids". The second name indicates the hardness of the wood which can damage or break an axe (*vunda* = break + *mbado* = axe). **a.** The

fruit is eaten when ripe. **b.** Sap from the fruit is collected and allowed to ferment into a fairly potent wine. **c.** The infusion from crushed and soaked leaves is used as a remedy for painful eyes. **d.** The wood is used for fire.

215. **Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum** (Sond.) Heine & J.H. Hemsl.
(= *Chrysophyllum magalismontanum* Sond.) *Mabogo 46*
(= *Pouteria magalismontanum* (Sond.) A. Meeuse)
Munombelo

a. It is one of the most highly sought-after sources of fruit in the mountainous areas. Large quantities of fruit are collected during the ripening season. The juice is sucked from the pulp of the fruit. **b.** It is said that a fermented beverage is made from the fruit of this plant. **c.** The boiled root decoction is a remedy for abdominal pains. **d.** A semiparasite or lichen on this plant is used as an ingredient of medicines, prepared and burnt to invoke ancestral spirits during *malombo* (Vhasenzi) or *mbila* (Vhalemba) cults.

216. **Mimusops zeyheri** Sond. *Mabogo 77*
Mububulu

a. The fruit is edible when ripe. This plant provides large quantities of fruit which are taken home and shared within and between families. The fruit is eaten fresh, soaked in milk or water. The surplus is dried and stored for future use. **b.** An alcoholic beverage is made from this fruit and enjoyed by young and old men and women. **c.** The root and stem bark is boiled and the decoction drunk for abdominal complaints.

SCROPHULARIACEAE

217. **Halleria lucida** L. *Mabogo 270*

Mudula

a. The fruit is edible when ripe but it is not very popular, especially in the low-lying and wetter areas. **b.** The infusion of the root is applied drop by drop (into the ear) for earaches.

SOLANACEAE

218. **Datura stramonium** L. *Mabogo 228*

(= *D. tatula* L.)

Zavhazavha

a. Leaves are dried, burnt and powdered with tobacco as a stimulant popularly known as *mukango*. **b.** It is used by some medicinal practitioners to treat insanity. **c.** A leaf infusion is a reliable remedy for venereal diseases.

219. **Physalis peruviana** L. *Mabogo 271*

Murungudane

a. Fresh leaves are sometimes cooked with other vegetables and used to relish porridge. The fruit is edible and much enjoyed. **b.** An infusion from the leaf is taken as an enema to treat abdominal disorders.

220. **Solanum aculeastrum** Dun. *Mabogo 130*
Mushulwa

a. Burnt and powdered fruit is sprinkled over toasted millet grains, which are eaten as an anti-emetic. **b.** The thorny branches are preferred for hedge fencing around dwelling places and gardens. It is sometimes planted to serve as a living fence.

221. **Solanum panduraeforme** E. Mey. *Mabogo 41*
Mututulwa

a. The contents of the fruit are applied to wounds. **b.** An infusion from roasted and pounded root is a remedy for indigestion in children and adults. Older people may chew the roasted root and swallow the juice for the same disease as well as for other stomach troubles. **c.** Mixed with other medicines it is used for the treatment of ulcers and as an anti-emetic. **d.** The decoction of the root is also used for toothache. The sap of the fruit is burnt on moistened cloth and the smoke inhaled for toothache. **e.** The fruit is used by young people in several games.

222. **Solanum nigrum** L. *Mabogo 27*
Muxe

a. Fresh leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge, preferably with meat or other vegetables. **b.** The infusion of the leaf is a remedy for malaria and dysentery. **c.** It is also used as a cholagogue.

STERCULIACEAE

223. **Dombeya rotundifolia** (Hochst.) Planch. *Mabogo 155*
Tshiluvhari

a. An infusion of the root bark is used to promote fertility and conception in women. It is believed that, because its flowering is very profuse, it can make a woman bear a

large number of children. **b.** The flowering period of this plant is understood to coincide with the beginning of summer by the Venda people, thereby serving as a seasonal indicator.

224. **Hermannia glanduligera** K. Schum. *Mabogo 221*
(= *H. viscosa* sensu Burtt Davy non Hiern)
Manyamanye

The infusion of the root is added to bathing water to treat an infant with visibly expanded veins all over the body, particularly the abdominal part. The infusion is also used for making soft porridge for the patient as part of the treatment. It is interesting to note that the root of this plant appears to have a network of veins all over its surface, and it is probably because of this appearance that it was first used for this illness.

STRELITZIACEAE

225. **Strelitzia caudata** R.A. Dyer *Mabogo 133*
N̂ambi

Leaves, leaf stalks and leaf sheaths are used for making fibre needed for weaving winnowing baskets and other types of receptables used by the Vhavenda.

THYMELAEACEAE

226. **Passerina montana** Thoday *Mabogo 169*
Musanana

a. The bark is an important source of fibre for cordage. The fibre is used as a tie for many things together including roofs, wood stacks, grass for thatching, wattles, thatched roofs, ox whips, *etc*. **b.** Saplings with leaves may be used as a substitute for thatch grass, especially in times of shortage, or as a broom.

227. **Peddiea africana** Harv. *Mabogo 182*

Gokodzalulimi, Muhoholodza

a. The root bark, together with leaves of *Fauria saligna*, is pounded and soaked to produce an infusion that is drunk for an illness known as *divhu* (described elsewhere). Consumption of this plant alone appears to be poisonous because it affects the tongue to an extent that it hangs out of the mouth, hence the Venda names *Gokodzalulimi* (from *kokodza* = to pull + *lulimi* = tongue) and *Muhoholodza*, which means "that which pulls". **b.** It is a good source of fibre used for cordage, weaving, ox-whips, *etc.* but it is toxic and does not have a pleasant smell. It should not be inhaled.

TILIACEAE

229. **Corchorus tridens** L. *Mabogo 19*

Delele

Leaves are cooked into a smooth vegetable called *delele*. It is often also cooked with many other vegetables, reducing their rough texture and improving their flavour. The addition of bicarbonate of soda also improves it. It is sometimes added to other vegetables as a spice. Pregnant women prefer to eat this vegetable with the belief that it would help ease the birth of the child.

230. **Grewia bicolor** Juss. *Mabogo 2*

(= *G. disticha* Dinter & Burret)
(= *G. kwebensis* N.E. Br.)
(= *G. miniata* Mast. ex Hiern)
Murabva

a. The fruit is eaten when ripe. The ripe dark-bluish fruit is commonly referred to as *madombi*, which points to the degree of ripening. **b.** Fresh leaves are boiled for making a tea. **c.** The infusion of the root bark is a remedy for diarrhoea in children. **d.** A decoction of the bark is taken for chest complaints. **e.** Branches were used as

bull-sticks during firemaking. **f.** Young men returning from initiation schools carry lashes obtained from branches of this plant. These lashes, sometimes called *midzhavhululo*, are used to frighten or flog the women and uninitiated men. **g.** The bark is a source of fibre for cordage.

231. **Grewia hexamita** Burret *Mabogo 91*
(= *G. messinica* Burtt Davy & Greenway)
(= *G. schweickerdtii* Burret)
Murabva-pfene

The fruit is eaten but is not very popular because of its bitter taste. The vernacular name indicates that it is mostly eaten by baboons. It is for this reason that some people dislike the fruit as they believe that a baboon, having eaten enough, usually enjoys spoiling the remaining fruits on the tree.

232. **Grewia microthyrsa** (L.f.) Kuntze *Mabogo 50*
Mupfuka

a. The fruit is edible and cherished most when fresh. **b.** Long and flexible branches are used as withies in the construction of roofs and courtyard fences.

233. **Grewia occidentalis** L. *Mabogo 7*
Muparatsheni, *Mizwilaminzhi*

The Venda name *Mizwilaminzhi* is commonly used by traditional medicinal practitioners to indicate that it can be used in many ways to treat different types of illnesses (*mizwila* = paths + *minzhi* = many). Some claim that its multitude of uses in the medical field is indicated by the many longitudinal ribs on its stem. In this case there are four main uses because the stem is 4-angled (see also the 'Doctrine of Signatures' in Chapter 5). **a.** The fruit is eaten when ripe. It can be eaten fresh or dried with water or milk. **b.** Roots are boiled and the decoction is given to an expectant woman to hasten the onset of labour. **c.** The same medicine is an ingredient of that used for treatment of barrenness and impotency. **d.** The flexible

branches are used as wattles in building and lashes by herdboys. **e.** Firewood may also be obtained from this plant.

234. **Grewia villosa** Willd. *Mabogo 6*
Mupunzu

a. The fruit is edible and enjoyed by both children and adults when ripe. **b.** The root has been reported as a medicine but details are not available. **c.** Straight branches are cut off by herdboys for use as lashes.

235. **Grewia** sp. *Mabogo 108*
Mulembu

a. Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. Only fresh leaves are obtained and the vegetable is mostly cooked with others. **b.** The root is boiled with *Tribulus terrestris* (stem, root, and leaves), the popular copper wire that is worn for religious purposes, and a bronze coin (e.g. old South African half penny) as treatment for syphilis.

URTICACEAE

236. **Pouzolzia mixta** Solms *Mabogo 34*
(= *P. hypoleuca* Wedd.)
Muṱhanzwa, *Mulambadivhu*, *Murovhaḓembe*

Fresh and tender leaves are cooked into a popular potherb called *muroho wa Muṱhanzwa*. It is usually cooked with other vegetables, especially *Obetia tenax*. **b.** It is an ingredient of the mixture of medicines soaked in a clay pot and taken daily by men for general body health. **c.** A decoction of boiled root is taken as a remedy for dysentery in children and adults. **d.** Mixed with other ingredients it is used as an enema for the disease known as *divhu*, hence the name *Mulambadivhu* (*lamba* = reject + *divhu*). It is known to be very effective against this disease, especially when

combined with an infusion from the root bark of *Trichilia emetica*. **e.** The name *Murovhaḓembe* is used when the plant is an ingredient in preparations for ailments caused by magic (e.g. through witchcraft), and is derived from *rovha* = break or weaken + *ḓembe* = magic.

237. **Obetia tenax** N.E. Br. *Mabogo 18*

(= *Urera tenax* N.E. Br.)

Muvhazwi, *Muugana*, *Muendanathavha*, *Gukhunya*, *Dyambila*, *Thanga*

The name *Muendanathavha* refers to the habitat of the plant rather than to its use or appearance. The other name, *Dyambila*, points at the association of the plant with the black mamba (*Dyambila*), which is suspected to feed on its bark and is often found near it. **a.** Leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. It is more delicious when taken with sour porridge (*mutuku*). The vegetable can easily be cooked with others, preferably *Pouzolzia mixta*. **b.** An epiphyte or semiparasite growing on this plant is used for treating snake bite. **c.** The bark is a good source of fibre cordage, ox-whips, mats, thatching, game traps and sieves for straining beer. The only problem with using this plant is the presence of stinging hairs on its leaves and stem, which are softened by cooking.

VERBENACEAE

238. **Clerodendrum glabrum** E. Mey. *Mabogo 127*

(= *C. rehmanii* Guerke)

Munukhatshilongwe

The infusion of leaves is taken and drunk as a remedy for sore throats, colds and related chest complaints. It is also an ingredient of magical medicines used for treating homesteads. It is believed that its smell repels pole cats and hyaenas which are popularly known to be familiars normally used by witches. It is also used to return the effects of witchcraft.

239. **Lantana rugosa** Thunb. *Mabogo 104*
(= *L. salvifolia* Jacq.)
Tshidzimbambule

a. The purplish berries are eaten, mostly by young people. **b.** A paste from leaf and stem is applied to troublesome eyes, but it is very painful to the eye. **c.** The infusion of the leaf is drunk for incipient bronchial infection, while it is also used as an enema for abdominal complaints. **d.** The same infusion is used as an anti-emetic, especially when taken with milk for *tshiliso*, a disease which has vomiting and breathing problems as some of its symptoms.

240. **Lippia javanica** (Burm. f.) Spreng. *Mabogo 21*
(= *L. galpiniana* Pearson)
(= *L. asperifolia* Rich.)
(= *Verbena javanica* Burm. f.)
Musudzungwane, *Mukundamboho*

a. The infusion of the leaf is drunk for coughs, flu and headaches. Leaves may be crushed and sniffed in emergency cases. **b.** It is also said to be important for general body sickness. **c.** The infusion is used as a prophylactic against malaria, dysentery and diarrhoea. **d.** Some people use it as an anthelmintic. **e.** The root is burnt and pounded to produce a medicine that is applied to cuts around sprained joints.

VITACEAE

141. **Rhoicissus tomentosa** (Lam.) Willd. & Drum.) *Mabogo 31*
(= *Rhoicissus capensis* Planch.)
(= *Cissus capensis* Willd.)
Dyathoho, *Ndirivhe dza daka*

The name *Dyathoho* seems to stress the fact that the fruit is mostly preferred by monkeys, but it is also occasionally eaten by people in Venda. It is recommended that one should not eat too much of it, otherwise an ill feeling referred to as *dikitela*

results. The fruit is only eaten out of hunger because it is not very palatable and has a sickly sweet taste. The introduction of domestic grape plants into Venda agriculture has led to this plant being known as *Ndirivhe dza ḓaka* which literally means that it is a wild grapes. The other name for this plant is *Tshitukisa ḓora* which refers to the fact that it can quench thirst when the fruit is eaten.

242. **Rhoicissus tridentata** (L. f.) Willd. & Drum. *Mabogo 273*
(= *Cissus cuneifolia* Eckl. & Zeyh.)
Murumbulambudzana

a. Fruits are edible but are less sought after. **b.** Roots are soaked, together with other medicines in a clay pot known as *thufhana* and the infusion is used for making soft porridge, called *tshiunza*, given to a baby from birth until he can eat harder porridge. The medicine is understood to keep the conditions in an infant's stomach stable and favourable. **c.** Roots are an important ingredient of *dzovheyo* as a result of the aphrodisiac properties of the plant.

243. **Rhoicissus** sp. Planch. *Mabogo 114*
Bopha-vhafu

a. The leaves are edible when cooked as a vegetable, but most people avoid it because of its association with corpses. They think that it might have grown vegetatively from a grave after it had been tied around a corpse and that it might have developed by taking up products from a decomposed body of a human being. **b.** The vernacular name indicates the use of the flexible stems of this plant to bind corpses when they are buried. The stems keep the clothes and/or hide used to cover the corpse securely fastened (from *vhofha* = to bind + *vhafu* = dead people). **c.** The leaf and root infusion is given to a woman who fails to conceive. The treatment is known as *mbuso* (meaning to restore). It is usually combined with other medicinal and magical plant and animal products, especially when many other causes, including witchcraft, are suspected. **d.** A semiparasite or orchid growing on this plant is used magically to protect a homestead against witchcraft. **e.** The flexible stems are used for binding wood and other materials.

ZYGOPHYLLACEAE

244. **Tribulus terrestris** L. *Mabogo 274*

Tsetwana

The name has been derived from *Tseto* (*Tribulus zeyheri*) by referring to it as a diminutive. **a.** Fresh leaves are sometimes included in the cooked vegetables used for relishing porridge. **b.** Root, stem and leaves are used for treating syphilis.

245. **Tribulus zeyheri** Sond. *Mabogo 117*

Tseto

Fresh leaves are cooked and eaten with porridge. The herb is usually cooked with other vegetables and is commonly used during periods of food and vegetable shortage.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE USE AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS PLANTS

The information presented in the previous chapters as well as that summarized in the Appendix illustrates clearly that the Vhavenda make extensive use of indigenous plants. It is evident that the natural environment is an indispensable source of food, medicine, firewood and building and art materials among other things. Additional notes on the use of plants for selected purposes are given in this chapter.

5.1 PLANTS AS A SOURCE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE

5.1.1 Porridge

From time immemorial the staple food of the Vhavenda has been porridges made from different cereals that they cultivated, including *Zea mays*, *Andropogon* spp., *Sorghum* spp. and *Pennisetum spicatum*. All these cereals could be cultivated only during the rainy summer period and sometimes when rainfall was insufficient, they produced nothing. Sometimes there was no rain at all and then they had to depend on their meagre reserves. During periods of extreme drought they resorted to indigenous plants for survival. It is reported that during the famine of around 1912, the Vhavenda dug roots of *Boscia albitrunca*, cleaned and pounded it into fine powder to be mixed with a little mealie meal and cooked into a porridge known as *vhuswa ha muṱhobi*. This famine appears to have resulted in untold loss of life and is still remembered today as *ndala ya miṱhobi*. The same expression is found among the Pedi and this may indicate that they also depended on this plant. The *Vhaṋia* of the northern and north-eastern Transvaal gathered and stored substantial quantities of the fruits of *Adansonia digitata*, *Strychnos pungens* and *Berchemia discolor* to make provision for lean times. These fruits have good storage qualities and were either stored as such or the pulp ground into a powder called *nugumo*. The powdered fruit pulp was kept sealed in large clay pots until needed, to be consumed in powder form (*mugumo*). Powder from *A. digitata* and *S. pungens* was usually mixed with

mealie meal and cooked into a sour porridge known as *khwangwali* or *phwambwali*. This porridge is said to have been so palatable that it was rarely shared with outsiders, including visitors. Quinn (1959) reports that the Pedi also dried fruits of *Ximenia caffra*, *Vangueria infausta* and *Strychnos innocoa* for porridges. Porridge made from indigenous fruits is now rare, probably due to industrialization which led to improved production and storage facilities.

5.1.2 Starchy roots, stems, bark and gums

Roots of many plants are prepared and eaten in different ways, and for varying and overlapping purposes. Some are taken for starch and water, others for refreshment, medicinal purposes or thirst. For instance, consumption of storage roots of *Vigna vexillata* and *Manihot utilissima* is basically to appease hunger, while the tuber of the plant, known by the Vhavenda as *khapha*, is primarily used for its taste and to quench thirst.

Tender and soft stems of most sedges (e.g. *Cyperus esculentus*, *C. sexangularis* and *C. latifolius*) are chewed and the juice is swallowed mainly for the salty taste which makes them palatable. On the other hand, the succulent roots of *Wrightia natalensis* are a rich source of water and have aphrodisiac properties.

The root bark of *Securindaca longepedunculata* is nibbled for the sweet and pleasant taste which is probably due to the presence of methyl salicylate, but it is also liked for its aphrodisiac effects. Bark of some plants is chewed and the juice swallowed with saliva for the refreshing taste, e.g. *Acacia albida* and *Landolphia kirkii*. Fibre of the plant known as *mukakate* is used for making ox-whips. As the only way of softening the inner bark of this plant is by chewing it, and it has a palatable taste, the juice is swallowed. A fellow villager stressed the palatability of gum from some acacias by saying that "it is like toffees" (Nemanashi, personal communication), but he also admitted that gums are eaten mostly for medicinal purposes.

Although most tubers may be eaten raw, those of *Manihot utilissima* should not only be properly cooked, but the central core must also be removed first. It is

believed that this part is poisonous. Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962) report that the toxic effects of the tuber, and particularly the core, are due to the presence of a cyanogenic glucoside. According to their report "... in Southern Rhodesia (the present Zimbabwe) the Bantu does not eat the tuber unless driven to in times of famine". The same source also suggests that drying and boiling destroy the toxicity of the tuber. This supports claims by the Vhavenda that prolonged cooking reduces the harmful effects of the tuber and explains the reason why it is commonly sliced and dried for future use. Even when it is properly cooked or dried first, people who do not know it, are warned of the danger of eating too much of it. Symptoms of over-eating this tuber resemble those described by Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962), namely abdominal distention, nausea, vomiting, respiratory difficulty and collapse. Despite extensive use of the tuber by the Tsonga of the lowveld in the eastern Transvaal, Liengme (1981) appears to have only noted its cultivation in the Giyani and Malamulele areas of Gazankulu. Tubers of *Vigna vexillata* are also usually sliced and dried before use, but this appears to be for storage purposes only.

5.1.3 Vegetables for relishing porridge

As in the case of cereals, the Vhavenda cultivate vegetable crops such as pumpkin, *Vigna sinensis* (*muṋawa*), *Voandzeia subterranea* (*phonḍa*), *Phaseolus aureus* (*ṋawa*), *Citrullus lanatus* (*habu*), *Lagenaria vulgaris* (*maranga*), *Arachis hypogea* (*nḍuhu*) and many others. These also being of seasonal availability and significance, the Vhavenda rely heavily on wild growing vegetable plants as well.

Gathering of indigenous vegetables growing in the wild takes place almost throughout the year. Vegetable gathering is a cultural role of women and girls to such an extent that it has become their culturally accepted and strongly commendable hobby. It is a communal activity which is confined to one or more peer groups, and it is usually combined with other tasks such as ploughing, weeding, catching locusts, fetching water or gathering wood. Men sometimes return home with some vegetables which they find in the mountains. However, they often uproot the herbs, lacking the patience and skill for fine picking. They sometimes gather substantial quantities of common vegetables where they find them flourishing, making them look very responsible to their wives in particular and families in

general. Men and boys' tasks are to collect mushrooms and to provide venison from the veld.

The gathering of certain wild vegetables is seasonal and, for most of them, it reaches its peak during the rainy season. Quantities of vegetable leaves gathered during a trip depends, to a large extent, on availability, distance and flavour preference. Those that are most preferred are collected first, followed by the unpalatable ones. Some are extensively gathered merely because they are readily available as weeds in cultivated areas, along footpaths and around homesteads and dumping sites.

Generally soft and tender leaves of the new growth are plucked. Flowers are usually also gathered, but there are some species of which even accidental inclusion of flowers or fruits is strictly avoided. For example, the flowers and fruits of *Cucumis zeyheri* are deadly poisonous and therefore avoided. Vegetables that can be cooked together are normally collected into one container, and in desirable proportions. Gourds or calabashes are used for this purpose, but recently tin containers came into fashion, probably because of their availability. Normally one collecting trip will provide for both the afternoon and evening meal.

Almost all vegetables are cooked before they are served with porridge. Combinations of vegetables depend on flavour, texture, availability and personal preference. Soft-textured vegetables are commonly cooked together. Similarly, the rough-textured ones are combined, but it is common to find the two types mixed in order to improve edibility. The following are some examples of common combinations in Venda vegetable cooking:

Corchorus tridens + *Amaranthus thunbergii*
Corchorus tridens + *Chenopodium album*
Corchorus tridens + *Cucumis zeyheri*
Corchorus tridens + *Obetia tenax*
Corchorus tridens + *Obetia tenax* + *Tragia* sp. (*Dzaluma*)
Corchorus tridens + *Obetia tenax* + *Tragia* sp. + *Pouzolzia mixta*
Corchorus tridens + *pumpkin leaves*
Cleome monophylla + *Cleome gynandra*

Bidens pilosa + *Sonchus oleracea*
B. pilosa + *Sonchus oleracea* + *Cleome gynandra*
B. pilosa + *Sonchus oleracea* + *Cleome gynandra* + *Cleome monophylla*
B. pilosa + *Cleome gynandra*
B. pilosa + *Cleome monophylla*

In case of combinations, the name of a relish is usually derived from the vegetable used in a greater proportion, or the one that has the predominating flavour. Thus, a relish may be called *delele* (*Corchorus tridens*) even when leaves of any other vegetable are included. Some vegetables serve as piquants or spices and are required to be added only in small quantities.

Some of the Venda piquants are *Momordica foetida*, *M. balsamina*, *Cucumis zeyheri*, *Solanum nigrum* and *Sonchus oleracea*. It is interesting to note that most of these piquants have an acrid or bitter taste and that some are even poisonous, e.g. *Cucumis zeyheri*. In his research on the edible wild plants of the Pedi, Quinn (1959) gave reports on 18 vegetable plants, 12 of which are found to be also eaten by the Vhavenda. With regard to the other six, it has been found that the Vhavenda eat other species of the same genera, probably because the species used by the Pedi do not grow in Venda, or have not been identified. In the same report it was also indicated that most of these plants or related species are also used as vegetables in other countries throughout the world, e.g. most of the Cucurbitaceae are found to be popular in India, North America, West Africa, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, southern Africa, *etc*. Gelfand *et al.* (1985) report that in Zimbabwe the consumption of *derere* (Venda: *delele* = *Corhorus tridens*) is forbidden for expectant women. All plants reported by Liengme (1981) as vegetables of the Tsonga of Gazankulu, *viz*. *Amaranthus thunbergii*, *Bidens pilosa*, *Corchorus tridens* and *C. confusus*, are used by the Vhavenda, except the last-mentioned.

During favourable rainy seasons some of the vegetable plants mentioned above are collected in abundance and the surplus is dried and stored for use during lean times. When simply dried in the form of leaves, the vegetable is known as *mutshovhotshovho*. Vegetables are sometimes cooked and moulded into small cakes which are dried and used as *mukusule*.

5.1.4 Condiments

With the exception of some soft-textured vegetables like *Corchorus tridens*, *Tragia* sp., *Pouzolzia mixta* and *Amaranthus thunbergii*, all other vegetables of the Vhavenda frequently need condiments to make them more palatable. The main condiments include peanuts (*Arachis hypogea*) and seed kernels of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* (*mufula*). The kernels and peanuts are called *thanga*. The kernels (seed) are crushed and ground into a pulp which is cooked with vegetables, or alone, to make a delicious savoury. A popular cooking oil is sometimes extracted from these seeds by heating and it is then stored for future use. In the northern and north-eastern regions of Venda the fruit pulp of *Trichilia dregeana* is cooked with vegetable leaves as a condiment.

An even wider use of *mufula* seed kernels is reported by Quinn (1959) in relation to Pedi food: the kernels are used as condiments not only in vegetable cooking, but also with dried kaffir-corn (*Andropogon sorghum*) stew to make *Tsholo le dikoko*. Liengme (1981) reports the use of *mufula* kernels as savoury by the Tsonga. They also use the kernels as a condiment in vegetables. The Tsonga are known to use peanuts as a condiment in chicken dishes, and there is no reason why they may not use *mufula* kernels as substitute, especially because they exchange these two condiments in vegetable cooking. Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962) report the use of seed kernels of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* as a condiment among the Zulu, Thonga and Pedi as well as in Madagascar. This is said to be very tasty, especially when cooked. The same source also reports the extraction of edible oil from the white fruit pulp of *Trichilia dregeana* in Gazaland. Condiments prepared from indigenous plants are rapidly replaced by the commercially available spices and cooking oils.

Salt is an ingredient of all vegetable dishes of the Vhavenda. This was originally obtained by evaporating salt water on rocks and potsherds. Ash was sometimes added to vegetables to expedite cooking, but this is now accomplished by the commercially available bicarbonate of soda.

5.1.5 Fruits and seeds as sources of food

As fruits of different species ripen at different times, the collection of any particular type of fruit is seasonal, and fruit collection takes place throughout the year. Most fruits are small and eaten in the veld by people of all ages, bringing home only a few for those who cannot go out and collect them. Some fruits require special expeditions from villages to the areas where they are available, especially those that grow on mountains. Three to four trips are undertaken each year to collect fruits of *Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum*, *Mimusops zeyheri*, *Syzygium legati*, *Strychnos pungens* and *Adansonia digitata*, to mention but a few. The collection of these fruits is normally a communal affair and almost every family in a village sends a member. This is one of the expeditions that usually include people of different peer groups. During these trips people try to collect as much as they can carry in bags, twenty litre tins, baskets or other containers. The purpose for collecting so much is to ensure that there would be enough for those who remained at home, including neighbours and relatives.

Consumption of some fruits, especially those of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* and those that are valued as famine foods, never takes place until the "first-fruit" ceremonies are performed at the chief's kraal. In some areas of Venda this practice remains to this day. During these ceremonies *mufula* beer is brewed and poured into sacred tombs and clay pots for the ancestral spirits to have their share of the newly ripened fruit. Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962) reports that the Tsonga also celebrate the feast of the first fruits by pouring the juice of *mufula* fruit on the tombs of deceased chiefs in the sacred wood.

Most fruits are eaten fresh, with milk or water, while others are dried and stored for future use. Among those that can be dried, some are pounded into powder and cooked as porridges or consumed as *mugumo*.

Seeds of a few species are valued as important sources of food. The seeds of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* are collected in large quantities during *mukumbi* beer making and stored until needed. Cattle, goats, sheep and pigs bring considerable numbers of *mufula* seeds into their enclosures and resting places. Wild animals also accumulate these seeds which are then easily collected. Children

crack the seeds and eat the kernels raw while guarding cattle and goats. Many of the seeds are cracked at home and the kernels (mainly the embryo) removed to be used as condiments or savoury. Seeds of *Berchemia discolor* are sometimes pounded together with fruit pulp and peel to make a powdered famine food known as *mugumo*. However, some people remove the seeds in the preparation of *mugumo*.

5.1.6 Nectar from flowers

Nectar is sucked or shaken from flowers of various plants. The most popular source of edible nectar is *Schotia brachypetala*, but nectar is also obtained from species of *Leonotis* and *Aloe*.

5.1.7 Beverages

Many types of beverages are made by the Vhavenda. Some are made from mealie meal, millet and sorghum, while others are brewed from fruits of indigenous plants.

a) Attractive beverages

The most popular non-intoxicating beverages of Vhavenda had, for a long time, been derived from boiled crops such as pumpkins (*khobvu*) and leaves of various vegetable plants. Some of those made from leaves of vegetable crops were sometimes taken for medicinal purposes. The introduction of sugar into the Vhavenda diet enabled them to make beverages from many other plants. For instance, leaves of *Grewia flava* and *Pappea capensis* are boiled and sugar added to make teas with pleasant flavours. Both the branches and leaves of *Athrixia phylicoides* are crushed and boiled. With sugar added, the tea produced is like the commercially available *'rooibos'* tea, but it is more yellowish. Roasted roots of *Boscia albitrunca* make a pleasantly flavoured tea with sugar. Most of these teas are rarely used today as a result of the readily available commercial tea and coffee.

b) Alcoholic beverages

Although most of the beverages of the Vhavenda are made from cultivated cereals, a few of those from indigenous plants warrant some attention. Alcoholic beverages are made to quench thirst (*Mabundu* and *tshikoko*), to entertain people at work parties, social, national and religious gatherings. There are beverages made specifically for ritual purposes (e.g. *mpambo*). Only those made from indigenous plants are briefly discussed below.

- *Mukumbi*

Mukumbi is a wine (or beer) made from the fruit juice of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*. The peel is removed during the process known as *u fhonda mafula* and the rest of the fruit is dropped into a large pot containing water. When the pot is full, the seeds with pulp are stirred, wrung and squeezed to leave as much of the juice in the water as possible. The seed with the remains of the pulp are then removed and given to children to suck as *govhole*.

The liquid is left to ferment for three to four days, depending on the weather. On the second day it is already slightly fermented and may be drunk as *tuvhu*, which is sweetish and much enjoyed by children, young men and women. The fully fermented wine is termed *mukumbi wa lutanda*, and is highly intoxicating.

Even though the making of *mukumbi* wine takes place throughout the ripening period, three stages are particularly important to the Vhavenda. These stages are marked by *mukumbi* presentations to the chiefs. The first offering is made when few of the fruits are ripe and only a little wine has been produced. This offering is termed *mulumo*. It is followed by *gulu* when the ripe fruit is abundant and large quantities of *mukumbi* are made. The offering brewed from the last fruit is termed *zwivhungu*. *Mukumbi* has recently entered the market as most people do not have time to collect the fruit and make their own.

Seeds accumulated during wine making are spread on rocks to dry out and then later used to make condiments.

The use of *mufula* fruits is reported among the Pedi (Quinn 1959) and by the Tsonga (Liengme 1981). According to Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962) the fruit of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* is used by "...the African in the Eastern Transvaal and Portugese East Africa for the brewing of beer and, in some districts of the latter, a potent spirit is distilled from it". These authors also noted that in Mozambique the fruit is used universally for the making of a "national" fermented beverage. They report that the fruit juice contains citric and malic acid, and that the fermented fruit juice when prepared by the Pedi contains 1,74% citric acid. The fruit contains 54mg vitamin C per 100g and 2.02% citric acid, while the fruit juice contains 2mg vitamin C per millilitre. They also noted that the juice is used in some Shangaan areas for religious ceremonies.

- *Mutshema* and *mulala*

Mutshema is made from *Phoenix reclinata* and *Hyphaene coriacea*. It is prepared by cutting off the stem, especially at the tip, and then collecting the sap which is allowed to drip into a container for a few days. The leaves of the plants are used as gutters to facilitate the flow of sap into the container until it is full. The sap is then taken home and left to ferment into an intoxicating beverage. When this practice was prohibited by law, the fermenting sap was moved out of the homesteads and hidden, in large pots, in the bushes until fully fermented. This beverage is not popular throughout Venda, but in areas where it is known and enjoyed it is also brewed for sale. Large scale brewing may affect a large proportion of the palm population.

- Other beverages

The Vhavenda, especially in the north and north-western regions, make a distilled spirit from the fruit of a plant known as *mutshato* (*Xanthocercis*

zambesiaca (Bak.) Dumaz-le-grand). The ripe fruit is soaked in water for a week or more until a large quantity of foam has formed. The fruit pulp is then separated from the seeds, which are removed. The resulting liquid is boiled in a large clay pot, the mouth of which is sealed. The evaporating alcohol is led out through a pipe which passes through a wooden trough (known as *mukoro*) containing cold water which is regularly changed. Nowadays half tires are used for this purpose. The condensate is collected at the other end of the pipe and is graded according to strength, from number one (strongest) to number three (diluted with water). The method of testing strength is by pouring a little into the fire and checking the colour and strength of the flame. It is reported that the strongest spirit can, and has been used, to run motor engines. The number one spirit is mixed with number three for consumption. With the introduction of sugar, the Vhavenda use the same apparatus to prepare the spirit called *thothotho* from sugar and malt.

Beverages are also made of other of fruits such as those of *Pappea capensis*, *Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum*, *Mimusops zeyheri* and *Parinari curatellifolia*, to mention but a few.

5.1.8 Nutritional adequacy of Vhavenda foods

Plant products are an indispensable source of food for any healthy population. A balanced diet should provide not only the quantity required, but also the necessary quality. It must supply energy foods, proteins, vitamins and minerals. The most important sources of energy are carbohydrates (sugars) as well as fats. Apart from supplying energy upon oxidation, proteins also supply the essential amino acids required to build the human body. Minerals and vitamins are needed for the various metabolic processes in the living cell.

The bulk of Vhavenda foods comprise porridges. These are cooked from meal basically obtained from the various cereals (mainly mealies) cultivated locally or imported from other countries and sold at local shops. Consequently their food is rich in carbohydrates. The incorporation of bread into the diet, although it is

usually used as substitute for porridge, has further increased the carbohydrate content of their food. All porridges are served with a relish of some kind, including meat, vegetables, edible insects and caterpillars of various kinds.

Even though the Vhavenda keep cattle, goats and sheep, these are rarely slaughtered for meat as they represent and protect the social status of the owners and are valued as a medium of exchange, payments of fines and apologies, marriage goods and thanksgiving to the chiefs. The most important food product from domestic animals is milk. Much of the meat used to be obtained by hunting and trapping game and birds. Venison, milk and insects, therefore, play an important role in providing the protein requirements of the diet, and probably supply most of the essential amino acids needed for the proper functioning and growth of the human body. As the Vhavenda did not keep fowls for security reasons, they depended on wild birds, particularly guinea- fowls, for eggs. The cultivation of various leguminous crops provides an important boost to the protein content of the carbohydrate-rich food and, in addition, they also supply considerable amounts of vitamins and vegetable oils.

Fresh vegetables and fruits are significant sources of vitamins and minerals that are frequently deficient in staple foods. For instance, the fruit of the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), has a very high calcium and vitamin C content, in addition to other minerals. Quinn (1959) analysed the wild vegetables and fruits of the Pedi, most of which are also regularly used by the Vhavenda, and found that they contain moderate amounts of protein, vitamin C and minerals. Condiments cooked with vegetables, as well as nuts and seed kernels eaten raw, are undoubtedly good sources of fats and oils in addition to proteins. This indicates that although the staple food of the Vhavenda is carbohydrate-rich, they always have some way of balancing their diet.

Civilization and the western way of living have brought many changes in the dietary patterns of the Vhavenda. The nature conservation code that has recently been introduced, is such that hunting and trapping of wild game is strictly prohibited and collection of insects is not particularly encouraged. Population explosion, industrialization, migrant labour and civil employment appear to have resulted in diminished arable and non-arable lands, little time for the gathering of wild

vegetables and fruits, and many other changes in the economic structure. Consequently, most families now depend on the food supplied by the local shop and, therefore, on food made in factories.

When money determines the nutritional status of any family unit, it becomes important to realize the effect of unemployment and underemployment on the provision of a balanced diet. This is particularly important when one realizes that the children who used to make substantial contributions to the economic position of their families, now spend much of their time at school in preparation for future employment, and that most of their parents, who should keep them at school and provide food, are not educated enough to secure any sound employment. Furthermore, the social structure has become such that the parents can not spend enough time with their children to pass on their knowledge about edible plants and their preparation. As a result, the young rather tend to withdraw from the natural environment and natural resources, despite the introduction of improved education dealing with the natural environment and its resources.

5.2 OILS, POLISHES AND DYES

Even though the Vhavenda mostly use animal fat, they still need vegetable oils for certain purposes. A considerable proportion of vegetable oil is obtained from seeds of plants. Apart from being used in cooking, the oil obtained from the seed kernels of *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* has for long also been used as an important skin emollient. Similarly the oily pulp of the fruit of *Trichilia dregeana* was used to smear over the body.

Oil extracted from seed kernels of *Ximenia caffra* and *X. americana* was preferred for making *mudo*, used to polish leather clothes, especially those called *zwirivha*, to keep them soft and give them a black colour. *Mudo* is prepared by burning the seeds and then grinding them into a black polish with a characteristic smell. Although *mudo* is not particularly pleasant smelling, its smell was still preferred because of the belief that it repels wild animals and thus keep them away from women when they go out to collect wood and vegetables in the veld.

All leather clothes worn by women should be made from hides of domestic animals, and it was for this reason that they had to be polishied with *mudo* to hide the smell which would otherwise attract beasts of prey. *Mudo* polishes are also made from seeds of *Cryptocarya liebertiana* (Netshiungani et al. 1981), *Ricinus communis*, *Trichilia dregeana* and other plants for the same purpose, as well as for furniture polish. The oil of *Ricinus communis* was, and still is, extracted particularly for use as a medium for mixing medicines, especially powdered and magical ones. This oil is also an important purgative and an ingredient of ear drops.

Dyes for giving colour to articles made from fibre, grass culms and reeds are obtained from barks, stems and leaves of indigenous plants. The use of certain plants as sources of dyes depends on availability, colour preference and knowledge of plants. *Indigofera erecta* is the most popular source of dye in the Vhuphani area, giving light blue, blue, purple and brown colours to articles, depending on how long they are boiled or soaked. In the Niani area most articles are decorated with red colours through the use of the bark of *Berchemia discolor*. *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra* is popular for its reddish to dark brown colours on articles in the Vhulafuri region of Venda. Many other plants are used for dyes depending on their availability and previous experience. All articles to be dyed must either be soaked or boiled for a certain period with the source of the dye. In order to get a black colour, the articles, or especially the materials from which they are made must be burnt or soaked in mud for long periods.

5.3 UTILIZATION OF PLANTS FOR MEDICINE AND MAGIC

From the evidence presented in this thesis it is clear that one of the most important uses of indigenous plants is in medicine. Many of the medicines used by the Vhavenda are either plant parts or their products, used for both medicinal and magical treatments.

Medicinal treatment here refers to the direct and empirical application of medicine to treat a particular disease with clearly observable or detectable symptoms, when the success of the treatment is being attributed totally to the effects of the medicine used.

Magical practice on the other hand, deals with treatment matters related to, or suspected to be caused by, supernatural forces such as witchcraft, sorcery or ancestral curses. This involves the use of medicines and ritual cults in the treatment of a person, family, nation or a property, to ward off, neutralize, remove or protect against the effects of such forces. There is, however, no clear distinction between the two, as medicines used for one may be similarly used in connection with the other.

5.3.1 History and theories of origin of traditional medicine

The age of traditional medicine is quite difficult to determine, especially in Africa, where there are no written records. The practice of medicine and magic among the Vhavenda is probably as old as their culture. Their history clearly illustrates that traditional medicinal practice and magic were more alive, being an important guiding factor in the development of culture, in the past than at present. The continued existence and survival of the Vhavenda as a nation is seen to have depended on the active and loyal role of medicinal practitioners and magicians who, apart from maintaining good health and peaceful co-existence within the nation by supplying their effective medicines and discouraging evil deeds, also protected the nation and their land against invaders. They are thought to have influenced rainfall, doctored the land and soldiers and made formidable magical weapons such as the sacred drum, *ngomalungundu*, and the different flutes which protected large and smaller groups in their hunting, trade and war missions throughout Africa. Folk tales of the Vhavenda confirm the role of medicine and magic in the daily life of their past.

Records of traditional medicine date as far back as between 2730 and 3000 B.C. (Sofowora 1982). It is not clearly understood how traditional medicine originated. Scholars and traditional practitioners have advanced some theories in an attempt to clarify this mystery. Some of the theories are briefly discussed here:

a) The information was communicated to some individuals by gods

This is the view maintained by some traditional practitioners who claim that their ancestors visit them while in a trance and show them their clients, complaints, causes and treatments needed. Others claim to get the information in dreams or visions. This involves "seeing" a plant that may be known or unknown and then learning about its use. Sometimes the practitioner is shown the plant without being told how and for what purpose it should be used. In such cases he will simply collect the medicine (mostly leaves) from the plant, or make a note of it, and wait to be told about its use. This is probably why traditional practitioners find it necessary to use certain drugs that will help them dream about medicines (Letsoalo & Motimele, personal communication).

In one case a baby boy who was very ill, was hospitalized at Siloam Hospital. One night his mother dreamt about her suffering baby. In the dream she noticed three very old women, one of whom was her grandmother, collecting bark from *Maerua angolensis*. The bark was pounded, mixed with some other medicine and then roasted in a potsherd. While she was still wondering what they intend to do with the medicine, they disappeared, leaving the medicine over the fire. The dream worried her so much that she decided to ask for the discharge of her son from the hospital. On arrival home she consulted a traditional practitioner who divined and advised her to go to another practitioner, an old woman for the treatment of the baby. She noticed that this plant was used with another mixture which she could not recognize, and the baby recovered.

Traditional practitioners also claim that some information on herbal cures is obtained from witches who offer to give it in exchange for not being exposed when detected in their evil acts (Sofowora 1982).

b) Knowledge on herbal cures was gained by chance

As early man was very close to nature, living in daily contact with plants and animals of the forest, hills and valleys which were his inescapable home and source of food and medicine, he was sensitive to the behaviour of animals and the properties and powers of plants. "By copying from animals, man soon learned how to use nature's healing powers for himself" (Thomson 1978).

Among Venda traditional practitioners there are some who, in their search for herbal cures, test the effects of plants known to be browsed by animals by ingesting their parts (Ratshitanga, personal communication). This originates from the view that some animals e.g. the porcupine, feed only on plants that are medicinally important, and that certain animals resort to eating parts of certain plants when injured or ill. Discovery by chance could also have come as a result of curiosity or hunger. It is probable that during periods of food scarcity, man could be forced to taste a number of plants which he normally would not touch, particularly their fruits and seeds, in an attempt to relieve hunger. Some of these plants would prove to be edible, others toxic with fatal effects, while few others would have comforting and remedial effects. Of the plants tasted and found to have medicinal powers, some could be used again to produce healing effects in times of disease. Those people with sufficient knowledge of plants with medicinal powers would then help others (at first for free and later for a fee) and acquire the status of traditional practitioners.

c) The doctrine of signatures

Later when man became sophisticated in his approach, he would look for special features in plants, such as shapes, colours and flavours, which bear resemblance to human organs and behaviour -- heart-shaped leaves for treatment of heart diseases, plants with reddish sap for blood diseases. This doctrine was first postulated by Paracelsus (1490--1541). He believed not only that plants were put on earth for man's use, but also that many of those plants not obviously valuable for food, were stamped by the Creator with a

clear sign or signature, indicating their use (Thomson 1978, Sofowora 1982). Even while adhering literally to this doctrine of signatures, "human beings by trial and error accumulated a vast store of medical knowledge based on their own observations and, above all, their experience" (Thomson 1978). Therefore, from observing the behaviour of animals, from the shapes and aroma of plants, and finally from empirical evidence, man learned how plants could be of service to him not only as food, but also to keep him in sound health.

Whatever the origin, the interest in and progress of knowledge about curative plant products were relentless, and gave birth to the various traditional and modern systems of medicine encountered throughout the world today. The manufacture and marketing of medicine remains a major industry.

5.3.2. Trends in Vhavenda traditional medicinal practice

a) The concept of disease

A patient is regarded as suffering from a "normal" or natural disease if he shows familiar symptoms which can be treated with remedies that are popularly known as active against complications. Injury and diseases such as, colds, fevers, whooping cough, diarrhoea, measles, venereal diseases are considered to be natural. The treatment of natural or "normal" diseases is purely medicinal. However, anyone of the conditions mentioned can be associated with "abnormal" or supernatural diseases if it fails to respond to popular treatments as expected. Such abnormal illnesses are believed to be a result of witchcraft, sorcery or ancestral curses. For example, it is commonly believed among the Vhavenda that a person could be bewitched in such a way that he would be involved in an accident and get injured or killed (a process known as *u livhanya*). The treatment of "abnormal" diseases is both medicinal and magical.

As already mentioned, magical treatments involve an initial ritual purification to remove or neutralize the effects of the supernatural force,

followed by medicinal treatment of the physical symptoms. Traditional practitioners usually try to ascertain the type of disease by divining for every patient. For ancestral curses a ritual ceremony attended by all kin-group members must be performed to communicate with the ancestors. During the ceremony the patient is possessed by the ancestral spirit to become a *mudzimu* or *mukalanga* who speaks *tshikalanga*, a language which is closely related to the present Shona of Zimbabwe. Elderly people gather around her (normally only women become possessed) to ask about his or her name (the *mudzimu*), the ancestral complaint, and what action would appease them and thereby save the patient. The end of the ritual ceremony should normally mark the beginning of a rapid recovery of the patient. It always requires a diviner to determine whether the illness is magically caused or is a result of ancestral complaints.

b) Collection of plant remedies

Even though most medicinal plants are collected and used throughout the year, certain types are left aside for collection at specified periods of the year. These include most of those medicines that are needed for magical uses. Medicines used magically for treatment of persons, homesteads, livestock and agricultural fields are normally collected during winter. There are a number of reasons for this seasonality of collection. It is believed that certain medicines cause heavy lightning sounds in the area if collected during summer and that this may encourage more lightning strikes, especially at the homestead where they are stored. Examples of such medicines are the roots of *Salacia rehmannii* and *Capparis tomentosa*. Winter collection co-incides with the period of resting, celebrations, immigrations and emigrations, building of new homes and renovation of old ones, visits to relatives and friends, and many other activities that are only possible when people are temporarily free from agricultural tasks. It is also the period of abundant food after harvesting. Traditional practitioners confirm that most medicinal plants are past the period of vigorous growth and are "hardened and matured" in winter. Traditional practitioners also have enough time to wander about and collect the medicines they need when they are free from agricultural activities.

Some medicines are collected only during the night, because the collector has to be be naked during collection and should perform certain rituals to avoid nightmares and misfortunes.

Medicines may be collected anywhere except on other peoples premises, i.e. their homesteads and fields. As everybody "doctors" his premises, it is believed that plants growing in and around them have been affected by his *phamba* and may not work properly for others, unless they are given some treatment to remove such effects. If a person has to collect medicines from other territories or homelands, he must first get permission from the relevant headman or chief, who will give him some of his people to accompany and protect him against possible tribal victimisation, show him where to find his medicines, make sure that he collects properly and not too much, and ascertain that he is not a spy sent to inspect the country. It is customary that the collector takes something to the headman or chief as a form of thanksgiving.

The part of the plant used varies from one species to another, from practitioner to practitioner, and depends on the nature and state of disease, but there are general tendencies. In the case of trees and shrubs the stem and root bark are mostly used, whereas leaves, flowers and fruits are less frequently needed. For herbs and grasses it is common practice to use the whole plant including roots, leaves and stems as well as flowers and fruits if present. Depending on the factors mentioned above, leaves, stems, roots or flowers may be used alone or in combination.

Venda traditional practitioners stress the need to avoid killing the plants from which the medicines are obtained. They believe that if a person kills the plant as a result of collecting medicine from it, the medicine would kill the patient instead of healing him. Leaving the rooting parts exposed after obtaining medicine from the plant is strictly forbidden. This is said to leave the plant dying of exposure of these parts which may then cause the death of the patient treated. As a result of this belief the roots of the plant from which the medicines have been obtained are always left covered with soil. Another reason for this is the belief that jealous persons, who may have

seen the collector taking medicines from the plant, may bewitch it in such a way that his medicines would not work effectively.

It is common practice when collecting bark medicine from stems of trees, that pieces from opposite sides of the trunk be obtained, i.e. east and west or south and north, *etc*. The reason given for this is the fact that the wind which carries all the healing magic from all parts of the globe, does not blow from one direction only. This normally results in removal of bark all around the stem when the plant is close to the village and within reach, especially when only a few trees are found in the area. Collection of roots is confined to the horizontally growing ones, probably because removal of these roots normally does not kill the source of the medicine. The treatment of some diseases may specifically require that only those roots that grow across footpaths be used.

c) Preparation and application of plant medicines

A determined and responsible practitioner has the duty not only to know the plants used to treat diseases, but also to know where to find them, how to collect them as well as the way in which they should be processed for use. It is also important that he or she should be able to understand and practice the safest possible applications of the medicines, giving the patient the correct dosage at the right time. One should also enjoy an appreciable degree of flexibility when it comes to combination of drugs, diluting and choosing alternatives.

The method of preparation and administration of any one drug depends on the plant used, the part collected, disease to be treated and on the practitioner's experience. Some methods are quick, simple and straightforward, while others, especially those related to some cultural, religious or superstitious practices, are more complicated. Some of the most popular ones are given below.

- Chewing:

This method is usually important in emergency cases such as when the patient has swallowed a poison and needs to vomit it, or when he is still waiting for treatment and his pain has to be stopped or minimized. The resulting juice is commonly swallowed, but for a few medicines it is spat onto the palms of the hands and rubbed over a painful part of the body. For children who cannot chew, the mothers usually chew for them and spit the resulting juice into their mouths.

- Crushing and sniffing:

This method is common for leaves and soft succulent stems, especially those with strong aromatic flavours. It is mostly used for colds and related chest complaints. Crushed medicines may also be soaked and used as a pressing or dressing on wounds, burns, bruises and sprains. The infusion resulting from soaking may be drunk.

- Dry pounding:

This method is particularly convenient for those medicines that should be used or stored in powder form. Powdered medicines may be mixed with animal fat or vegetable oils and be used as skin ointments, dressings on inflammatious wounds, contusions, and incisions cut on the skin. Ointments find many applications in external use and are particularly suitable for smearing on hut poles, doors, gate poles and magical sticks in the doctoring of homesteads and other property. Powdered medicines may be swallowed with saliva, soaked or boiled in water and drunk, sprinkled over soft porridge or taken in urine or beer. The use of powdered medicines for herbal baths is quite common among the Vhavenda. Some magical powders are just blown away to the accompaniment of incantations to have them register certain magical effects at a distance. Others are tied in cloths and attached to a girdle, necklace or anklet and carried along as a charm. Certain powders are burnt around homesteads or business sites to drive away evil spirits or attract customers.

- Soaking:

Soaked medicines are usually crushed or powdered first. The resulting infusion may be taken orally for internal complaints, e.g, as an emetic or mouthwash for toothache. Some of the soaked medicines are used as enemas or for external applications against burns, bruises and wounds, or as herbal baths for ritual purifications. Infusions are generally also used to prepare soft porridges and as eye or ear drops.

- Burning:

Burning is a popular method of preparation for those medicines in which only the ash is needed. The resulting black powder or ash is usually mixed with fat for external application, or licked for internal treatments.

- Heating and roasting:

These methods are common in the preparation of poultices from succulent herbs. Such medicines are prepared mostly for external use on sprained joints, inflammations, bruises and for backache.

- Fumigation:

Dried medicines (leaves or stems) are frequently burnt in the treatment of diseases, especially fevers, colds and related chest complaints. The plant portions are placed on hot coals and the patient is covered in a blanket to inhale the smoke. Fumigations are also used for external treatments where the affected parts are exposed to the smoke or heat. Adults usually smoke some of these medicines wrapped in paper like tobacco. Fresh leaves of aromatic plants are often boiled and the patient is covered in a blanket to inhale the resulting steam. These two forms of treatment are also used for external treatments of rheumatism, skin problems, general body pains, and ulcers. The water used for steaming may be used as pressings over such areas while still hot (hydrotherapy) or the decoction drunk thereafter.

- Boiling:

Barks, leaves and roots are commonly boiled to produce decoctions which are either taken orally or used for external applications. The resulting decoction is frequently used to cook soft porridge and gruel.

It is interesting to note that the different methods of preparation of drugs employed by the Vhavenda are basically similar to those encountered in traditional medicinal practice in other parts of the world. Kokwaro (1974), Sofowora (1982), Watt & Breyer-Brandwijk (1962), Gelfand *et al.* (1985) and Arnold & Gulumian (1984), in their studies on African medicinal plants, described methods of preparation that display great uniformity all over the continent. It would appear that each method of preparation has, through experience, been found suited to the extraction of the active principles in desired proportions and chemical forms in relation to the treatments for which they are needed. This is particularly important with drugs that may become toxic or ineffective when improper methods are used.

d) Combinations of drugs

Medicines used in Venda traditional medicine are generally compounded for effective or multiple treatment, the proportions differing from practitioner to practitioner and from treatment to treatment. In general, the combinations include the main remedies that are known to be effective for the treatment. More often an adjuvant is added to complement or enhance the treatment. It is also common practice to include other substances, the corrigents, to improve the flavour, appearance or palatability. Some ingredients are included for the sole purpose of minimizing the side effects associated with a treatment. There are practitioners who sometimes mix drugs because they are uncertain about the most effective ingredients. This is normally the case with those mixtures that have simply been inherited from older generations, who also had little knowldge of the main remedies, or did not inform their successors properly. In case of diseases caused by supernatural forces, some

of the medicines may be included to deal with the effects of witchcraft, sorcery or ancestral curses, while others are for the physical symptoms. It is also believed that some practitioners mix medicines with the purpose of concealing the identity of the main remedies. In such cases it is reported that they may mix the effective medicines with leaves, fruits or burnt grass, all of which are known to be edible with no serious side effects. No evidence has been found to support mixing of drugs or inclusion of accessory substances to improve the keeping qualities of drugs.

Water, fats, oils and milk are important mediums in the mixing of drugs. Mixing may involve boiling, soaking, burning or roasting medicines together. Edible medicines are generally mixed separately from nonedible ones and the two kinds may also need to be mixed on different days. A ready made mixture is known as *thevhele*, *phamba* or *luṋanga*, the last two names being more often applied to magical mixtures than to medicinal ones.

e) Dosage

In Venda medicinal practice, the dosage is generally a matter of personal judgment and experience. The quantity of any medicine used at a time is normally arbitrarily determined by indicating the minimum and maximum limits for effective and safe use, and may be influenced by the type and state of disease. The medicines are mostly measured as, for example, a pinch using two fingers, a handful, or stating the amount as filling a standardized and popular container. The patient also receives instructions to take the crudely stipulated quantity either once, twice or three times a day, usually before meals. As modern medicinal practice becomes popular, traditional practitioners are starting to use spoons, teaspoons and cups as measuring units.

f) Storage of drugs

Medicines used by practitioners are collected from far and near, and it may take a few minutes, days or even years to bring all the required medicines together. Leaves, flowers, bark or branches may be collected from the veld

and brought home for treatment or further processing. Dedicated and established practitioners normally have separate huts for storage and preparation of their drugs. Such huts may also be used for consultations and treatment of patients. Medicines awaiting further processing such as those that must first be dried, and readily prepared ones are all kept in this hut, which is normally placed at a distance from all the others.

Most Venda practitioners maintain that for quick drying, medicines should not be exposed to direct sunlight. They believe that the medicinal powers of the plant are destroyed by heat and exposure to wind. In some cases drying medicines are covered even though they are inside the hut. Medicines should also not be left outside for drying when there is nobody to guard them against others who may bewitch the material. During storage inside the hut edible medicines must be kept at a distance from the nonedible ones because "they may absorb the poisonous or harmful properties from them". Those medicines that are stored in powder form are usually kept in pouches made from hides of a variety of animals. For the edible ones the pouch must be made from the hide of an animal that is eaten by people, while for the nonedible the pouch may be made from any other animal. Some magical powders are stored strictly in pouches made from hides of specific animals. Otherwise, it is believed they may lose their powers to such an extent that they may become dangerous to the owner. Containers made from wood, gourds, clay and iron as well as horns of small and large stock are also widely used. Nowadays there is a tendency to keep medicines in bottles of various sizes as they become readily and freely available.

Some medicines such as bark, roots or leaves are left unprocessed until needed, while others are processed immediately and stored in powder form. Venda medicines are rarely stored in liquid form, probably because they become fermented if they remain dissolved for too long. A few, however, are gathered from the surrounding area and used fresh.

Stored medicines are identified by their colour, flavour, texture and positions on the racks. It must also be appreciated that no information regarding their identification, collection, preparation and application as well

as storage properties is recorded anywhere and that the practitioner carries the responsibility of remembering everything. Such information is once again transferred verbally from one practitioner to the other and from generation to generation. This verbal transmission of medical information may present problems when the practitioner becomes too old to cope, or dies before passing all the necessary information to a young and able person.

g) The doctrine of signatures in Venda traditional medicine
(see also 5.3.1 c)

The following examples illustrate the possible contribution of the doctrine of signatures towards the development of Venda traditional medicine:

- Plants containing a milky latex are frequently used to promote lactation in humans and domestic animals, e.g. *Sarcostemma viminale*, *Ficus* spp.

- Owing to its profuse flowering, *Dombeya rotundifolia* is included as an ingredient in medicines used to promote fertility in humans. The same appears to be the case with most other plants that produce abundant fruit, e.g. *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*.

- Those plants that have a reddish sap or or give a reddish decoction when boiled are found to be commonly used for blood diseases, e.g. *Pterocarpus angolensis*, *Cassine transvaalensis* are used as remedies against dysmenorrhoea, menorrhagia, dysentery, piles (haemorrhoids) and related diseases.

- Plants with sharp-pointed thorns are medicines for pricking pains, e.g. *Ziziphus mucronata*, *Acacia* spp.

- There is a common belief that plants with few or very thin horizontally growing roots when compared to those growing straight downwards, are medicines for stomach troubles e.g. *Artabotrys monteiroae* and some *Acacia* spp.

- Climbers and other small, soft and thin-stemmed plants are mostly used as medicines for children, while large trees and shrubs are used for adults, e.g. *Sphedamnocarpus pruriens*, *Asparagus* spp. and *Hermannia glanduligera* are used as medicines for children and rarely for adults.

- The bark of the baobab tree, *Adansonia digitata*, is soaked, and the infusion used to bathe babies to promote growth, particularly to increase their weight. This is because the plant has a very thick trunk and the bark is as smooth as a human skin when observed from a distance.

- Plants bearing drupes and berries are generally considered to be effective medicines against ulcers, e.g. *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*, *Cassine transvaalensis*, *C. aethiopica* and *Solanum incanum*.

- Owing to its regeneration capacity when the bark is damaged, the *mufula* (*Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*) is used to treat open wounds.

- The use of *Myrothamnus flabellifolius* in the treatment of epileptic fits is related to its resurrection capacity.

- Plants with multiple longitudinal ribs on their stems are used as panaceas and are termed *mizwilaminzhi* (many paths) to refer to their many uses in medicine, e.g. *Grewia occidentalis* and *Euphorbia ingens*.

- The roots of *Hermannia glanduligera* have a network of spiral thickenings and for this reason the infusion of the roots is used to bathe babies who, as a result of poor health, develop a similar network of dilated veins over their bodies, especially on the abdominal part.

- The bark of *Combretum hereroense* is covered by reddish fibres which form a network resembling the capillary network around an animal heart. It is probably for this reason that the plant is used for heart diseases.

When related to animal behaviour, the doctrine of signatures appears to be associated with magical practices. For instance, burrowing rodents such as moles are used to treat cancerous ulcers that spread from one part of the body to another, e.g. the ulcers that are commonly known as *pfuko*, which means *a mole*, and are suspected to be caused by witchcraft.

It is not clear how this apparent relationship between Venda medicine and the doctrine of signatures developed. It is also possible that after realizing the medicinal uses of some plants and animals, people might have tried to explain why such plants are effective, and then came up with this doctrine. This may be particularly true in view of the fact that most of the medicines used in this way are too effective against the diseases for which they are used, to have been discovered as a result of speculation only. It is possible that both approaches might have been used, one involving the discovery of a medicine and then a search for plants with similar features to be tried for the same disease, and the other one involving the observation of certain structures in the plants that resemble human organs or behaviour. A deductive/inductive approach to the development of this doctrine may possibly give a better explanation.

5.3.3 The future of Venda traditional medicine

While Venda medicine, and traditional medicine in general, has served the African population, without much complaint and competition, for many centuries before the advent of modern medicine, it appears that much effort is now required to have it introduced into the existing formal health structures. The biggest problem appears to be the recognition and proper registration of traditional practitioners by the various departments of health in most countries, especially those that are based on Christian doctrines. The most important stumbling block is probably the intimate relationship that exists between traditional medicine and the religious and magical beliefs of the people, although this is rarely pointed out. It would appear that modern medicine can use this important feature of traditional practice as one of the reasons why the two approaches cannot be reconciled and combined to work as one all-inclusive medical organization. A number of disadvantages related to

traditional medicine have been pointed out by some scientists and the proponents of modern medicine as the only reason for the world population health problems. Some of these are as follows:

a) Traditional medicine lacks scientific proof of efficacy:

This should, of course, be expected in a population with an underdeveloped technology. The lack of scientific proof, however, does not necessarily mean that the medicines used are not valuable, but only that much scientific work is needed to expand the field of medicine.

b) The techniques of diagnosis are imprecise:

Even though traditional practitioners use divination to determine health problems, in most cases they also use normal observable symptoms to diagnose their patients' problems. Generally divination is used to ensure that supernatural forces are not involved. This plays an important social role among Africans as witchcraft and ancestral curses are always suspected. In most cases the medicines used by traditional healers are compounded to fight against all known causes of the symptoms observed, and here the imprecise nature of diagnosis may play a minor role.

c) Imprecise dosage

This is one common feature of traditional medicine. According to Sofowora (1982), the absence of exactness of doses in traditional medicine is not very critical as the concentration of active principles in a potion is usually very small and large volumes must be taken to obtain any response. The lack of prescriptions related to the patient's age, weight and condition of illness has also been pointed out. This is not always true as traditional practitioners do specify doses for adults and for children. In such cases they also use different plants for the same diseases in children and adults. Dilution is used as one method of prescription that differentiates between strong patients and those weakened by serious conditions. This, however, does not mean that

dosage in traditional medicinal practice is acceptable according to civilized standards, and standardization is required in this regard.

d) Lack of hygiene

The fact that most practices in traditional medicine look unhygienic should be seen as a result of a comparison between traditional and modern medical standards. This can, however, be improved through retraining programmes.

e) Intangibility

The intangible aspects of traditional medicine such as occult practices, magic and beliefs in witchcraft and ancestral spirits cannot be verified scientifically, and are therefore regarded with suspicion by modern practitioners. This, however, does not seem very different from praying for the rapid recovery of a patient under treatment.

Apart from these and other disadvantages, it is a fact that traditional medicine also has a number of advantages, perhaps even more than the disadvantages, and still serves the greater proportion of the African population for the following reasons:

a) Traditional medicine is cheaper compared to modern medicine. In a country with rising figures of unemployment, underemployment and inflation, it is more economical to go for cheaper treatment if the results are the same or comparable. Traditional practitioners normally allow for treatment on credit, leaving it to the patient to pay when able to do so. Also local patients are sometimes treated free of charge out of good neighbourliness. One reason for cheap treatment might be that most medicines are obtained locally and at very little, if any, cost.

b) Traditional medicine is more accessible to most of the population in the Third World. Sofowora (1982) estimates that 60 to 85 % of the population in every country of the developing world has to rely on traditional or indigenous forms of medicine. This is possibly due to shortage of formal health

institutions and professional staff. The cost of transport to these institutions may also be contributory.

c) Traditional medicine is widely accepted among the African population. According to Sofowora (1982), a major contributory factor may be that traditional medicine is deeply rooted, and blends readily into the sociocultural life of the African people. In this respect he gives examples of people in Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia, who consult traditional healers as a first choice despite the fact that they live very close to hospitals. In addition to the high cost of modern medical treatment which keeps most people away, there are those who believe that certain types of diseases can only be treated successfully only by traditional practitioners and are reluctant to consult modern practitioners, especially with regard to those diseases suspected to be caused by witchcraft and ancestral spirits, e.g. insanity, *ṅwatela*, *pfuko* and *tshiliso*. Despite the recent introduction of antibiotic treatments for most sexually transmitted conditions such as venereal disease, most people still believe that the treatment only suppresses the symptoms and does not heal the disease completely. This is the reason why most people prefer to receive traditional treatment for these diseases, even though they may first go for antibiotic treatment.

Another reason, it is claimed, is that modern practitioners normally do not wish to inform their patients about the result of their diagnosis, the prognosis and implications of further treatment or the side effects related to the treatment. While this is not true for most practitioners, it remains a strict rule in most hospitals that patients and their relatives are not allowed to read their bed charts (medical files), let alone ask about the diagnosis and nature of treatment.

d) Traditional practitioners may play an important role as sources of additional manpower and expertise. This may, of course, require that they be trained to meet the required standards in simple hygiene, general health care concepts, health education (including nutrition), environmental sanitation, epidemic diseases, emergencies and referrals, record-keeping, and general diagnostic techniques.

e) Traditional medicine is a potential source of new drugs. This source can be used in the synthesis of known drugs or a direct inexpensive source of these drugs. Research on the medicines used by traditional practitioners may result in the discovery of new drugs for treating such diseases as diabetes, cancer and AIDS. There is great fear at present that if AIDS is allowed to spread, it may exterminate the human population. Some practitioners in Uganda recently came forward with a mixture of herbs that is reported to show improvement in the treatment of AIDS (Sunday Times, 4 October 1987, p. 4).

f) The red tape associated with consulting a modern practitioner involves two queues for registration and payment of fees, a queue for a nurse to take disease history (including blood pressure, temperature and weight), one more to see a doctor, and possibly another one for diagnostic tests (including urine tests, X-ray if necessary), coming back for a prescription and lastly a queue to the dispensary. Even though a traditional practitioner may have more than one patient at a time, this may happen only once in a while. Consulting a practitioner of traditional medicine may also take a whole day, but this time is spent while giving his patient treatments which he feels should be done by himself, such as emetics, enemas or applications of medicines through incisions made on the body. The patient may have to wait for a traditional practitioner to go out and collect some of those medicines that must be used fresh, but normally this does not take long as they are mostly obtained in close proximity to his homestead.

g) Some parasites and micro-organisms are known to develop resistance to synthetic chemotherapeutic agents, e.g. strains of malaria parasites (*Plasmodium falciparum* or *P. vivax*) develop resistance to chloroquine, whereas some micro-organisms develop resistance to antibiotics. No resistance is known to develop as a result of treatment by traditional medicines, but this may be due to the fact that traditional practitioners do not keep medical files or records. It is also possible that traditional medicines may provide a solution to this problem as a result of their multicomponent nature.

The above account clearly indicates that neither of the two approaches is without its shortcomings. It is also evident that traditional medicine, like modern medicines, is in need of extensive scientific study. Such a study should demand that effective and appropriate approaches be sought that would lead to the development of suitable methods of research aimed at providing maximum utilization of the positive aspects of traditional medicine, and the removal of negative and irrelevant ones. All such approaches will necessarily require that traditional drugs be standardized. Sofowora (1982) points out that the problem of standardizing a crude drug preparation is not only that of specifying the amount of the medicine to be taken by the patient, but also that all stages leading to the preparation and application of the drug should be standardized. The following are some of those many aspects that should be considered in the process of standarization:

a) Identification and collection of the plants:

Firstly, the correct plant must be collected. This is particularly important in Venda and other medicinal systems where one finds that there are many plants with the same common name or where one plant may be known by several such names. The lack of recorded data about the plants used and their names adds to the confusion that may arise during collection. Secondly, the right part of the plant must be collected as for most plants there is a difference in the availability or concentration of active ingredients in different parts of the plant. For instance, the collection of roots where leaves should be used may result in negative, toxic or indifferent effects. Thirdly, the drug must be collected at the appropriate season as the active compounds of some plants vary from one season to another. The same also applies to the developmental stage of the plant. The yield of plant constituents may even vary within the 24 hour period of the day, generally as a result of the interconversion of compounds. Some plant drugs must be obtained during the night, while others must be taken in bright sunlight, e.g. *Eupatorium odoratum* loses its oil content in bright sunlight, but regains it from sunset to midnight (Sofowora 1982).

b) Post-harvest processing:

It is important that the keeping qualities of the plants are studied as there are plants in which the constituents rapidly deteriorate soon after harvesting. Deterioration may be a result of enzyme activity, volatilization or attacks by moulds during damp storage, for example. Quick drying is suggested where enzyme action and mould attacks are not desired (Sofowora 1982). Harvested drugs must also be stored in such a way that, when dried, they remain dry and the storage period must be kept to a minimum.

c) Preparation of galenicals:

This may also pose problems when no standardized method of preparation exists. It may not only lead to varying results every time a new drug must be prepared, but an incorrect method may also produce ineffective or toxic results.

d) Appropriate containers must be used:

The stored drug must be prevented from interacting with its container, just as with atmospheric gases, moisture or any other substances. It is only when these factors are considered that dosage can be standardized.

The study of traditional medicines will necessarily require that a comprehensive vocabulary be compiled involving the terminology associated with names of diseases, descriptions of symptoms and treatments, and names of plants used. This can make the interpretation of diseases, associated diagnostic principles and treatments easier before the necessary plants are subjected to scientific research.

Scientific research may take various forms. One of these is the screening of plants for bioactive agents. This involves biological screening (i.e. searching for the physiological effect which a plant or extract may produce) and phytochemical screening (i.e. searching for the active compound). According to Sofowora (1982)

these approaches have one problem in common, namely selection of material to be screened, otherwise known as sampling. Various sampling and screening procedures have been discussed elsewhere and are not repeated here (Sofowora 1982). Kokwaro (1976) gives guidelines on the chemical constituents of plants as well their possible medicinal effects. A very brief summary of these are given below.

a) Fats and oils

Fixed oils are good as emollients and ointment bases and are common in species of *Annona*, *Balanites* and *Trichilia*. Unsaturated fatty acids which are not readily absorbed or digested, are common in *Ricinus communis* and species of *Croton*, the seeds of which are used as mild or strong purgatives. Oils of both the latter species contain toxalbumins which must be destroyed by heat before use. Species of *Ximenia* contain cathartic fixed oils.

Essential oils can regulate the intestinal movement, preventing or controlling violent contractions and aiding the orderly flow of bowel content. Plants with these oils are, therefore, widely used as condiments with food and also to relieve colicky pain. Many essential oils have the power to hinder bacterial growth and are, therefore, generally used for treating wound infections. Species of *Chenopodium* (widely used as a vegetable) have oils that are less well absorbed and were reported to be remedies for roundworm and hookworms (vermifuges).

Sulphur oils are found in species of *Boscia*, *Capparis*, *Cleome*, *Capsicum*, *Salvadora* and some members of the Brassicaceae. Plants containing them can be good as carminatives in small doses and emetics in large doses.

b) Resins

The majority of resins are extremely irritating and cause vomiting and purging if taken in large doses, e.g. gum resins found in species of *Boswellia* and *Commiphora*. Many resins resemble the essential oils in their drug

activities, e.g. species of *Piper* and *Zingiber* (used as carminatives), and *Albizia* and *Zanthoxylum* (used as medicines for the urinary tract). Purgative resins found in species of *Ipomoea* are considered very effective. It is also reported that the adhesive quality of resins gives them value as wound-dressing materials.

c) Glucosides

Tannins have the property of precipitating proteins and mucous, and also constricting blood vessels. This accounts for their medicinal value in preventing diarrhoea, controlling haemorrhage and they may be applied to wounds as a protective coating. These compounds are abundant in the bark of many trees including species of *Acacia*, *Diospyros*, *Kigelia*, *Pterocarpus* and *Cassine*. Tannins are extracted by boiling the bark or soaking it in cold water. Some of the plants containing tannins are also used as vermifuges.

Anthelmintic glucosides kill tapeworms and are all taenicides. Most species of *Albizia*, *Hugonia*, *Maesa*, *Myrsine* and *Phytolacca*, contain anthelmintic glucosides.

Cardiac glucosides are contained primarily in the Apocynaceae, e.g. species of *Acokanthera*. These are often extremely poisonous.

d) Alkaloids

These are mostly used as poisons rather than drugs. They are found in *Datura stramonium*, for example. The less toxic alkaloids such as caffeine and sparteine would normally increase renal excretion either by increasing the blood flow through the kidneys or by some direct action and are therefore used as diuretics and in the treatment of dropsy. Most alkaloids are characterised by a bitter taste.

e) Toxalbumins

These are poisonous proteins, usually irritant in nature, and found mainly in seeds. They can induce inflammation of the mucous membranes such as those of the eye or nose, and can cause violent vomiting and purging when swallowed since they are not digested. They are found in seeds of *Abrus precatorius*, *Cassia absus*, *Croton* spp., *Ricinus communis*, *Jatropha* spp.

f) Anthraquinone cathartics

These are found in many groups, particularly species of *Cassia* and *Aloe*. Species of these genera are used as cathartics, while others are used as dressings for burns and other skin lesions.

The information given above can be used in two ways in the study of traditional medicine. Firstly, all plants used as medicines and known to produce similar effects can be screened for those chemical substances that are related to their effects. For instance, the fact that *Cassine transvaalensis*, *Pterocarpus angolensis*, *Pouzolzia mixta* and some species of *Aloe* are used in Venda medicine to treat piles (haemorrhoids) could mean that they all contain a common active principle (or group of chemicals), possibly tannin, which is responsible for the healing effects. The same applies to plants that are used to treat dysmenorrhoea, menorrhagia, scurvey and nose bleeding. Plants used for treating infectious diseases such as venereal diseases may be screened for antibiotic properties. Those plants found to have negative tests for known antibiotics, but known to be effective against diseases known to be caused by bacteria or viruses, can be very interesting because it could mean that they contain new compounds which combat bacterial or viral infections. Some could probably be found to build up the immunity of the body and this may provide some clues towards the future treatment of such problematic diseases as AIDS.

Secondly, all plants screened and found to contain similar or related chemical substances may be tried in the treatment of some diseases, e.g. all plants known or found to contain cardiac glucosides may be tested for their effects on the

various heart diseases. Some of these may be found to be so effective that heart transplantations may no longer always be necessary. A combination of these two approaches may lead to substantial contributions in the field of medicine. In fact, previous research has proved that it does help to use either one or both of these approaches (see also Sofowora 1982).

5.4 UTILIZATION OF PLANTS FOR FIREWOOD

5.4.1 Fire-making

a) History

There is disagreement among the people of Venda about the way in which fire-making became incorporated into their culture. The Vhalemba and Vhasenzi claim that the other tribes who occupied what is now Venda before them did not use or did not even know anything about fire before their arrival many years ago. On the other hand, there is evidence that the first settlers of Venda such as the Vhangona and Vhambedzi used fire in many of their domestic and outdoor activities. It is reported that when the Vhalemba and Vhasenzi arrived in Venda, they found Vhangona and other neighbouring tribes cultivating most of the cereals and other crops that the Venda people still use today. Most of these crops have no history of being eaten raw, not even in religious cults. It also became common practice if a Mulemba or Musenzi man became ill after having had sexual intercourse with a Mungona woman, to use ash from Vhangona ruins as an important ingredient in the remedy – the existence of ash in their ruins indicating that they must have made fires. Potsherds and pieces of iron which could not have been made without the use of fire, unless they were bought from neighbouring tribes, were unearthed from the ruins of the Vhangona.

Ritual and other sacrificial performances of these indigenous people often required the making of bonfires. Fire-making is also reported to have existed among the Zulu, Sotho, Tsonga and Swazi for a long time. Whether these tribes initially depended on fire from lightning strikes, after which they preserved it, or that made by friction which gave the initial spark, it is true

that firemaking by friction developed at an early stage in the history of the southern African peoples.

b) Method of firemaking and plants used

Two pieces of wood are required to make fire by friction. One of these is relatively thin and hard, while the other may be thicker and softer. It is important that both pieces should be dry. Holes are made in one surface of the thicker one (the cow-stick) to receive the tip of the thinner stick (the bull-stick) which is used to drill fire. The pointed end of the bull-stick is inserted into one of the holes in the cow-stick and then twirled very fast. Dry wood shavings and a little sand are normally added to the hole to create more friction. A small quantity of combustible material such as dry donkey dung or grass is heaped close to the hole so that it would catch fire easily when a spark develops. Two or more people may take turns to drill before enough heat is generated by the friction to start a fire. Drilling may take from 45 minutes to an hour, or even more, depending on the plants used, their dryness and the force exerted.

The Vhavenda use, amongst others, *Grewia* spp., *Ehretia rigida*, *Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum* for bull-sticks, and *Annona senegalensis*, *Ficus* spp. and *Berchemia* spp. for cow-sticks. For maximal hardness, bull-sticks are carved mostly from the heartwood of stems. The use of particular species of plants for making fire varies greatly between the community groups living in geographically isolated regions, and is also influenced by availability and previous experience.

The method of making fire as described above is gradually falling into disuse as commercially available matches are becoming more and more popular. At present the traditional method of making fire remains a practice of historical interest. The method is, however, still encountered in ritual ceremonies and initiation schools when bonfires are made, but then more as a formality than a necessity.

5.4.2 Collection and use of plants as firewood

The division of labour among the Vhavenda is such that women and girls carry the responsibility of gathering all the wood needed for domestic use. Boys and young men may only collect firewood for the *khoro*, a place outside the living quarters of the homestead, where old men, young men and initiated boys spend most of the evenings. A favourite spot for the *khoro* is next to the cattle kraal, where men can discuss their matters and inspect, advise and discipline the boys in the absence of women. Big fires are made here and large poles are needed to provide enough warmth for everybody throughout the evening. Women are not expected to provide wood for this purpose.

The gathering of wood by women is a communal activity and is usually done by a group of two or more who may belong to the same or neighbouring families. Depending on the quantity and type of wood required, gathering may take place close to the homestead or far away in the mountains and valleys. Axes, hatchets and other instruments are used for cutting wood which is then piled into headloads and bound together by ropes. Normally one headload is gathered per trip, but more wood may be collected. Long poles which are hooked at one end (*govho*) are commonly used to pull dry branches off the canopies of tall trees. Wood gatherers usually leave home very early in the morning and return around midday.

Mostly dry wood is gathered. These may be three to fifteen centimetres thick and one to three metres long, splints chopped from fallen or standing logs and tree stumps. Fallen twigs and bark are usually gathered around homesteads. Fallen logs that are too big to be carried home are chopped and split longitudinally. When dry wood becomes scarce near homesteads or villages, the collection is restricted to small twigs and tree stumps that are split down to ground level. During extreme shortages these stumps are completely uprooted and carried home in dishes, baskets or bags. As a consequence of the population explosion and the resulting competition for firewood, trees and forests near villages are often depleted of dry wood, and there is a growing tendency to cut down living trees and keep them until they are dry. The Department of Nature Conservation discourages the cutting down of living trees and a fine of not less than R10 is charged for this offence. As a result of this, living wood is gathered and left in the bush to dry before it is brought home.

Some is brought home before it is dry and then hidden in dwelling huts and storage structures. Living trees known to provide good wood when dry, are ring-barked and left to die.

Firewood is needed for purposes such as cooking, light and warmth, firing of clay pots and preparation of medicine. The choice of any particular plant species for use as firewood depends on the type of fire reqiured. Plants that produce good coals with little smoke and little white ash are used for warmth and cooking, e.g. *Combretum* spp., *Colophospermum mopane*, *Burkea africana*, and most *Acacia* spp. Light wood that gives short-lived fire is needed for temporary fires to cook beer and firing clay pots. Some wood is collected to provide light when cereals are pounded during the night, and for this purpose plants that produce good flames are chosen. Plants with cracking fire are avoided when firing pots or when making fire for warmth. Those that produce bad or strong smelling smoke are not used as sources of firewood. For example, *Androstachys johnsonii* is extensively harvested for building and fencing, but never used for firewood. Most Apocynaceae and some Euphorbiaceae that have a milky latex are strictly avoided for use as firewood. Some of these produce smoke that irritates the eyes and nose, and could be harmful. Such plants are allowed into the homestead only for medicinal purposes, and then in very small quantities.

The use of plants as sources of firewood by the Vhavenda has always been influenced by traditional laws and taboos. Traditional laws prohibited the use of important medicinal and magical plants as well those known to be good sources of famine foods. For example, *Boscia albitrunca*, *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*, *Adansonia digitata*, *Ximenia* spp., *Pleurostylia capensis*, *Brackenridgea zanguebarica*, *Milletia stuhlmanii*, *Osyris lanceolata*, *Acokanthera oppositifolia* and *Maerua angolensis* are not used for firewood mainly because they are either conserved or tabooed by traditional laws. Some families are prohibited from using certain plants as firewood by traditional practitioners who have doctored their homesteads because such plants are important ingredients of *phambas* used for this purpose. The use of *Acokanthera oppositifolia* is said to induce menorrhagia in all women of child-bearing age and branches and twigs of the plant are therefore inserted into the fences around homesteads and livestock enclosures to discourage women from using the fences as firewood. Young people who are unable to understand the magical

and medicinal values of plants, are told frightening stories to discourage them from using prohibited plants as firewood.

Some plants are used extensively for fuel simply because they are readily available and this may cause deviations from the normal trends. For instance, as the vegetation becomes sparser around heavily populated villages, and firewood becomes scarce, it is not unusual to find a person carrying a whole headload of wood from *Euphorbia tirucalli*, *Sarcostemma viminale* or *Ximenia caffra*, plants which, as far as could be ascertained, have never been used as firewood by the Vhavenda.

Two main fires are made every day by each family in summer. The afternoon fire is made for cooking the daily meals. This is usually extinguished after use to save wood. It is the evening fire that is maintained with additional wood to provide warmth. In addition, a variety of foods are cooked and roasted in the evening when women and children are gathered around the fireplace in the *tshiṱanga* (dwelling hut), listening to folktales and fables. Morning fires are common in winter when it is cold. Men may also make big morning fires in winter, but this is not common.

During extremely cold winter nights fires are kept going to keep the huts warm while people are asleep. Winter is a favourite period for most of the initiation rituals of the Vhavenda. During this period large quantities of wood are gathered for fires at the *murundu* initiation school, *domba* and *vhusha*.

Despite the fact that a large proportion of the Venda population is engaged in some form of employment and therefore spend much of their time elsewhere, the condition of the vegetation around their residential areas continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. Much of this can be attributed to the population explosion.

Almost every year new stands are established around existing ones, occupying areas initially reserved for agriculture, grazing, sustainable utilization of natural resources, recreation and education, and general appreciation of nature. Invasion of these essential sites usually takes place without any compensation or alternatives to the people concerned. It is primarily as a result of this expansion of the settlement areas that most people find themselves in great competition for

material resources. Plants that provide good firewood are the first to disappear from the periphery of villages, followed by those with edible fruit and medicinals. Ultimately, complete denudation occurs when it becomes impossible to select and utilize plants wisely.

In a study on the use of wood for fuel and building material in Gazankulu, Liengme (1983) estimated an annual consumption of 5,4 tons per family. Unfortunately no such figures are available for the rural areas of Venda, but unless the present condition receives the serious attention of the authorities, this valuable natural resource will become completely depleted.

5.5 RUSTIC WORK

The material culture of the Vhavenda includes a host of articles or artifacts made from a variety of raw materials. The most common of these are household utensils, musical instruments, tools for agricultural production, collection and transport, weapons, and objects related to ancestor worship. Material obtained from plants make up the greatest proportion and include grasses, sedges, reeds, fibres of different types, wood and leaves. Animal products such as hides, bones and horns are also used. From the non-living world the Vhavenda obtained clay and metals such as iron ore, copper and gold. The materials obtained from plants are discussed in more detail below.

5.5.1 Fibres

Fibre has always been a raw material needed for the Vhavenda's manufacturing art. Soft (bast), hard (structural) and surface fibres are used, depending on the articles to be made. In most cases a combination of two or all of three types are used.

a) Soft or bast fibres

This is fibre grouped outside the xylem tissue of the stem, and normally includes everything from the cork to the vascular cambium. Among the

indigenous plants of Venda, the most important sources of this fibre are *Adansonia digitata*, *Terminalia sericea*, *Acacia* spp., *Obetia tenax*, *Annona senegalensis*, *Grewia* spp., *Ficus* spp., *Passerina montana*, *Peddiea africana*, *Sida cordifolia*, *Rauvolfia caffra* and many others. Fibre is gathered in autumn when it is still fresh, but already matured. Removal usually involves stripping of the bark from the woody part of young branches by pulling or beating such a branch between any two hard objects so that the bark separates from the wood in two longitudinal portions. The bark may then be used without further processing for binding, or it could be rolled into coils and stored for future use. For weaving, the outer part of the bark (including the cork tissue) is stripped off, leaving the inner fibrous material which is then beaten and soaked in water until pliable. When little fibre is needed, as in the making of ox-whips, chewing is found to be more convenient for softening if the plant is known to be non-poisonous. This method is commonly used by boys in the field. Water, dew and rain retting are other methods used to soften fibres when large quantities are involved. It may sometimes be necessary to scorch the poles or branches before removal of fibre to facilitate the process. Burning the fibre has an additional advantage of rendering it repulsive to wood-borers and termites so that it lasts longer. Immersing the fibres for long periods in water or mud is said to soften them as well as give the black colour necessary for making decorative patterns on baskets, mats and hats. It is also believed to make them stronger and more durable by removing excess sap or latex that is palatable to wood-borers.

Rolls of fibres reserved for future use are hung on roof poles all around huts and storage structures. When it becomes time to use them, they are put into a large pot with water and boiled or simply soaked. Fibres that are needed to be dyed are boiled or soaked with colouring-matter (barks or leaves), depending on the colour required. Excessive use of any plant that produces dye is normally influenced by availability. Nowadays it is common to find people obtaining dyes from synthetic plastics.

Fibres obtained and processed as described above are used for a variety of purposes. Unprocessed ones are usually preferred for cordage and binding of thatch, laths, headloads of wood, or thatch grasses. Softened

fibres are normally used for making ox-whips, strings for weaving, sewing and plating. Coloured ones are usually included in patterns on articles such as baskets, mats and hats. Soft fibres are commonly referred to as *nnzi*.

b) Hard or structural fibres and leaves

Also known as leaf or stem fibres, hard fibres include what the Vhavenda collectively call *Khumbe* (climbers), *mulala* (leaves of palms) and *maluwa* (stripped stems of *Acacia ataxacantha*). Leaves and stems of monocotyledons such as *Sansevieria* spp., various species of grasses, sedges and reeds are also some of the hard fibres used by the Vhavenda.

Flexible branches of some trees, lianas and creepers are used as wattles in the construction of roofs, thatching, for binding and mostly as foundations in braided articles. The bark is commonly removed and the wood smoothed when beautiful and braided articles such as baskets, hats and mats are woven. For articles such as winnowing baskets, lidded baskets and deep baskets used for storage, trimmed slivers of wood are required. These are mostly obtained from flexible stems of *Acacia ataxacantha*. While the flexible branches mentioned above are needed for making foundations in basketry, palm leaves are considered more suitable for weaving and plaiting of these articles. The rachis of palm leaves is also sometimes used as foundations in weaving. Palm leaves, and most other leaves used as "fibres", are popular for making beer strainers, mats and pouches of various sizes and shapes. Towards the closing of initiation schools for boys, usually one week before, senior members make costumes from palm leaves and various sedges, and masquerade as *mannḓaganana*, imaginary characters popular at these traditional institutions and meant to amuse crowds of women and children.

Sedges are preferred for sleeping and sitting mats. In this case stems or leaves of sedges are cut to one size before they are plaited together using strings made from soft or surface fibres. Two close plaits are commonly made on each side for strength, while single ones are placed in between, usually 60--80 mm apart. The distance between any two plaits is measured by the number, and as such the width, of fingers: four for the middle ones

and two or one for those at the ends. Generally the length of the leaves or stems determines the width, and not the length, of the mat. Leaves of *Cyperus latifolius* are preferred for sleeping mats, while stems of *C. sexangularis* are commonly preferred for sitting mats and decorations, usually on a temporary basis. Such mats are also used for closing entrances to huts (like doors) as well as for spreading damp mealie meal.

In places where reeds (*Phragmites* spp.) are available, after they are harvested and spread out to dry, they are plaited on the butt-end by strings of fibre to form mats used as underthatch on roofs of huts (*makhenya*, sing. *likhenya*). Reeds are also good for making temporary courtyard walls (*mipfunda*) erected to secure privacy and to protect against strong winds and dust. In this construction the reeds may be laid close together or in bundles, either vertically or horizontally, although the wattles keeping them together must be at right angles to their longitudinal axis. Courtyard walls of reeds are commonly made for the decoration of homesteads in anticipation of some special visit, gathering or celebration. Instead of wooden doors, reed doors (*masase*, sing. *sase*) have been used without shame. Wattles for this type of door are usually made of wooden sapplings or bundles of reeds. The *sase* have also been used as stretchers for carrying sick or injured people. When used for carrying corpses from the homestead to the grave site, it is left over the grave for the deceased to close his hut wherever he has gone. These "trap doors", as they are sometimes called, have also been found handy for laying slaughtered animals on.

Reeds are cut into short strips (slivers) and woven together by strings or fibres to form small mats which are wrapped around legs and hands to support bone fractures (*zwitanga*, sing. *tshitanga*). *Zwitanga* are also used for the same purpose in domestic animals. Some artists prefer to cut reeds into long strips which are smoothed and decorated with dyes for weaving garden baskets, or used as foundations for other articles. Reeds are often used for making flutes, fishing rods, beads and as medicinal pipes for blowing in enemas. A firm, thick bamboo reed was probably used as a *mukoro* pipe for brewing distilled spirits before the acquisition of metallic pipes.

The use of the culms of grasses for art has remained restricted to small and temporary amulets such as bangles, anklets and necklaces. The culms of some grasses such as *Sporobolus africanus* are cut into thin strips, plaited into strings and woven into mats and hats, with bundles of others as foundations.

Hard fibres are decorated in the same way as soft ones by immersing or soaking them in boiling water with a source of dye, or by soaking them in mud to obtain a black colour.

5.5.2 Wood as a source of art material

Among the Vhavenda, wood carving is primarily an occupation for males. They use a variety of tools such as hatchets and axes for cutting, gouges (bent blades) for hollowing out of larger objects, knives and chisels for finer finishing. Initially most of these instruments were bought or obtained as gifts from iron smelters. Types of wood used are varied, depending upon the articles to be made.

The most common articles made by the Vhavenda include household utensils such as spoons, plates, stirrers, knives, bowls, dishes, mortars, pestles, headrests, chairs, doors, troughs for cooling distilled spirits (*mikungwa*, sing. *mukungwa*), musical instruments including drums of different sizes (*Ngoma*, *thungwa* and *murumba*), drum beaters, whistles, flutes, resonated xylophones and hand pianos, as well as stringed musical bows. Tools and weapons such as hoe handles, hafts of axes, spear handles, hunting clubs, bows and arrows, yokes and their accessory parts as well as wooden boats (*zwikwekwete*) are also made from wood of different types and strengths.

As mentioned above, the article to be made determines the plant from which the wood should be obtained. Certain species are preferred for certain purposes because of their structural features. Qualities such as density, durability (i.e. ability to withstand the attacks of organisms of decay and certain insects), grain and figure, lustre, moisture content, porosity, rigidity (i.e. ability to withstand bending and distortion), strength, toughness, texture, odour and taste (which depends on volatile

compounds), cleavability and workability are considered when a choice is made. In general, plants known to be edible are preferred for making articles likely to come into contact with food. Some species are totally avoided owing to their association with magic, while others are tabooed or traditionally conserved. A permit is required for cutting wood for art from a traditionally conserved plant, and this is obtainable from a headman or chief, or, nowadays, from an office of the Department of Nature Conservation.

Decoration of articles carved from wood includes a series of grooves and ridges, especially on spoons, stirrers, mortars, pestles and many others. Branding with a hot iron over surfaces, and sometimes on grooves and ridges, adds beauty to most articles.

The use of gourds to make calabashes and vessels of various sizes for serving and holding water, beer or other foods seems to have originated with the agricultural practices of the Vhavenda. These are also variously decorated by the burning of artistic patterns on the outside, especially around the openings.

The art of the Vhavenda was primarily appreciated for providing articles for home use as well as for making offers to chiefs and other respected people. Some articles played important roles as measuring instruments in the sale of cereals and other crops and were also exchanged for other commodities. Their exchange, particularly vessels, pots and baskets, depended upon the type of material required. For cereals, the most popular method was to fill the article needed.

Some articles such as drums, yokes and lidded baskets could be worth a sheep or two, sometimes even an ox or bride. There is a tendency nowadays to make a variety of articles for sale to tourists and museums. Demand by tourists has led to the appearance of transitional art materials as customers demand various shapes related to their own cultures. There is a general regionalization of art as a direct consequence of availability of raw materials. Demand for certain articles most probably encourages the production of those articles whereas others appear to be rarely made.

Today there is little encouragement for the young generation to make traditional artefacts. Cultivation of this art is restricted to the primary schools, and even there, it is often not taught with care. The recent resurgence of appreciation of traditional artefacts could boost the economic position of many citizens if they are sufficiently encouraged and sponsored, providing them with an opportunity to earn a living.

5.6 UTILIZATION OF PLANTS FOR STRUCTURAL MATERIALS

The Vhavenda use a variety of plants to erect structures in and around their homesteads and fields. These include huts, storage structures, animal enclosures and fences.

The use of any particular species for such purposes depends upon a multitude of social, cultural, religious and environmental factors. The kind of structure also largely determines the type of plant that should be used. For example, certain plants are avoided as firewood because of magical beliefs associated with them. Some of these plants are, however, planted around the homestead with the belief that they would protect it against evil forces. *Mimosa pudica* is used magically in connection with prevention of witchcraft, and its planting is believed to serve the same purpose. Other plants are not used for construction purposes simply because they are tabooed. It is an offense carrying a heavy fine to fell traditionally conserved plants, especially without a permit from a headman or other authority. People therefore avoid using such traditionally conserved plants as famine food, medicines and religiously or magically valued plants. Poisonous plants are strictly avoided for obvious reasons, although some of them may be planted around the homestead as windbreaks.

The physical features of the plant, such as shape and thickness of branches, usually influence its use for construction purposes. Plants with rough bark are particularly preferred for building hut walls since the plastering mud clings easily to it. For use as laths or wattles, plants with long, flexible and tough branches are preferred. Climbers and creepers with reasonably thick stems are popular for this purpose. Thorny plants are particularly good for fencing.

Fibre is an important material in building and plants with good, strong, durable and easily removable fibre are preferred for bulk collection. It is common to find one plant being excessively used merely because it is readily available, and not because of its good qualities.

Collection of structural materials normally starts in early spring when fields have to be fenced, and continues through summer to early winter when building and art materials are collected. Branches and thorny bush are collected during clearing of fields and preparation for tilling and planting. These are used to strengthen or renovate fences around fields and animal enclosures. Poles and laths are gathered and cut to required sizes in the field where they are left in stacks exposed to periodic soaking and drying caused by rain or dew and high summer temperatures respectively. This exposure is understood to remove excess latex and sap palatable to wood-borers and other decomposers. Superficial burning before use is reported to have the same effect on durability. To restore pliability, laths are normally soaked in water for long periods before use.

Fibres, thatch grass, sedges and reeds are gathered towards the end of summer to early winter when they are mature. These are also gathered and spread in fields and along river banks, or carried home to dry inside the homestead. Fibres, stored in rolls until needed, are commonly soaked or boiled in a large pot to make them soft and pliable shortly before use.

Construction of huts and storage structures generally starts in winter for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is the period when all people have much more time than during the agricultural season. Secondly, it is difficult to build during the wet summer because of the drenching and destructive effects of rain on mud plastering. Thirdly, the Vhavenda believe in the doctoring of all newly built structures. Some magical plants may not be collected during the rainy season and may not be available in their fresh form if building was to take place at this time. Traditional practitioners who have to doctor these structures may be hard to find, or may be too busy in their fields at the time to move around and collect medicines. It also leads to insecurity and discomfort if the valuable and expensive medicines are applied to the homestead or agricultural land, only to be washed away immediately by rain.

Winter is therefore a convenient time for migrations to new settlements where building activities can then take place undisturbed.

The following examples of structures built by the Vhavenda illustrate the significance of plant materials:

5.6.1 The dwelling hut

The hut is constructed from wall poles, roof poles, laths and thatch. Fibres are used to bind both laths and thatch grass to the larger poles.

a) Wall poles

Wall poles are of two different types. One comprises the main wall poles that are cut to the size of the wall. The upper ends should preferably be Y-shaped to support the roof. Poles with rough-textured bark are favoured for this purpose in order to hold the mud plaster. The poles are anchored in the soil, forming the round shape characteristic of Venda huts. Straight poles are usually carefully chosen for this purpose. The Vhavenda call them *thokha*. The other type is called *thoredza* and are used to fill the spaces between larger poles. They should also have a rough bark but do not necessarily have to be straight or durable and may therefore be obtained from any source.

Main and subordinate wall poles are wattled together by flexible and tough branches obtained from various climbers. The wall is normally wattled at two places, at the top and the bottom, but middle wattling may sometimes be necessary for strength. Both soft and hard fibres are used for binding the poles to their wattles. When the pole wall is finished, it is plastered with mud and left to dry.

b) Roof poles and laths

The roof of Venda huts is typically conical in shape. Two types of poles are used in the construction of the roof. There are long and straight ones which form the main frame, and shorter ones which fill the spaces between the former. The long poles are bound together at the top of the roof, preferably all to one carved stump called *mutumeri*. The poles are usually fastened to the *mutumeri* by several coils of hard fibres, preferably whole stems of climbers known as *khumbe*. Both the main and subordinate poles are joined together by laths, usually not more than six centimeters thick, to produce and maintain the conical shape of the roof. Withes or laths are fastened to roof poles and to one another by soft, thin, flexible hard fibres. Wattling commonly takes place from the top of the roof to the bottom, and the spacing depends on the size of the thatch grass to be used. The roof may be constructed separately and then lifted onto the walls, or constructed directly on top of them. Two pieces of wood are placed perpendicularly to one another and fastened to opposite roof poles to provide additional support. This is usually done anywhere near the roof top.

c) Thatch

Thatching commences with the laying down of the underthatch, usually of mats made from reed or sedge, depending on which is readily available. Two overlapping layers of mats are laid down over the roof, one at the bottom, and the other towards the middle. The tips of the underthatch may face opposite directions with the top one facing down, but usually they are all laid down with the free ends upwards. Two methods of thatching are practiced by the Vhavenda.

In the first one, dominant in the western and drier parts of Venda, all grass tips face upwards and bundles of grass are successively bound to the roof poles or wattles by thinner and flexible laths. These laths are placed near the but-end of each thatch layer in such a way that each next layer covers the previous line of laths from bottom to top, leaving only the top one

visible. The laths are fastened to roof poles and withes by fibres. An attempt is made to conceal the existence of layers of thatch grass on the roof, with the best thatch leaving the roof smooth and beautiful.

The other method, practised in the eastern and sometimes also the southern and northern regions of Venda, involves plaiting of the thatch grass into mats. The mats are then laid on the roof from the bottom to the top, and then from top to bottom with the but-end of these mats fastened to roof poles and withes. The thatch is then bound on the outside by laths that remain visible all over the roof. These are fastened to roof poles by soft or leaf fibres. This is the easiest, fastest and cheapest method of thatching and may take only one·day to complete. It is also the least beautiful and durable of the two methods. Paradoxically it is practised by people living in areas with abundant thatch grass.

In both types of thatch, a woven mat is laid around the top of the roof leaving its frills facing downwards and, in the former method, covering the last laths that bind the thatch. This mat is also bound to the roof by laths, fastened by fibres.

For decoration, the hut occupied by the head fo the family, the one known as *thondwana*, may be given pillars all around to create a structure rather like a veranda. Inside this hut, poles are placed across the top of the wall to form a platform on which a variety of articles may be placed. These include clothes, baskets, tools and weapons such as clubs, battle axes, assagais and drums of varying sizes that may also be related to the religious worship of the family. Medicines for doctoring the homestead as well as other articles that must be kept out of reach of children and outsiders may also be stored on this platform. Other features that may be visible in this hut are wooden racks plastered with mud for keeping food, wooden blocks for sitting on as well as mats, headrests and blankets. All the other huts may be furnished differently even though they are similarly built and thatched. They usually lack pillars and may not be so neatly thatched. On one side inside the cooking hut one usually finds a platform of poles placed on Y-shaped wooden blocks that are anchored on the floor. Bags of cereal and other

foods may be placed on this platform. Some kitchen implements are usually hung on the walls. It is not uncommon to find goats and sheep also accommodated in the cooking huts. The cooking hut is usually the first to be erected and is usually bigger than all the others, including the *thondwana*, and it is therefore also called *themamudi*.

5.6.2 The pounding hut

This is the hut in which all grain is pounded. It is usually termed *goha* and may also be used as a resting place. The pounding hut is built like the dwelling hut but may sometimes lack proper mud-plastered walls. When there are no walls, the roof is simply supported by thick poles. The pounding hut is rare in most homesteads as pounding may also be done in the cooking huts.

5.6.3 Storage structures

Three types of storage structures are encountered among the Vhavenda. These are *zwitatari*, granaries (*madulu*) and grain pits (*zwisiku*). All are used to keep cereals. They only differ with regard to the form in which cereals are stored inside them and their degrees of permanency.

a) *tshitatari*

This is a temporary storage structure built of wattled wall poles like a dwelling hut. Maize straws, reeds or saplings are mostly also used. No mud plastering is needed for *tshitatari* and no roof is made. The floor may be raised by laying down poles on Y-shaped stumps of wood in such a way that it is only supported by main wall poles that are anchored on the ground. Maize and millet cobs are stored in this structure before they are thrashed. The shape varies from round to irregular.

b) Granary (*dulu*)

The granary is a semi-permanent storage structure for cereals. It is used to store maize and millet which is regularly removed for use and could last for two or more seasons.

A granary is often built like a dwelling hut, except that it is smaller. Wall poles and roofing resemble that of a dwelling hut, but the wall may not be plastered. Very often the floor is raised -- being maintained in a raised position by horizontally placed poles which are supported on Y-shaped stumps anchored on the ground on two opposite sides of the walls. Maize straws and saplings are often used to fill the spaces between the larger horizontal poles. A small entrance, placed high on the wall, is made to allow removal of grain.

c) The grain pit (*tshisiku*)

One or more grain pits are built in the homestead, depending on the average annual harvest. A grain pit may be made anywhere in the homestead, but cattle kraals are commonly preferred. This is probably because the site can easily be concealed by covering it with loose kraal manure. Hiding grain stores was particularly important during the periods of the "flights" (*mishavho*), when enemies could take all livestock and food reserves.

The size of the pit depends on the amount of grain to be stored, and may be large enough to take twenty bags of maize. It is reported that one chief Mphaphuli once had a grain pit which could accommodate his whole band of Tshikona dance (Wessmann 1908). Several pits may be made in the same homestead.

The walls of the grain pit are supported by large poles and saplings, and they are often plastered. After all work inside the the pit has been completed and the grains poured, the mouth of the pit is closed by horizontally placed poles which are plastered before being covered by kraal manure. The grain pit is a relatively permanent structure and may remain closed for many years.

5.6.4 Livestock enclosures

The largest animal enclosure of the Vhavenda is a cattle kraal. This is normally erected to the side, towards the main entrance of the homestead, usually with the outer wall against that surrounding the homestead.

Large poles are placed vertically around the enclosure. These poles must have side branches to support horizontally placed ones which may be fastened to the vertical ones by means of fibres. Smaller poles, saplings and brushwood are then placed against the larger ones to close the spaces. Thorny branches are generally preferred to make the kraal impenetrable. The entrance into the kraal is often closed by large poles placed horizontally and obliquely.

A small enclosure for calves is often built against the larger one. This is usually made of smaller poles, saplings and brushwood.

Two or more cattle kraals may be built in the same homestead to allow for rainy seasons, when the one commonly used becomes too muddy. A number of thick poles are often anchored inside the kraal and used for fastening cattle when they are milked or treated against ticks or other diseases.

The enclosures for sheep and goats are made of thin vertical poles and saplings, usually wattled together to form a rounded or irregularly shaped structure. Saplings, reeds, grass or both may be placed on top for shade.

5.6.5 Fencing

A large number of poles are required for the fence around homesteads and fields. These are used in the same way as for the cattle kraal. Saplings and brushwood are often used to make these fences impenetrable.

People in the eastern and northern parts of Venda have a habit of building courtyard walls of wattled poles and saplings, commonly known as *mipfunda*. Various plants are used for this purpose, including among others, *Bridelia* spp.,

Dichrostachys cinerea, *Annona senegalensis*, *Faurea galpinii*, *Combretum* spp., *Pappea capensis*, *Terminalia sericea*, *Grewia* spp., *Rothmania capensis*, *Tabernaemontana elegans* and *Bauhinia galpinii*. It seems as if most of these plants are selected only for their shape and not for durability. This is not surprising as these walls are usually temporary structures which are periodically renewed.

In general the plants required for fencing posts and wall poles of semi-permanent structures such as huts are *Androstachys johnsonii*, *Parinari curatellifolia*, *Combretum glomeruliflorum*, *C. imberbe*, *C. hereroense*, *C. apiculatum*, *C. erythrophyllum*, *C. collinum*, *Terminalia sericea*, *Colophospermum mopane*, *Tarchonanthus* spp. and many others. *Syzygium* spp., *Cussonia* spp., *Afzelia guanzensis* and some of those species mentioned above are most preferred for roof poles. Nowadays there is a tendency to use commercially available poles and wattles, especially in areas where there is access to supplies from plantations.

The use of most of the species mentioned above has also been noted by Liengme (1983) and Malan & Owen-Smith (1974) in their studies on the use of wood by the Tsonga people of Gazankulu and the ethnobotany of Kaokoland respectively. The method used by the Tsonga for constructing huts and storage structures is not different from that used by the Vhavenda. This is not surprising as these two groups are neighbours, and even lived together before ethnic separation.

5.7 NAMING AND CLASSIFICATION OF PLANTS

Most plants known to the Vhavenda have Venda names. These vernacular names were derived in a number of ways, some of which are mentioned below:

a) Names based on functional significance

Such names are usually related to the utlization of the plants by people inhabiting some or all regions of Venda. The name may indicate the purpose for which the plant is used, e.g. *muvhambangoma* (*Albizia versicolor*), *gumululo* (*Elephantorrhiza burkei*), *lukandululo* (*Cissampelos torulosa*), *mufhaṱa* (*Brachylaena discolor*), *mutibammela* (*Maesa lanceolata*), *bopha*

(*Adenia gummifera*), *muluwa* (*Acacia ataxacantha*) and *mualigatsibi* (*Idigofera arecta*), the taste or effect when used, e.g. *mukuvhazwivhi*(*Cassine transvaalensis*) and *gokodzalulimi*, the name of the disease for which it is used in medicine, e.g. *vhulungwane* (*Equisetum ramosissmum*) and *mafa-vuka* (*Myrothamnus flabelifolius*), or the method of medicinal or magical application, e.g. *murumelelwa* (*Pleurostylia capensis*) and *mutambapfunda* (*Albizia versicolor*). As a result of this method of naming, some plants with similar uses have the same vernacular name. For instance, the name *muhatu* is used for boths *Tabernaemontana elegans* and *Rauvolfia caffra*, *mukundandou* for *Mundulea sericea* and *Ormocarpum tricocarpum*.

b) Names derived from morphological and anatomical features

Examples include, *muelela* and *muhashaphande* (spreading branches), *museri* (in woven stands of wood), *mudzwiri* and *muvundambado* (very hard), *munnamutswu* (black colour of roots), *delele* and *mupupuma* (leaf texture).

c) Names based on the morphological, utilitarian, behavioural or nutritional relationship of the plant with others or with animals

Examples include *Muangasese* (leaves similar to those of *Peltophorum africanum*, known as *musese*), *tshitoni* (flower head appears like the hair on the body of a hedgehog) and *mulanotshi* (always swarmed by bees when in flower).

d) Names based on the chemistry of the plant

Names are often derived from the presence of aromatic compounds in the plant, e.g. *munukhatshilongwe*.

e) Names based on the response of the plant to environmental factors or touch

Examples include *mulambatshipalo* (never loses all its leaves at the same time), *tshiteaḓuvha* (follows the direction of sun rays) and *munalu* (it is shy, for *Mimosa pudica*).

f) Names based on the habitat

Examples include *muendanathavha* (grows on mountain sides), *mutumadi* (grows along river banks or in moist places) and *musalamarubini* (it remains growing in abandoned settlements).

g) Names with an onomatopoeic derivation

Examples include *muunga* (sound made by wind against its bark), *muthethenyua* (breaks crackingly when dry), *murera-vhusiku* (rustling sound of leaves, especially during the night when blown by wind) and *mushushaphombwe* (the rustling sound of leaves frightens adulterers during the night).

The classification of plants by the Vhavenda is both utilitarian and natural. Utilitarian systems tend to classify plants into food plants (e.g. vegetables or potherbs, famine foods, beverage plants and fruit plants), medicinal plants (e.g. medicines for venereal diseases, medicines related to pregnancy, treatments for colds and fevers, medicines for children's diseases, magical mixtures and mixtures for ritual purposes) and plants that are utilized for building purposes, firewood or fibres, among other things.

In the natural system of the Vhavenda one can sometimes deduce some relationship with the genus concept of modern classifications, since plants that are closely related are mostly called by the same name -- the only distinction being the addition of an adjective or adverb that explains the minor differences between any two or more species. Generally such minor differences include stem and leaf size or shape, colour of bark, size or colour of ripe fruit, robustness and thickness of stem or root bark and habitat. For instance, species of *Euclea* are all known as *muṱangule* but a distinction is made between *muṱangule-thavha* (growing on

mountains and hills), *mutangule-musekene* (stem and leaves are thin), *dangula* (the largest species with thick stem and broad leaves). Similarly, *Tribulus zeyheri* has been given the name *tseto* whereas *Tribulus terrestris* is called *tsetwana*.

Names such as *tshisesana* (*Elephantorrhiza elephantina*) and *muangasese* (*Mimosa pudica*) have been derived from *musese* (*Peltophorum africanum*) and appears to have been based on the possession of compound leaves by all these species. Names that differentiate species by describing their habitats are, among others, *damba*, as compared to *Damba-la-mulamboni* (the latter being described as one that prefers to grow along river banks and valleys), *mukundandouthavha* for *Mundulea sericea* (growing on hills and mountains) and *mukundandou-wa-fhasi* for *Ormocarpum trichocarpum* (growing in the valleys), both of which are legumes and also have the same medicinal use. Another example is *nduhu* (*Arachis hypogea*, the peanut) and *nduhushango* (*Crotalaria* sp.); the name *nduhushango* indicates that the latter species is considered to be a wild peanut plant. In some cases two species given the same vernacular name are distinguished from one another by treating one of them as male and the other as female. For instance, *Salacia rehmannii* and *Maytenus tenuispina* are both known as *ntsatshilambe* and used medicinally for the same purpose, but the former is considered to be female because it has a thicker and more robust root bark, than the latter which is treated as male.

Fruit-bearing is another feature that is used for classifying closely related species as male and female. Even though these are vernacular names, the whole system of naming and classifying plants (ethnosystematics), by virtue of its practice of giving a plant a name plus a description of its other features or habitat (similar to the specific epithet), shows some similarity to the binomial (or older polynomial) system that had long been used by earlier botanists such as Linnaeus. Some names even reflect "phylogenetic" relationships, e.g. *makhulu-wa-mutudo* (from *makhulu* = grandparent + *wa* = of + *mutudo* = the herb *Sida cordifolia*), *makhulu-wa-mutangule* (*Vepris lanceolata*) treated as a grandparent to *mutangule* (*Euclea* spp.).

Indigenous plants are also classified according to habit in which case a distinction is made between trees (*miri*) shrubs (*zwitaka*), grasses (*hatsi*) and vines (*khumbe*). There is no Venda term that relates to herbs. The distinction between

plants of different habit is achieved by putting the names in different noun classes, such as *mu-* (*mi-*) for trees, *tshi-* (*zwi-*) for shrubs, *lu-* (*vhu-*) for grasses and *n-* (*dzi-*) or *lu-*(*vhu-*) for vines. There is no prefix for the names of herbs, and these may fall under any of the mentioned groups depending on their uses, for example, when used as vegetables herbs take the prefix *mu-* for *muroho*.

The classification of vegetation types is very general and loose. A distinction is made between *ḓaka* (forest), *vuvhu* (a field lying fallow and overgrown by a few shrubs and abundant grass), *bulu* (a forest on sandy soil with isolated patches of grass and undershrubs), *dzunga* (dominated by sedges, reeds and grass, especially *Sporobolus* spp., on clayey, salty soils with poor drainage), *tshifhale* (with dark, clayey and salty soils usually dominated by prostrately growing grasses such as *Cynodon dactylon*, and palms as well as a characteristic type of locust generally known as *nzie-tshafhale*), *tshikhwa* (with thorny shrubs and trees on dry and rocky soils).

It should be emphasized, however, that the naming and classification of plants as described above is usually of local significance. A plant known by a specific vernacular name in one region may be called by a different name in another. For instance, plants called *murabva* (*Grewia flava*), *murodololo* or *muvuṋḓambaḓo* (*Papea capensis*) and *mulimakhoḓa* (*Canthium* spp.) in Nzhelele, are called *muhwana*, *muborane* or *muṱhoḓoli* and *muokhwane* respectively, in the Nthabalala/Mpofu areas of Venda. *Albizia versicolor*, which is known as *muṱambapfunda* in Nzhelele, is called *muvhambangoma* in areas of Sibasa. Traditional practitioners also have a tendency to give plants names that are known only between them, and reflect their uses or methods of medicinal preparation and application. For instance, the plant commonly known as *mupharatsheni* (*Grewia occidentalis*) is known as *mizwilaminzhi* among traditional practitioners to indicate the multitude of its medicinal uses. Similarly, the name *mavhelematshena* (white cereal grains) and *mukuvhazwivhi* (cleanser of dirt) is used in the place of the popular names of *muṱangauma* (*Securinega virosa*) and *mulumaṋamana* (*Cassine transvaalensis*) respectively.

5.8 CONSERVATION OF INDIGENOUS PLANTS

5.8.1 Conservation methods

In Venda there is a traditional conservation system which is enforced by chiefs and headmen. This system was primarily aimed at protection and preservation of those plants that are important as sources of food or medicine, but certain species are more strictly protected than others. Most of these are important sources of famine food and beverage and have reputedly saved the nation during periods of drought and food scarcity, e.g. *Sclerocarya birrea* subsp. *caffra*(marula), *Parinari curatellifolia*, *Adansonia digitata*, *Strychnos* spp. and *Boscia albitrunca*.

The protection of the marula has been the most popular in most regions of Venda, probably because of its significance as a source of food, beverage, medicine, shade and also its wide range of distribution in Venda. It has, for a long time, been an offence to fell a marula tree, and the maximum fine could be as much as an ox. The chiefs delegate the powers to control the use of protected plants to their headmen who, in turn, allocate the marula trees in their villages (a headman must know all the marula trees in his village) to heads of homesteads to guard and use. From these trees they obtain beer and medicine and the trees provide shade in and around their homesteads and in their fields. As the wood of the marula is also used for wood-carving, permission is needed from the relevant headman or chief, who usually gives permission to use those plants that do not produce fruit (males). A sound reason is needed to obtain permission to fell a tree for its wood. Acceptable reasons, for example, would be to carve a drum for use at initiation schools such as *domba*, *vhusha*, for religious ceremonies as well as for carving mortars. All marula trees are doctored before the fruiting season in order to increase the crop. The responsibility of headmen for the protection of marula trees has led to their popularity as *zwilindamifula* (guardians of marula trees).

Important medicinal and magical plants are also protected, and permission from the headman is required, especially when medicines have to be collected in an area under another headman's jurisdiction. Such plants include *Milletia stuhlmannii*, *Salacia rehmannii* and *Brackenridgea zanguebarica*. Some plants remain protected because their use is tabooed. Such plants have been known as prohibited for a

long time and people simply continue to avoid using them for construction and firewood purposes. Among these are plants that are tabooed by the whole nation because they are used to doctor the country to protect it against invasion by other tribes and against natural disasters. Some plants are tabooed by some families for the same reason with respect to their homesteads. Plants such as *Celtis africana*, *Acokanthera oppositifolia*, *Maerua angolensis*, *Ximenia* spp., *Bolusanthus speciosus* and *Osyris lanceolata* are generally tabooed.

Some plants escape use by humans because of their morphological and biochemical properties. Such plants may remain untouched for long periods even if they are not tabooed. These include thorny plants, plants with milky latex which are considered poisonous, those that cause irritation of eyes or nose when burnt as firewood, plants giving too much smoke when used as firewood, unpleasant smelling plants (for wood-carving), those suspected to have magical powers, and some important medicinal plants that people simply feel should be preserved. Species reported to cause problems when used as firewood include *Boscia albitrunca*, *Sarcostemma viminale*, *Synadenium cupulare*, *Jatropa* sp. (all cause eye irritation), *Androstachys johnsonii* (too much bad-smelling smoke), *Acacia* spp., *.Ziziphus mucronata*, some *Combretum* spp. (thorny and difficult to collect), *Acokanthera* spp., *Trichilia* spp. (medicinal plants with undesirable effects when burnt).

The consevation of plants which used to be under the sole control of chiefs and headmen has now largely been taken over by the Division of Nature Conservation of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in Venda. The policy of this Division includes restrictions on the collection of live wood, indiscriminate felling of trees, gathering of any live animals (including catching and trapping of birds, game hunting and trapping, but excluding collection of insects). Provision has been made for the issuing of a permit to collect firewood and hedges for fencing. People in need of a constant supply of wood, such as for wood-carving or sale of firewood, can obtain a licence from either a local tribal authority office or the offices of the Division of Nature Conservation. At present there is no specific regulations controlling the gathering of wild-growing vegetables, locusts or other insects. A paid permit can also be obtained for fishing in certain dams, e.g. Nzhelele. No fishing is allowed in local rivers and irrigation dams.

At present there is no provision for citizens of Venda to obtain a permit to hunt and trap game as a source of food, for heroism or as a sport. Hunting permission is, however, granted to trophy hunters, most of whom come from outside Venda. Tribal authority policemen are the most conspicuous people enforcing the nature conservation regulations in the rural areas. As a result of this they have been given the name *vha ha ṋama a i ḽiwi*, which means that they are hand in glove with those people who forbid others to eat meat. There is currently no system to expose the greater part of the rural population to appreciation of the aims of nature conservation. They are merely informed, through their authority offices, of what they should not do.

5.8.2 Effects of plant utilization on the natural environment

No quantitative study of the effects of the interaction between the people and their natural environment has been done, but evidence based on visual observation indicates that there is an urgent need for such a study. These effects are more conspicuous in the drier areas of the western regions of the country, especially in the highly populated settlement areas of Nzhelele, Sinthumele and Kutama. Personal experience and historical evidence indicates that there has been a rapid deterioration of the vegetation in these areas.

The originally dense and floristically rich forests were first subjected to deforestation through clearing for new settlements and agriculture when people changed from their original settlement patterns to the new patterns of blocks of stands, which were started during the late nineteen fifties and sixties. During this period large trees were felled to obtain fencing posts, with only a few left for shade. This created large open spaces which allowed, among other things, high surface wind speeds and rapid drying of the soil surface.

As more people were brought to these settlement areas from neighbouring white farms and other regions that were either declared white areas or development sites, competition for firewood and other natural resources ensued, and continued to grow. This decreased land areas available for grazing, agriculture and general gathering of natural materials. It is the gathering of firewood that appears to have

contributed more to the present environmental degradation than any other factor. In most villages there is a total removal of all woody material from the area, this becoming more intensive closer to the villages. The areas around most villages are not only devoid of dead trees, but all the fallen branches and brushwood have also been removed from the soil surface. It is common to find people carrying dishes and baskets to collect whatever small fragment of wood that may still be available (called *thasana*) -- this includes bark and uprooted stumps of trees and shrubs that would otherwise resprout if given the opportunity As Malan & Owen-Smith (1974) also pointed out, this has an effect of exposing even the young seedlings and perennial grasses to browsing animals, to such an extent that they fail to grow and reach a stage where they can withstand browsing and trampling. This total removal accelerates soil erosion as there is nothing left to hold the soil and debris during rainy seasons, especially the during first rains after a dry period.

The resurgence of interest in traditional art, particularly wood-carving and basketry, with the resultant establishment of small business industries for this purpose, may threaten large trees and fibre plants such as palms. While there is a great encouragement for growth and development in the field of art, there are clearly insufficient measures aimed at controlling the harvest on a sustainable basis, or improving the production of the raw materials needed. As these industries and markets grow, there is certainly going to be increasing competition for the resources. In fact, there are already complaints about the scarcity of palms needed for basketry, as a result of the increasing demand for baskets, both in traditional and transitional craft industries.

It appears that the gathering of food and medicine from the veld does not have serious negative effects on the local vegetation. Gathering of vegetables is usually restricted to the soft and tender leaves, and this practice, according to Malan & Owen-Smith (1974), may stimulate development of new growth in the species affected, with having beneficial consequences. Accidental or purposeful gathering of seeds with vegetable leaves is responsible for the abundance of most vegetable plants around homesteads and dumping sites. This obviously has an important beneficial effect, not only in promoting seed dispersal, but also in widening the distribution range of the species concerned. This also applies to the wild fruit plants, the fruits of some of which are gathered far from the villages.

Under normal conditions of habitation by a traditional Vhavenda society, the collection of plant medicines is unlikely to upset the natural environment for a number of reasons. Firstly, few people are engaged in medicinal practice and, in most cases, only enough for immediate use is collected at a time. Secondly, the traditional norms are such that only horizontally growing roots are taken, after which the exposed parts of the plant have to be covered again. The fact that most Venda traditional practitioners believe that killing the plant from which the medicine has been obtained, has negative effects on the use of the medicine, may discourage them from harvesting all the roots of a plant. It is also for this reason that most collectors prefer not to take their medicines from roots that display signs of having previously been dug. Thirdly, various traditional practitioners generally do not depend on the same plants for their medicines, even for treatment of similar diseases, so that any particular species is only used by a few people at a time. As mentioned before, the extraction of medicine from the bark involves removal of portions of bark from opposite sides of the trunk. This usually affects the lower part of the trunk which is within reach and, consequently, continued use of one or a few trees may lead to complete girdling of the trunk, ultimately resulting in the death of the tree. It is the sale of traditional medicines in newly established herbal shops as well as competition resulting from growing rural populations that may demand closer attention in the immediate future.

As a result of the disappearance of most predators, improved supply of watering points and veterinary services, the numbers of livestock are likely to grow considerably. This increase, coupled with the stabilization of territorial boundaries which restrict nomadic movements, would intensify the impact of domestic animals on natural vegetation.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from the information recorded in this study that the Vhavenda depended, and still depend, on indigenous plants for most of their material requirements. Apart from the significance of indigenous plants as sources of food, medicine, firewood and material for art and building, they are also considered useful for shade, fencing, shelter against winds, as sources of oils, and dyes, and as ornamentals.

The dependence of the Vhavenda on their natural environment is typical of a pre-industrial society where the relationship is governed by such cultural factors as magical beliefs, superstition, myths, taboos, and religion. The ethnobotany of the Vhavenda, is therefore intertwined with and hardly separable from their cultural norms and values.

For the purpose of communication, plants are given names and classified into groups. Most names are related to the functional significance of the respective plants, while others are derived from morphology, anatomy, habitat relations, presence of chemical substances, or responses to natural factors. Plants are Occasionally named after the sounds they produce, especially those caused by blowing wind and falling or fallen leaves. It would also appear that only those plants with some cultural significance are given names. A utilitarian system of classification of plants is the most important in the ethnosystematics of the Vhavenda, and plants are classified into groups of plants with related uses: food plants, beverage plants, medicinals, sources of fibre, firewood, dyes, oils, building materials, wood-carving and basketry. Within each of these groups, plants are divided further into subgroups. For instance, the medicinal group comprises purgatives, carminatives, those for adult diseases, children's diseases, pregnancy, coughs and fevers, sexually transmitted diseases and magicals. Other features such as morphology, anatomy or presumed evolutionary relationships are also used in classification. Furthermore, plants are arbitrarily recognized as trees, shrubs, climbers and grasses. There is a broad classification of groups of plants into vegetation types.

A traditional system of conservation exists among the Vhavenda. A study of this system indicates that it was primarily intended to protect the most important plants such as food plants, medicinals, and shade plants against indiscriminate use as firewood, art and building materials, and against other cultural practices. The conservation of plants takes the form of restrictions by chiefs and their headmen, taboos and other cultural prohibitions.

During the course of this research a number of other features of the ethnobotany of the Vhavenda were identified. One of the most important is that the cultural significance of indigenous plants is largely localized. Certain species that are considered to be indispensable in some areas of Venda, are virtually unused in other parts of the country. It is also common to find the same species being used for totally different, and perhaps even unrelated, purposes. This regional significance of plants also affects other aspects of the ethnobotany of the people, including nomenclature, classification and conservation. For instance, it would be culturally unsound to make an effort to give a name to, or conserve, a plant that is not important in any way.

Another feature is that when subcultural groups move from one region to another, they tend to find substitutes for plants that do not occur in their new area, or for practices that are not popular or feasible under the changed circumstances. This similarly applies to contacts with other cultural groups, introduction of new regulations, environmental changes brought about by population explosions, competition, droughts or over-abundance. According to Malan & Owen-Smith (1974), "the exploitation of natural resources results in a process of reciprocity, or dialogue, between cultures and environments", and according to Sahlins (1968), "there is an interchange between culture and environment, perhaps continuous dialectic interchange, if in adapting the culture transforms its landscape and so must respond anew to changes that it had set in motion". In view of this, future studies should not be confined to the recording of ethnobotanical information and the effects of cultural views, but should also take cognisance of regional differences and changes brought about by population changes, civilization in the form of industrialization, religion, introduction of new systems of nomenclature and conservation, medical development and resettlements, for example.

Although still far from being complete, this information on the uses of plants by the Vhavenda, is a good starting point for a multitude of scientific research programmes aimed at improving and developing the positive aspects of their ethnobotany, and removing the negative ones. Furthermore, there is great uncertainty regarding the value and efficacy of most plants used as food and medicines, while at the same time the African continent is rich in indigenous plants, both in abundance of individuals and variety of species. It is an established fact that most medicines used by the Vhavenda in particular, and by traditional medicinal practitioners in general, have positive physiological effects. Some of them have proved to be more effective than their equivalents in modern medicine and, in most cases, are far cheaper to acquire. Also, most plants used by traditional practitioners as food plants of medicinal value, or as medicines for serious diseases, can easily be cultivated and, therefore, become available for experimentation.

Properly planned and well co-ordinated research projects may not only boost the food and medical industries, but may also make provision for other material needs, particularly firewood, among people who cannot afford alternative sources of energy such as electricity, in a way that blends well with the cultural backgrounds, aspirations, and associated changes among the various groups of people.

Lastly, it is recommended that future ethnobotanical studies should also concentrate on obtaining the appropriate cultural interpretations of the relevant people. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that concepts such as *dambi*, *ṅanga*, *pfuko*, *midzimu*, *ḓuxwane*, and many others, are likely to have been misinterpreted by previous researchers and missionaries who worked among the Vhavenda, possibly as a result of difficulty in communication, ethnocentricity, or both. These concepts were interpreted or translated, as magic, witch-doctor, cancerous ulcer, gods, and zombi respectively. However, their original meanings do not always convey the same message as their vernacular equivalents. It could well be that the use of these terms was not intended specifically for the Venda concepts as mentioned above, but for other African concepts considered to convey similar meanings. Also, even if they were used for some Venda terms, it is doubtful whether dialectical differences have been sufficiently considered. In view of this, it is not be surprising that most African cultural practices have been, and continue to be, dismissed as superstition by most research workers.

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APPENDIX

INVENTORY OF PLANTS USED BY THE VHAVENDA

The following list enumerates the plants and their uses as identified by the author during the present study (condensed from Chapters 5 & 6), as well as information derived from the literature. Little attention is given to exotic and agricultural species.

Species have been grouped according to family, and the families are arranged alphabetically, as are the species within each family.

SYMBOLS/WORDS USED:

- \- No other ingredient known to exist.
- * Record not specifically for the Vhavenda, but from the region adjacent to Venda, and thus likely to apply to Venda also.

unidentified Known to contain other ingredients but species not identified.
another/others Known to contain other ingredients, but their identity is unknown.

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NO.	BOTANICAL NAME	VERNACULAR NAME	PLANT PART	USES	OTHER INGREDIENTS	SOURCE
	ACANTHACEAE					
1.	Hypoestes verticilaris	mukuluvhali	leaves	vegetable	various	1
	AMARANTHACEAE					
2.	Amaranthus hybridus	vowa	a) leaves	vegetable, test medicine for baby's food	275	1
			b) stem and leaves	snuff ingredient	snuff	1, 2
3.	Amaranthus spinosus	tshithavhamisisi	entire plant	dizziness	-	3
	ANACARDIACEAE					
4.	Lannea discolor	muvhumbu	root	infertility	190+198+219+223+261	3
5.	Lannea schweinfurtii	mulivhadza	a) leaves	sores, bleeding, abscesses	-	5*
			b) root bark	sedative,	-	3
				magic, sleeping sickness	-	1
				snake-bite	-	5*
			c) wood	smaller household utensils	-	5*
6.	Ozoroa engleri	mudumbula	a) leaves	with bark : to treat seeds before planting	-	1
				with bark and root : diarrhoea and as purgative	-	5*
			b) bark	general cleaning of stomach, blood and kidneys	-	1
7.	Rhus lancea	mushakaladza	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1
			b) leaves	fevers, colds and headaches, 'tshifumbu'	-	1, 2, 3
				papules and pustules	-	3
			c) wood	firewood, hut roof construction	-	1
8.	Rhus leptodictya	mushakaladza	bark or root	headache	23	3
9.	Sclerocarya birrea subsp. caffra	mufula	a) fruit, seed	food, beverage, oil	-	1, 5*
			b) bark	fevers, stomach troubles, headaches,	-	1, 5*
				ulcers	98	1
				infertility	93+94+98+110	1
				to regulate sex of unborn child	-	1,2,3,5*

				toothache, backache	-	3
			c) wood	firewood, woodcarving, shade	-	1, 5*
				drums	-	2
	ANNONACEAE					
10.	Annona senegalensis	muembe	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1, 5*
			b) juice	weave thahu	202	2
			c) root	antidote for snake-bite, venereal diseases, bilharzia, diarrhoea, dysentery, baby food medicine, magical protection	various	1, 5*
				constipation and indigestion, stomach-ache	-	1, 3
				headache	96	3
				blood in faeces	202+292	3
			d) bark	arrow poison	lutemamatanda + 48	2
				abdominal pains in children	-	2
			e) fibre	binding (cordage), neckache, magical protection	-	1
				headache	-	3
			f) stem	roof and courtyard construction	-	1
			g) wood	fire-making	-	1
11.	Artabotrys brachypetalus	mudzidzi,munna-mutswu	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1
			b) root	baby food ingredient, stomach troubles, pelvic pains aphrodisiac, magical protection, luck	various	1
				infertility	25+89+116+144+180	3
				impotency	89+230	3
				woman married with physical defect	89+193	2
				abdominal troubles	91+109+228+258+ two sedges	2
			c) stem	roof and courtyard wall construction		1
12.	Hexalobus monopetalus	muhuhuma	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1, 5*
			b) root	wounds (dressing)	-	3
			c) wood	firewood	-	1
13.	Uvaria caffra	munna-mutswu	root	cough	-	3
14.	Xylopia odoratissima	muvhulavhusiku	root	stomach-ache	-	1
				increase size of penis	15+18+ two unideti-	

					fied	3
				menorrhagia	219	3
				dysmenorrhoea	-	3
	APIACEAE					
15.	Heteromorpha arborescens	muthathavhanna	root, leaf	aphrodisiac, general cleaning of stomach, kidneys and blood 'ngoma'	-	1, 3, 4
				to increase size of penis, headache, etc.	14+18+ two unidentified	3
				headache	-	3
	APOCYNACEAE					
16.	Acokanthera oppositifolia	musilili	a) wood	smoke must be avoided - it causes prolonged menstruation		1, 3, 4
			b) latex	arrow poison		4
17.	Carisa bispinosa	murungulu	a) fruit	eaten	-	1
			b) root	toothache	-	1
			c) branches	hedge fencing	-	1
18.	Carisa edulis Vahl.	murungulu	a) fruit	fruit is eaten	-	1
			b) root	baby food		1
				mild laxative for children	-	3
				virility and potency	230	3
				tuberculosis	-	3
				increase size of penis	14+15+ two others	3
19.	Catharanthus roseus	liluvha	root	venereal diseases	202	3
20.	Holarrhena pubescens	makhulu-wa-muhatu	root	stomach-ache in women, infertility, amenorrhoea	-	3
21.	Landolphia kirkii	mukumululo, muvhungo	a) fruit	eaten	-	1
			b) latex	strengthen birdlime	-	1
			c) root	piles, rheumatics	127+175+270	1
			d) stick	magical protection	various	1
			e) sapplings	basketry and roof construction, etc.	various	1

22.	Rauvolfia caffra	munadzi	a) bark	wounds, pelvic and abdominal troubles	241	1
				epilepsy,		3
				eye sickness	65	3
			b) wood	wood carving	-	1
23.	Tabernaemontana elegans	muhatu	a) fruit	eaten although less preferred,	-	1, 3
			b) latex	birdlime, curdle milk		
			c) root	venereal diseases	-	1, 3
				menorrhagia	71+76+98+115+202+237	
					261	3
				menorrhagia, wounds, tuberculosis, stomach-ache		
				purgative, infertility,	-	3
				headache	8	3
24.	Wrightia natalensis	musunzi	root and bark	aphrodisiac	various	1, 3
	ARACEAE					
25.	Zantedeschia aethiopica	ndalunwepi,	root	infertility due to uterine lesions, snakebite	11+116+180	3
		ndalunwafhi	root	snakebite	-	2
	ARALIACEAE					
26.	Cussonia spicata	musenzhe	a) root	duretic, laxative	-	3
				bathe infant for strength, weight, freshness	51	1
				prophylactic, malaria, venereal diseases, nausea, as well as some type of food	-	5*
				wean child	218	2
			b) stem bark	stomach ulcers, magic	-	1
			c) branches	roof construction	-	1
			d) leaves	cover bodies during initiation rituals	-	1
27.	Schefflera umbellifera	mukho	wood	carving household implements and tools	-	1
	ARECACEAE					
28.	Hyphaene coriacea	mulala	a) sap	palm wine	-	1, 2, 4

			b) pith of trunk	eaten as such for dysmenorrhoea	-	3, 4
			c) fibre	tied around neck for neckache	-	1
				beer strainer, string on bowed instrument(tshidzambo)	-	2
			d) leaves	basketry	-	1, 4
29.	Phoenix reclinata	mutshevho, mutshema	a) sap	palm wine	-	1, 4
			b) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1, 4
			c) leaves	sap collection, thatching, "toothbrushes", etc.	-	1, 4
	ASCLEPIADACEAE					
30.	Asclepias fruticosa	mutshulwa	root	stomach troubles and infertility	-	1
31.	Pentarrhinum insipidum	phulule	leaves	vegetable, preferably as spice	various	1
32.	Sarcostemma viminale	mutshiso	root and stem powder	lactation	unknown	1
33.	Stapelia nobilis	mudadzashango	root	general body aches	-	3
	ASTERACEAE					
34.	Athrixia phylicoides	mutshatshaila,	a) leaves and stems	tea	-	1
		mubosotie	b) root	aphrodisiac	-	1
35.	Bidens pilosa	mushidzhi	leaves	vegetable, menorrhagia, infertility	-	1
36.	Brachylaena discolor	mufhata	a) leaves	roundworm infection	-	1
			b) branches (poles)	building and fencing, tool handles, firewood	various	1
37.	Dicoma zeyheri	tshitoni, thoni	flowers and fruit	the disease known as'goni'	-	1
38.	Gerbera krausii	Ito la ndau	leaves	vegetable	various	1
39.	Helichrysum krausii	tshifulathulo	root	veneral diseases	-	1
40.	Helichrysum nudifolium	unknown	root	baby stops suckling		1
41.	Senecio longiflorus	mushavhavhakazi	stem	love charm	-	1

42.	Senecio sp.	Tshifatafatane	leaves	burnt and smoke inhaled for colds and fevers	-	1
43.	Senecio sp.	tshitanzisanngwa	leaf	emetic	-	1
44.	Sonchus oleraceus	shashe	leaf	vegetable	various	1
45.	Tagetes minuta	mushushathuri, mukangambanzhe	leaves	a) dizziness	-	3
				b) headache	71+75+76+115+224	3
46.	Vernonia corymbosa	phathaphathane	leaf and root	a) intestinal worms in domestic animals	-	1
				b) abortion in humans	-	1
47.	Vernonia stipulacea	mululudza	root	contraceptive	-	1
	BALANITACEAE					
48.	Balanites maughamii sprague	mudulu	a) thorns	magical protection of homesteads	various	1
			b) wood	wood carving for household utensils	-	1, 5*
			c) fruit	edible but not pleasant-tasting	-	1, 5*
				arrow poison	lutemamatanda + 10	2
	BIGNONIACEAE					
49.	Kigelia africana	muvevha	fruit	to increase size of penis	-	3, 4
50.	Markhamia acuminata	mulakholomo	a) leaves	browsed by cattle	-	1
			b) roots	coughs and diarrhoea	-	3, 4
	BOMBACACEAE					
51.	Adansonia digitata	muvhuyu	a) fruit	eaten raw, pulp for 'mugumo' and 'khwangwali'	-	1, 4, 5*
				pericarps have been used as storage and serving vessels	-	1
			b) bark	bathe infant	26	1
				venereal disease	261	3
			c) fibre	cordage and weaving		1, 4, 5*
			d) epiphyte	magical protection	various	1

	BORAGINACEAE					
52.	Ehretia rigida	murovherovhe, mutepe	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1
			b) branches (sticks)	magical protection, lashes, firewood, firemaking, withies,		1
			c) root	sprained joints	96 + 149	1
				infertility	59+96+ another	3
	BURSERACEAE					
53.	Commiphora marlothii	mufhafha	bark	pelagra	-	1
54.	Commiphora merkeri	mutonyombidi	root	aphrodisiac	-	1, 3, 4
55.	Commiphora mollis	muukhuthu	a) wood	carving impliments	-	1, 5*
			b) living plant	living fences	-	1
	CACTACEAE					
56.	Opuntia ficus-indica	mudoro	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1
				intoxicating drink	-	2
			b) root	toothache		1
				venereal disease	194	3
	CAESALPINOIDEAE					
57.	Afzelia cuanzensis	mutokota	bark	snake bite	-	3
				love charm	snuff	2
58.	Bauhinia fassoglensis	mutama	root	treat uterus after childbirth	-	3
59.	Bauhinia galpinii	mutswiriri	a) root	infant food	various	1
				stomach, spasms, diarrhoea, infertility	-	3
				infertility	52 + 96	3
			b) branches	construction (roof and courtyard)	-	1
60.	Bolusanthus speciosus	mukambana	a) bark(root & stem)	anema for venereal disease, cleaning blood and kidneys	-	1

				'divhu'	-	1
			b) wood	fencing posts, furniture, household utensils	-	5*
61.	Burkea africana	mufhulu	a) leaves	foods for caterpillars which are part of human diet	-	1, 5*
			b) wood	carving impliments, firewood, fencing	-	1, 5*
			c) whole plant	shade and beauty	-	1
			d) bark	blisters on tongue and gums, sore throat, ulcers		3, 5*
62.	Cassia abbreviata	muboma, mulambadivhu	root	'divhu'	-	1
				blackwater fever	-	5*
63.	Cassia petersiana	munembenembe	a) fruit	edible	-	1, 4
			b) root	aphrodisiac, gonorrhoea, syphilis	98 + 275	1
				toothache	-	1, 3, 4
				stomach-ache, sterility	-	1, 3
				epilepsy	110 + 115	3
64.	Colophospermum mopane	mupani	a) leaves	food for 'mashonzha' which are eaten	-	1
				stomach-ache	-	3, 4
			b) wood	firewood, building and fencing	-	1, 4, 5*
65.	Peltophorum africanum	musese	a) bark	colds, fevers, sore throat, sores, ulcers and blisters in the oral cavity	-	1, 3, 4
			b) fibre	basketry	235	2
				stomach complaints, wounds, intestinal parasites	-	5*
				wandering rash of the tongue in children,	-	3
				eye sickness	22	3
				venereal diseases	98 + 202 + 216	3
			b) entire plant	menorrhagia	-	3
			c) leaves	ritual body cover	-	1
66.	Piliostigma thonningii	mukolokote	a) pods	soap substitute	-	5
			b) leaves	thirst, intestinal pains	-	5
			c) bark	with leaves: thirst, intestinal pains	-	5
			d) root	hookworms, spleen problems, leprosy, smallpox	-	5
				infant food	various	1
				venereal diseases	233	3
67.	Schotia brachypetala	mulubi, mununzwu	a) flower	nectar is sucked	-	1, 4
			b) bark	dysentery and diarrhoea, heart disease		1,3,4,5*
			c) wood	firewood	-	1

				shade and beauty	-	1, 5*
				furniture	-	5*
	CANELLACEAE					
68.	Warburgia salutaris	mulanga	bark	given to dogs to make them more brave, alert and ferocious	-	1, 4
				aphrodisiac	-	1, 3, 4
				Makes bees aggressive and thus protected	-	4
				Venereal diseases	-	1
				colds, chest complaints, sore throat	-	1, 3, 5*
				pugative, malaria	-	5*
				back ache, skin sores, stomach ulcer	-	3
	CAPPARACEAE					
69.	Boscia albitrunca	muthobi	a) fruit	eaten	-	1, 5*
			b) leaves	browsed by goat and cattle	-	1
			c) root	famine food, beverage (tea)	-	1, 4, 5*
			d) wood	tabooed as firewood but recently used	-	1, 5*
70.	Cadaba aphylla	tshikuni	root	luck	-	1
71.	Capparis tomentosa	gwambadzi, muobadali	root	magical protection of homestead against lightning evading court and other cases	-	1
				menorrhagia	23+98+115+202+261	3
				swollen ankles	199	3
				infertility	11+74+144+156+237+261	3
				tuberculosis	149	3
				headache	45+75+115+224	3
				worms	199	3
				war medicine	261+ heart of hammerhead	2
			leaves	purification after abortion, charm against witchcraft	-	2
				purification of husband after birth of twins	-	2

72.	Cloeme gynandra	murudi	leaves	vegetable	-	1
73.	Cloeme monophylla	mutohotoho	leaves	vegetable	-	1
74.	Maerua angolensis	mutambanamme	leaves and bark	'misho', stomach-ache, headache, purgative	browsed by goats	1
				skin cancer, purgative	-	5*
75.	Maerua caffra	mutapatila	a) root and stem bark	magical protection of homestead, menorrhagia	-	1, 3
				menorrhagia	23+146+237+261	3
			b) wood	must be avoided as firewood	-	1
	CARICACEAE					
76.	Carica papaya	mupapawe	a) fruit	stomach problems	-	1
			b) root	stomach problems	-	1
				venereal diseases	23+98+145+183+241+256	3
	CELASTRACEAE					
77.	Cassine aethiopica	mugugunu	a) fruit	eaten	-	1
			b) bark (root)	birdlime,	21	1
				magic	various	1
			c) wood	craftwork, firewood	-	1
78.	Cassine transvaalensis	mulumanamana, mukuvhazwivhi	a) fruit	eaten	-	1, 5*
			b) leaves	whitish, sweet and edible substance deposited on them	-	1
			c) bark	piles (haemorrhoids), venereal diseases, anthelmintic laxative, stomach-ache*, dysmenorrhoea, cough, diarrhoea, kidney and bladder complaints, diuretic, kidney calculi and venereal diseases	-	3, 5*
			d) root	coughs and diarrhoea	-	4
79.	Cassine spp.	mutshilari	a) root	baby food mixture, invocation of ancestors	various	1
		mukolomo	b) semiparasite	use against witchcraft (magical)	85 + 230	1
			c) branches	toy cattle	-	1

80.	Hippocratea crenata	luuvhu	stem	binding thatch	various	1
81.	Maytenus peduncularis	mukwatule	root	back ache	-	3
82.	Maytenus senegalensis	tshiphandwa	a) root	baby food (prophylactic,remedial), diarrhoea, nerve pains	various	1
				cough	202	3
				pneumonia	159+240	2
			b) wood	craftwork, firewood	-	1
			c) thorns	magical protection of homestead	various	1
83.	Maytenus tenuispina	ntsatshilambe	root	magic (to evade trouble)	various	1
84.	Maytenus undata	tshibvukahalwa	branches	stop spillage of water and beer from containers when carried from source to other places	-	1
				woodcraft	-	5*
85.	Pleurostylia capensis	murumelelwa	root or bark	magic - (white or black)	79+86+201+230	1
86.	Salacia rehmanii	Dira, musasalabwa, ntsatshilambe, phathatshimima, tavhatapano, tavhatapi	root	magical protection, luck	various	1
	CHENOPODIACEAE					
87.	Chenopodium album	daledale	leaves	vegetables	various	1
88.	Chenopodium spp.	muthathathuri	stem and leaves	insanity	various	1
	CLUSIACEAE					
89.	Garcinia livingstonei	muphiphi	a) fruit	eaten, alcoholic beverage	-	1, 4, 5*
			b) leaves	watering eyes	-	3, 4
			c) root	contraceptive	-	1
				aphrodisiac, toothache	-	3, 4
				impotency	11 + 230	3
				woman married with physical defect	11 + 93	2

90.	Combretum collinum	muvuvha	wood	firewood, building	-	1
91.	Combretum erythrophyllum	muvuvhu	a) bark	infertility and maintainanace of pregnancy	various	1
			b) wood	not recommended for building	-	1
			c) root	cough	-	3
				abdominal troubles	11+109+228+258+ two sedges	2
92.	Combretum hereroense	mugavhi	bark	heart diseases, heartburn	-	1
93.	Combretum imberbe	mudzwiri	a) root	infertility	9 + 94 + 110	1
			b) wood	building, fencing, craftwork, firewood	-	1, 4, 5*
			c) leaves	burnt & smoked for colds & other chest complaints	-	5*
94.	Combretum molle	mugwiti	a) bark	worms	-	3
			b) root	infertility	9 + 93 + 110	1
				laxative, worms	-	3
			c) wood	building, fencing, firewood	-	1
			d) leaf and root	wounds, snake-bite, stomach problems, difficult birth-giving, constipation, fever	-	5*
95.	Combretum mosambicense	mulandou	root	magical treatment (doctoring) of humans	-	1
96.	Combretum paniculatum	mukopo-kopo	root	infertility	116 + 279 or 52 + 59 + another	3
				retained placenta	-	3
				menorrhagia	261	3
				venereal disease	179 + 259	3
				headache due to indigestion	10 + another	3
				cough	45+233+290+111	3
				to treat pulsating anterior fontanelle in babies	45 + 96 + another	3
				sprained joints	52 + 149	3
97.	Combretum zeyheri	mufhatelathundu	a) wood	building and roof construction - short-lived	-	1
			b) roots	basketry, eye washes, diarrhoea	-	5*
98.	Terminalia sericea	mususu	a) leaves	infected wounds	-	3
				menorrhagia	-	3
			b) bark	dressing on wounds, especially magical ones	-	1

				ulcers	9	1
			c) root	baby food, diarrhoea, dysentery	-	1, 5*
				Diarrhoea	-	1, 3, 5*
				infertility, virility	65 + 202 + 216	3
				venereal diseases	23 + 76 + 145 + 256	3
			d) wood	woodcraft	-	1
	CONVOLVULACEAE					
99.	Evolvulus alsinoides		leaves and stem	colds and flu	-	1
100.	Ipomoea obscura	muduhwi	a) leaves	eaten, food for edible caterpilars (maduhwi)	-	1
			b) stem	binding and basketry	-	1
	CRASSULACEAE					
101.	Kalanchoe brachyloba	tshinyanyu	leaves	mental illness	Crustacea isopoda	3
	CUCURBITACEAE					
102.	Cucumis africanus	tshinyagu	a) leaves	vegetable	various	1
			b) seed	purgative	166	1
103.	Momordica balsamina	tshibavhe	leaves	vegetable, anti-emetic	-	1
104.	Momordica boivinii	tshifhafhe	a) leaves	eaten as vegetable	-	1
			b) tuber	bathe infant for weight	-	1
105.	Momordica foetida	nngu	leaves	vegetable, earache	-	1
	CUPPRESSACEAE					
106.	Widdringtonia cupressoides	thaululo	root	venereal diseases, menstrual and uterine problems	-	1

CYPERACEAE

107. Cyperus latifolius	dzhesi	leaves	mats and thatch	various	
108. Cyperus esculentus	ngowe	corm	eaten	-	1
109. Cyperus sexangularis	mutate	straws	weaving, cordage, thatch, also chewed	various	1
		root	abdominal troubles	11+91+228+258+ two sedges	2

EBENACEAE

110. Diospyros lycioides	muthala	a) root	baby food mixture	various	1
			epilepsy	63 + 115	3
			blood in faeces	162	3
			infertility	9 + 93 +94	2
		b) branches	lashes	-	1
111. Diospyros mespiliformes	musuma	a) fruit	eaten	-	1, 4, 5*
			fungal disease on skull	-	3
		b) seed	headache	-	3
		c) root or bark	dysentery, febrifuge	-	1
			cough	126	3
			pulsating anterior fontanelle in babies	96	3
		d) wood	firewood	-	1
		e) whole plant	shade	-	1
112. Diospyros whyteana	munyavhili	leaf and root	'munyavhili' (pricking, itchy and irritating rash)	-	1
113. Euclea divinorum	mutangule	a) fruit	eaten	-	1, 5*
		b) branch	toothbrush	-	1
		c) root	purgative*, troubled and noisy stomach, headaches, general cleaning, toothache	-	1, 5*
114. Euclea linearis	mutangule-musekene	a) fruit	eaten	-	1
		b) branch	toothbrush	-	1
		c) root	joints and fractured bones, toothache	various	1

115. Euclea natalensis	mutangule-thavha	a) root	laxative	-	3
			headache	45 + 71 + 75 + 224	3
			infertility	-	3
			epilepsy	63 + 110	3
		b) root and bark	toothache	-	3
		c) bark of root	abortion, diuretic, gonorrhoea, kidney calculi, amenorrhoea	Mylabris oculata	3
EUPHORBIACEAE					
116. Antidesma venosum	mukwalakwali	root	infertility	11+25+96+180+279	3
			menorrhagia	-	3
			dysmenorrhoea	-	3
117. Bridelia micrantha	munzere	a) fruit	eaten	-	1, 5*
		b) bark	burns	-	1
			infected wounds	195 + 259	3
			toothache, abortion (1--2 months)	-	3
		c) wood	construction of bridges and roofs	-	1, 5*
		d) leaf	painful eyes, fevers and headaches	-	5*
118. Bridelia mollis	mukumbakumba	a) fruit	eaten	-	1, 5*
		b) root	worms	166	3
		c) whole plant	ornamental	-	1, 5*
119. Croton gratissimus	mufhorola	a) leaves	colds, flu and fevers	-	1, 5*
		b) bark	rheumatism, blue tongue, bronchitis and digestive problems	-	5*
120. Croton megalobotrys	muruthu	a) seeds	purgative	-	1,3,4,5*
			worms	127	3
		b) bark	bark for malaria, fish poison	-	5*
121. Euphorbia cooperi	tshikondengala	a) root	paralysis	122+thorn+another	3
		b) latex	infected wounds	-	3
122. Euphorbia ingens	mukonde	a) bark	ulcers (especially the type known as 'pfuko')	-	1
			swollen ankles	130 + 199	3
		b) root	paralysis	121+thorn+another	3
			diarrhoea	-	3

		c) sap	fish poison	-	5*
123. Euphorbia tirucalli	mutungu	a) root	general body pains	-	1
		b) leaves	prophylactic against poisoning	-	1
124. Jatropa curcas	mupfure-donga	root	toothache	-	3
125. Manihot utilissima	mutumbula	a) leaves	vegetable	various	1
		b) root tuber	eaten when cooked properly	-	1
126. Pseudolachnostylis maprouneifolia	mutondowe	a) bark	carminative, noisy stomach, venereal diseases, magic	-	1
			cough	111	3, 5*
		b) bark and leaves	to attract animals (wild) to traps	-	1
		c) root	pneumonia, purgative*	-	3, 5*
127. Ricinus communis	mupfure	a) fruit	cough but causes diarrhoea and emesis,		
			laxative, tonic	-	1, 3
			earache (oil in ear)	-	3
			worms	120	3
		b) seed	purgative, oil for earache (dropped in ear)'thiliso',		
			mixing medium, and softening leather clothes	-	1
			oil for mixing drugs	-	2
		c) leaves	purgative	-	1
		d) root	toothache	-	1
			piles and rheumatic	21 + 175 + 270	1
128. Securinega virosa	mutangauma	a) fruit	eaten	-	1
		b) root	general body health in children	-	1
		c) wood & branches	building and fencing, firewood	-	1
129. Spirostachys africanum	muonze	a) bark	stomach pains, noisy stomach, dysentery, diarrhoea, general		
			purification of blood and kidneys	-	1, 5*
		b) wood or bark	headache, nose and gum bleeding, colds, flu, fever	-	3, 4
			put in bag containing seeds to discourage damage by		
			seed-borers	-	1
			never used for firewood	-	1
		c) latex	toothache	-	5*

130. Synadenium cupulare	muswoswo	a) latex	black quarter in cattle, sprained limbs	-	1, 4
			boost running power	-	1
			injured eyes in cattle	-	1, 2
		b) root	paralysis, swollen ankles	122 + 199	3, 4
131. Tragia rupestris	tshitondovhe	fruit/inflorescence	promote tooth emergence in babies	-	1
			spines itchy	-	1
132. Tragia sp.	dzaluma	leaves	vegetable, headache, venereal diseases	-	1
FLACOURTIACEAE					
133. Dovyalis caffra	mutunu	a) fruit	edible and frequently eaten	-	1
		b) thorns	to remove pieces or wood or thorns tips from soles of feet to extract marula seed kernels, and in magical protection of homesteads	-	1
			pain in chest,	-	3
			amenorrhoea	179 + 199 + 216	3
			make incisions on body for application of medicines	-	2
134. Oncoba spinosa	mutuzwu	a) root	infertility	-	3
		b) dry fruit shells	dancing rattles	-	4
135. Trimeria grandifolia	muhashaphande, muthethenya	a) fruit	edible and frequently eaten	-	1
		b) wood	craftwork, firewood	-	1
GUNNERACEAE					
136. Gunnera perpensa	shambodavhadzimu	a) leaves	cooked as vegetable	various	1
		b) stem (rhizome)	magical protection of homesteads	various	1
HERNANDIACEAE					
137. Gyrocarpus americanus	mundzhoundzhou	root	wounds	139 + another	3

ICACINACEAE					
138. Pyrecantha grandiflora	bwere	root	luck, to evade trouble	various	1
			malaria	droppings of hammerhead	2
139. Gladiolus dalenii	phende-phende	bulb	eye sickness	-	3
			wounds	137 + another	3
			earache	-	3
LAMIACEAE					
140. Leonotis mollis	mununzu	flowers	nectar sucked	-	1
141. Mentha aquatica	mpuyuyu	leaves	sore and itchy eyes	-	3
142. Ocinum canum	bunganyunyu	leaves	eye sickness	-	3
			ward off mosquitoes	-	1
143. Plectranthus loxiflorus	bunganyunyu	leaves	repellent for mosquitoes	-	1
			eye sickness	-	3
LAURACEAE					
144. Cassytha filiformis	luangalala	root	menorrhagia	23+75+156+202+261+ another	3
			infertility	11+71+75+156+237+ 261 + three others	3
			magic	various	1
LILIACEAE					
145. Aloe chabaudii	tshikhopha	a) root	venereal disease	23+76+98+241+256	3
			haematuria	-	3
		b) leaves	swollen ankles	199 + two others	3
146. Aloe marlothii	bindamutshe	a) leaves	treatment of seeds 'divhu', etc.	-	1
			blood in faeces	-	3
		b) root	stomach troubles, infection by worms	various	1

147. Aloe micrantha	tshikhopha tshituku	leaves	dysentery in children	various	1
148. Protasparagus buchananii	lufhaladzamakole	a) root	anti-emetic	-	1
			eye sickness	-	3
		b) leaves	amenorrhoea	-	3
		c) whole plant	burnt to disperse clouds	-	1
149. Protasparagus falcatus	govhakhanga	a) leaves	anti-emetic	-	1
		b) root	sprained joints	52	1
			sore throat and dysphagia, anti-emetic,	unidentified	3
			tuberculosis	71 + spider-web + unidentified	3
150. Sansevieria hyacinthoides	savha	a) root	baby food	various	1
		b) leaves	diarrhoea in children, prophylactic	-	1
			basketry	-	1
LOGANIACEAE					
151. Anthocleista grandiflora	mueneene	a) leaves	to cover millet grains to promote malting, ritual clothing	-	1
			nutrition for cattle	175	3
		b) bark	high blood pressure, pre-treatment of seeds, Venereal D.	-	1
152. Nuxia floribunda	mulanotshi	wood	firewood, fencing posts	-	1
153. Strychnos decussata	mukangala	root	snake-bite	-	1, 3
			protection of homestead against invasion by snakes (Powder sprinkled all around homestead)	-	1
			chastisement of initiates (on stick)	-	2
154. Strychnos madagascariensis	mukwakwa	a) fruit	edible and eaten	-	1
		b) bark	dysmenorrhoea	-	3
		c) root	toothache	-	3
		d) wood	firewood	-	1
155. Strychnos spinosa	muramba	a) fruit	edible,'swanzwo', soft porridge for woman after giving birth	-	1
			playing wheels by boys	-	2

		b) leaves	'swanzwo'	-	1
		c) root	purification after birth of twins	-	2
		d) wood	firewood and building	-	1
MALPHIGIACEAE					
156. Sphedamnocarpus pruriens	azwiili, tsimambe	root	diarrhoea and anti-emetic in children, prophylactic against breast-feeding children diseases during mother's pregnancy	-	1
			stomach troubles, mental illness	-	3
			infertility	11+71+75+144+237+ 261 + three others	3
			menorrhagia	23+75+144+201+202+ 261 + another	3
MALVACEAE					
157. Hibiscus praeteritus	makhulu wa mutudo	a) fibre	cordage and weaving sieves	-	1
		b) stems	clean reed cavities for musical instruments	-	1
158. Hibiscus trionum	delelemukhwayo	leaves	cooked and eaten as vegetable	-	1
159. Hibiscus vitifolius	muhwidzi	root	vaginal discharge which causes infertility	-	3
			pulsating anterior fontanelle in babies	-	3
			pneumonia	82 + 240	2
160. Pavonia sp.	tshiteaduvha	leaves	cooked and eaten as vegetable	various	1
161. Sida cordifolia	mutudo	a) fibre	cordage and weaving	various	1
		b) stem	clean hollow cavities in reeds	-	1
MELIACEAE					
162. Ekebergia capensis	mudouma	a) leaf	skin diseases, headaches, chronic coughs	-	5*
		b) bark	emetic	-	1, 5*
			dysentery	110	3, 5*
			backache, headaches	-	1, 3

		c) wood	furniture	-	5*
		d) whole tree	ornamental and shade	-	1, 5*
163. Entandophragma caudatum	munzhounzhou	a) fruit	playing instruments ('zwihwilili')	-1	
		b) sap	tanning	-	5*
164. Melia azedarach	muserenga	a) fruit	frequently eaten	-	1
		b) whole plant	ornamental and windbreaker	-	1
165. Trichilia dregeana	mutuhu	a) bark	enema for men - to clean the stomach, kidneys and blood	-	1, 3
		b) whole tree	ornamental	-	1
166. Trichilia emetica	mutshikili	a) fruit	edible and eaten, condiment, cooking oil,'mudo'		
			furniture oil	-	1, 4, 5*
		b) bark	enema for men (general cleaning of kidney & blood)		1, 3, 5*
			stomach troubles*, laxative,		3, 5*
			worms	118	3
		c) whole tree	ornamental	-	1
167. Bersama tysoniana	sando	root, leaf & semi-parasite	bad luck	various	1
MENISPERMACEAE					
168. Cissampelos torulosa	lukandululo	a) whole plant	ritual purification	various	1
		b) leaves	vegetable	various	1
MIMOSACEAE					
169. Acacia albida	muhoto	a) bark	infant food mixture, venereal diseases, diarrhoea*	-	1, 5*
		b) whole plant	shade and beauty	-	1
170. Acacia ataxacantha	muluwa	a) root bark	aphrodisiac	various	1
		b) branches	basketry and fencing	various	1,4a
		c) wood	firewood	-	1
171. Acacia burkei	munanga	wood and branches	fencing and building, firewood	-	1,5*

172. Acacia karroo	muunga	a) gum	edible	-	1, 5*
		b) bark	palatable when chewed, fibre	-	1
			emetic, coagulant, dysentery, diarrhoea, colic, colds		
			inflamation of eyes, tulip poisoning in cattle,		
			basketry & ropes	-	5*
		c) wood and branches	inhabited by edible worms, firewood, fencing	-	1
		d) thorns	magic	-	1
			heart pains	187	3
173. Acacia nigrescens	tshinangana	wood and branches	fencing, firewood	-	1, 5*
174. Acacia tortilis	musu	a) gum	chewed	-	1
		b) fruit	gathered for goats and sheep feeding	-	1
		c) bark	fibre	-	1
		d) wood and branches	hedge fending, firewood	-	1, 5*
		e) thorns	remal of thorns from soles of feet as well as kernels		
			from marula seeds	-	1
175. Albizia adianthifolia	muelela, muvhadangoma	a) leaves and root	stomach-ache, purgative, toothache	-	1
			dysentery, piles	21 + 127 + 268	1
			food for cattle	155	3
		b) root	boosting memory and promoting dreams about medicinal plants	-	1
			inflamation of the eyes*	-	5*
		c) wood	carving drums and other household impliments		1
		d) whole plant	shade and as ornamental	-	1
176. Albizia anthelmintica	muime	root	venereal disease	256	3
177. Albizia brevifolia	mupalakhwali	a) leaf and fruit	abdominal pains	-	1
		b) root	baby food, infertility, headache*, purgative*, sore eyes*	-	1, 5*
			amenorrhoea	133+179+199+216	3
		c) wood	craftwork	-	1, 5*
178. Albizia tanganyicensis	mulelu	root	for athletes who run	legs of birds	3
179. Albizia versicolor	mutambapfunda, muvhambangoma	a) bark	eye diseases, aphrodisiac,'divhu' bilharzia, general		
			cleaning of stomach and blood, luck, wounds and sores	various	1
			venereal diseases	96 +259	1, 3
		b) wood	craftwork	-	1

		c) whole plant	shade and ornamental	-	1
180. Dichrostachys cinerea	murenzhe	a) leaf	eye diseases	-	1, 3
		b) bark (root & stem)	promote hardening of baby's or adult's fontanelle		
			dislocated joints	-	1, 3
			ngoma, toothache, and stomach troubles, snake-bites and scorpion stings	-	1
			sore throat	-	3
			infertility	11 + 25 +116	3
			wounds, headaches, tuberculosis	-	5*
		c) fruit	festering sores,	-	1, 3
			wounds	199 + 268	3
		d) semiparasite	witchcraft (practice and prevention)	-	1
		e) wood and branches	fencing, firewood, craftword	-	1, 5*
			luck	-	1
181. Elephantorrhiza burkei	gumululo, tshisesevhafu	root	bathe long time convalescent ('ukumulula'), general cleaning of body systems, regulation of menstruation, venereal diseases, aphrodisiac	-	1
			miscarriage	-	3
MORACEAE					
182. Ficus burkei	muumo	a) fruit	eaten by all	-	1
		b) latex	birdlime	-	1
		c) semiparasite	madness	various	1
		d) whole plant	ornamental	-	1
183. Ficus capensis	muhuyu-ngala	a) fruit	tuberculosis	185	3
		b) root	diarrhoea	76	3
184. Ficus ingens	tshikululu	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) whole plant	ornamental	-	1
		c) bark	milk production in cows, anemia	-	5*
185. Ficus sycomorous	muhuyu-lukuse	a) fruit	edible, promote lactation in goats and cattle	-	1, 4, 5*
			tuberculosis	183	3

		b) root or bark	colds and other chest troubles, diarrhoea	-	1, 5*
			ingredient of medicines in 'thufhana'	various	1
		c) fibre	sieves and cordage	-	1, 5*
		d) whole plant	shade and ornamental	-	1
186. Ficus sp.	mutambvu	a) fruit	edible, promote milk production	-	1
		b) bark	medicinal information on bark unavailable	-	1
		c) whole plant	ornamental and shade	-	1
MUSACEAE					
187. Musa paradisiaca	muomva	fruit	heat pains	172	3
			eaten	-	1
188. Musa sp.	mulolo	leaf and leaf sheath	weaving, cordage, to hold snuff	-	1
MYROTHAMNACEAE					
189. Myrothamnus flabellifolius	mukangambanzhe	whole plant	colds and other chest complaints, nose bleeding, fainting	-	1
MYRSINACEAE					
190. Maesa lanceolata	muunguri	a) leaves	cover grain to promote malting, dressing at initiation schools	-	1, 4
		b) whole plant	ornamental	-	1
		c) root	infertility	4+198+219+223+261	3
191. Rapanea melanophloes	tshididiri	bark	sore throat, wounds (dressing)	-	1
192. Eugenia natalitia	museri	wood	building and fencing posts, craftwork	-	1
193. Heteropyxis natalensis	mudedede	a) fresh leaves	weaning	-	3
		b) root	menorrhagia	-	3
			drug for woman with physical defect	11 + 89	2
194. Psidium quajava	mugwavha	root	venereal disease	56	3

195. Syzygium cordatum	mutu	a) fruit	edible	-	1, 4, 5*
		b) leaves	stomach troubles, colds and fevers	-	1
		c) bark or root	ingredient of baby food	-	1
			headache, amenorrhoea	-	3
			wounds	117 + 259	3
196. Syzygium guinense	mutumadi	a) fruit	edible	-	1, 5*
		b) bark	ingredient of baby food medicine, diarrhoea		1, 5*
197. Syzygium legatii	mutawi	fruit	edible	-	1
NYMPHAEACEAE					
198. Nymphaea capensis	murambodane,shamboda	a) leaves	to avoid having twins	-	3
		b) root	infertility	4+190+219+223+261	3
OCHNACEAE					
199. Brackenridgea zanguebarica	mutavhatsindi	root and bark	magic	various	1
			magic	250+251+255+261	2
			wounds	180 + 268	3
			swollen ankles	122 + 130	3
			amenorrhoea	133 + 179 + 216	3
			worms	-	3
			mental illness	owl meat + another parasitic plant	3
200. Ochna arborea	murambothavha	root	for mothers who deliver weak or dead babies	-	3
OLACACEAE					
201. Ximenia americana	dadzwanombe	a) fruit	edible and often enjoyed	-	1
			seed for 'mudo' (polish)	-	1
		b) root	diarrhoea, dysetery, febrifuge	-	1

			menorrhagia, blood in faeces	23+75+144+156+202+ 261	3
		c) semiparasite	magic	85 + 86	1
202. Ximenia caffra	mutshili	a) fruit	edible and often enjoyed by most people	-	1, 5*
		b) seed	seed for 'mudo' (polish)	-	1
		c) root	blood in faeces	-	1, 3
			diarrhoea, febrifuge, ingredient in 'dzovheyo'	-	1
			cough	82	3
			menorrhagia	23+75+201+144+156+ 261	3
			infertility, venereal diseases, eye sickness, indigestion, headache, etc.	-	3, 5*
			venereal diseases	19	3
			scurvy	-	2
		d) fibre	weaving 'thahu'	10	2
OLEACEAE					
203 Olea capensis	musiri	root	swollen joints and broken bones	228	3
204. Schrebera alata	mulingwi	dry leaves	anti-emetic for children	unidentified	3
OXALIDAE					
205. Oxalis semiloba	mukulungwane	leaves	tart	-	1
PAPILIONOIDEAE					
206. Crotalaria sp.	murundelatshotshi, nduhushango	root	cholic and stomach troubles in general, venereal diseases	-	1
207. Dalbergia melanoxylon	muuluri	a) wood	making divination articles ('thangu')	-	1, 4
		b) bark	prevent excessive bleeding	-	3
		c) root	headache	-	5*

208. Eriosema elipticifolium	mundodzi	fruit	edible and eaten	-	1
209. Erythrina lysistemon	muvhale	a) bark	toothache	-	1
		b) whole tree	windbreaker and ornamental	-	1, 5*
210. Indigofera arrecta	muswiswa, mualigatsibi	a) root	ngoma (depressed fontanelle), diarrhoea in children	-	1
			tuberculosis in children	-	3
		b) entire plant	dye for fibre articles and iron anklets	-	1
211. Lonchocarpus capassa	mufhanda	a) entire plant	diarrhoea	-	3
		b) root	gastrointestinal disorders	-	3
212. Milletia stuhlmanii	muangaila	root	magical protection of homesteads and property	various	1
			stomach-ache	-	3
213. Mucuna coriacea	mulada	a) root	toothache	-	1
		b) hairs	must be avoided, treacherously used	-	1
214. Mundulea sericea	mukundandou	root bark	prophylactic (general)	-	1
			aphrodisiac	-	4
			purification of spouses after abortion	urine from both	2
			aphrodisiac	228 + 230	3
			regulate sex of unborn child	9	3
215. Ormocarpum trichocarpum	mugogodwane	a) root	magical protection	various	1
		b) leaves	entertainment (children pseudofamily games --'mahundwane')	-	1
		c) wood	firewood	-	1
216. Pterocarpus angolensis	mutondo	a) bark	piles, amenorrhoea, promote blood formation	-	1
			amenorrhoea	133+179+199+177	3
			menorrhagia	23	1, 3
			venereal diseases	65 + 98 + 202	3
			gonorrhoea, haematuria, bilharzia	-	3
		b) fruit	whooping cough	-	3
		c) root	amenorrhoea, headache, ngoma	-	3
		d) wood	craftwork, fencing, magic (to doctor land)	-	1, 5*
217. Vigna vexilata	musivha	root tuber	famine food	-	1

PASSIFLORACEAE					
218. Adenia digitata	dundu	a) leaves	edible and cooked as vegetable	various	1
			with stem for delayed childbirth	-	1
		b) root	earache	-	1
			swollen legs	-	3
			wean child	26	2
219. Adenia gummifera	bopha, beleha	a) leaves	vegetable	-	1
		b) root	menorrhagia	219	3
			infertility	4+190+198+223+261	3
		c) whole plant	binding	-	1, 2
220. Adenia spinosa	tshivhuyudumbu	bark	to promote strength and weight increase in babies	various	1
PEDALIACEAE					
221. Dicerocaryum zanguebaricum	museto	a) leaves	soap substitute	-	1
		b) whole plant	expulsion of placenta in cattle	-	1
			expulsion of placenta in humans and easy delivery	-	3
			black quarter disease in cattle	-	1
			aid in birth-giving	-	2
PHYTOLACACEAE					
222. Phytolacca octandra	vowa, thebe	a) leaves	vegetable	-	1
		b) whole shoot	stimulant and flavourant in snuff	-	1
PIPERACEAE					
223. Piper capense	mulilwe	bark	wounds and vaginal discharge	-	3
			infertility	4+190+198+219+261	3
			sore throat, tongue sores and venereal diseases	-	3

POACEAE					
224. Cymbopogon marginatus	fungwi	root	headache	45+71+75+115	3
225. Cymbopogon validus	benzwa	whole shoot	thatch	-	1
226. Cynodon dactylon	tshitanzhela	whole shoot	hot pressing on cattle udder	-	1
227. Oxytenanthera abyssinica	musununu	stem	musical instruments (flutes)	-	1, 2
228. Phragmites mauritianus	lutanga	stem	under-thatch, roofing goat and sheep enclosures, reed doors, courtyard enclosures, musical instruments, smoking pipes, fishing rods, withies, basketry, etc.	-	1
			swollen and broken bones	203	3
			abdominal troubles	11+91+109+258+ two unidentified	2
229. Sporobolus africanus	mushingidzhane	straws (stems)	craftwork (hats, mats, baskets, anklets, etc.)	-	1
POLYGALACEAE					
230. Securidaca longepedunculata	mpesu	a) root	aphrodisiac	-	1, 3, 4
			magic	79 + 85	1
			aphrodisiac	255 + 279	3
			virility	18	3
			impotency	11 + 89	3
			emetic, magic, anthelmintic, purgative		1
			back ache, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, contraceptive	-	3, 4
POLYGONACEAE					
231. Oxygonum dregeanum	muthanyi	leaves	vegetable	-	1

PORTULACACEAE					
232. Portulaca oleracea	makhulu-wa-luvhisi	leaves	vegetable	various	1
PROTEACEAE					
233. Faurea saligna	mutango	a) leaves	'divhu'	245 + 274	1
		b) root and bark	venereal disease and bilharzia	66	3
		c) root	cough	45+96+111+290	3
		d) wood	craftwork	-	1
234. Protea caffra	dzungu, tshidzungu	a) fruit	dizziness	-	1, 3
		b) fruit and bark	dizziness	-	1, 3
RANUNCULACEAE					
235. Clematis brachiata	tshiumbeumbe	fresh leaves	headache	-	3
			headache and colds	-	1
		branches	withies for basketry (tshidani)	65	2
236. Knowltonia transvaalensis	thauyakhomba	leaves	eye disease	-	3
RHAMNACEAE					
237. Berchemia discolor	munie	a) fruit	edible	-	1, 5*
			menorrhagia	23 + 71 + 75 + 261	3
		b) bark	infertility	11+71+75+144+158+ 261 + three others	3
			purplish dye in basketry and other types of weaving	-	1
		c) wood	furniture and other household utensils	-	1, 5*
			fire-making, building, firewood	-	1
		d) whole plant	shade and ornamental	-	1
238. Berchemia zeyheri	munie-niane	a) fruit	edible, also to make porridge	-	1, 5*
		b) bark	backache, rectal ulcers in children	-	5*
			purple dye	-	1
		c) wood	woodcraft	-	1, 5*
			firewood, building, fire-making	-	1

239. Helinus integrifolius	mupupuma	leaves	soap substitute	-	1
240. Ziziphus mucronata	mukhalu	a) fruit	edible but not pleasant tasting	-	1, 4, 5*
		b) leaves	pains in the body	-	1, 5*
		c) root	pain in the body	-	1, 3, 5*
			infertility	23+98+115+202	1, 3
			menorrhagia	23 + 98	3
			purification after birth of twins	-	2
		d) branches	hedge fencing	-	1, 4
			put over grave for shade	-	2
ROSACEAE					
241. Parinari curatellifolia	muvhula	a) fruit	edible, alcoholic beverage	-	1, 4, 5*
		b) bark	pelvic pains, abdominal troubles, wounds	22	1
			venereal disease	-	1
			toothache	283	3, 4
		c) root	venereal disease	23+76+98+145+256	3
			ear drops, cataract of eye	-	5*
142. Rubus pinnatus	munambala	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) root	chronic diarrhoea, chest complaints	-	1
RUBIACEAE					
243 Breonadia microcephala	mutulume	root	tachycardia	-	3
244. Canthium huillense	muvhibvelashadani	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) wood	craftwork, firewood	-	1
245. Canthium mundianum	mutomboti	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) leaf	divhu	233 + 274	1
		c) root	abdominal pains	-	3
246. Canthium sp.	mulimakhoda	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) thorns	extract marula seeds, magic	-	1
247. Cephalanthus natalensis	murondo	fruit	edible	-	1

248. Conostonium natalense	ndilele	root	magic	-	1
			love charm	-	2
249. Fadogia tetraquetra	tshiliso	root	'tshiliso'	-	1
250. Gardenia amoena	murombe	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) wood	firewood, hedge fencing	-	1
		c) root	magic	199+251+255+261	2
251. Gardenia volkensii	tshiralala	a) leaf	with root - wean a child, encourage walking		1
		b) fruit	'mituhu'-blood or poison - sucking impliments, medicine containers		1
		c) wood sticks	magic	various	1, 4
			magic	199+251+255+261	2
		d)root	with leaf - wean a child, encourage walking	-	1
252. Pachystigma macrocalyx	muzwilungala	root	aphrodisiac	-	3
253. Pavetta lanceolata	tshituku	dry leaves	anti-emetic	-	3
254. Rothmania capensis	murathamapfene	a) fruit	wounds and burns	-	3
		b) wood	firewoord	-	1
			woodcraft	-	4
255. Vangueria infausta	muzwilu	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) root	infertility in women, magic	-	1
			aphrodisiac	230 + 279	3
			magic	199+250+251+261	2
RUTACEAE					
256. Citrus limon	tshikavhavhe	root	venereal diseases	-	5
			venereal diseases	23+76+98+145+176	3
257. Toddalia aculeata	gwambadzi	root	heart pains and headache	-	3

258. Xanthoxylum davyi	munungu	a) leaves	chest pains	-	3
		b) thorns	infected wounds	117 + 195	3
		c) root	sore throat, ulcers in oral cavity	-	1, 3
			aphrodisiac	-	3
			venereal diseases	96 + 179	3
		d) bark	snake-bite, chronic cough, boils, toothache, pleurisy	-	5*
SALICACEAE					
259. Salix subserrata	munengeledzi	root	ntswu (baby food), stomach pains, magic	various	1
			abdominal troubles	11+91+109+228+ two sedges	2
SALVADORA					
260. Salvadora angustifolia	mundamuka	leaves	nose bleeding	-	3
SANTALACEAE					
261. Osyris lanceolata	mpeta	a) root	magic	various	1
			styptic effects on wounds	-	3
			menorrhagia	23+71+75+96+237	3
			infertility	11+71+144+156+237+ three others or 4+190+198+219+223	3
			war medicine	71 + heart of hammerhead	2
			venereal diseases	-	3
		b) sticks	magic, to stir beer	-	1
			magic	199+250+251+255	2
			charm: protection against disease, ancestors and enemies	vhulivhadza	2
SAPINDACEAE					
262. Pappea capensis	murodololo	a) fruit	edible, alcoholic beverage	-	1, 5*

		b) leaf	painful eyes, venereal diseases, aphrodisiac	-	1, 5*
		c) wood	firewood, house-hold utensils	-	1, 5*
SAPOTACEAE					
263. Bequaertiodendron magalismontanum	munombelo	a) fruit	edible, alcoholic beverage	-	1, 4, 5*
		b)	abdominal pains, to invoke ancestral spirits during 'malombo' dance, contraceptive	-	1
			rheumatism	-	5*
264. Mimusops zeyheri	mububulu	a) fruit	edible, alcoholic beverage	-	1, 5*
		b) root	abdominal complaints, insanity	various	1
SCROPHULARIACEAE					
265. Halleria lucida	mudula	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) root	earache	-	1
SOLANACEAE					
266. Datura stramonium	zavhazavha	leaves	snuff ingredient, insanity, venereal disease	various	1
267. Physalis peruviana	murungudane	a) leaf	vegetable, abdominal disorders	-	1
		b) fruit	edible	-	1
268. Solanum aculeastrum	mushulwa	a) fruit	anti-emetic	-	1
			piles, dysentery	21 + 127 + 175	1
			burning and itchy defaecation	-	3
			wounds	180 + 199	3
		b) branches	hedge fencing	-	1
		c) living plant	living fence	-	1
269. Solanum nigrum	muxe	leaves	vegetable, malaria, dysentery, cholagogue	-	1
270. Solanum panduraeforme	mutululwa	a) fruit	wounds, toothache	-	1
			headache	-	3

		b) fruit juice	promote drying of umbilical cord	-	2
		c) root	indigestion in children and adults, other stomach disorders	166	1, 3
			ulcers, anti-emetic, toothache	-	1
			piles, rheumatic	21 + 127 + 175	1
	STERCULIACEAE				
271.	Dombeya rotundifolia	tshiluvhari	a) bark	fevers, headaches, stomach troubles, cordage	-	5*
			b) root	infertility	-	1
				colic, stomach problems	-	5*
			c) wood	furniture	-	5*
			d) flowers	seasonal indicator	-	1
272.	Hermania glanduligera	manyamanye	root	swollen or expanded veins on abdomen	-	1
	THYMELAEACEAE					
273.	Passerina montana	musanana	a) fibre	cordage	-	1
			b) branches	thatch, brooms	-	1
274.	Peddia africana	gokodzalulimi	a) fibre	weaving and cordage	-	1
			b) root	'divhu'	233 + 245	1
	TILIACEAE					
275.	Corchorus tridens	delele	leaves	vegetable	various	1
276.	Grewia bicolor	murabva	a) fruit	edible	-	1
			b) leaves	tea	-	1
			c) root	chest complaints, diarrhoea	-	1
			d) bark	cordage - fibre	-	1
			e) branches	lashes, laths, fire-making	-	1
			f) whole plant	firewood	-	1

277. Grewia flavescens	muparatsheni	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) root	inducing labour, infertility and impotency	-	1
		c) branches	lashes, wattles, discipline	-	1
		d) whole plant	firewood	-	1
278. Grewia hexamita	murabva-pfene	fruit	edible	-	1, 5*
279. Grewia microthyrsa	mupfuka	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) branches	wattles	-	1
		c) root	infertility	96 + 116	3
			aphrodisiac	230 + 255	3
280. Grewia occidentalis	mulembu	a) leaves	vegetable	-	1
		b) root	syphilis	293	1
281. Grewia villosa	mupunzu	a) fruit	edible	-	1
		b) root	medicine - unknown	-	1
		c) branches	laths, lashes	-	1
		d) whole plant	firewood	-	1

282. Triumfetta pilosa	tshimvumvu	leaves	eye disease	-	3
ULMACEAE					
283. Celtis africana	mumvumvu	a) bark	magic	-	1, 5*
			nose and ear drops	241	3
			toothache	241	3
		b) branches-sticks	magic	vrious	1, 5*

URTICACEAE					
284. Obetia tenax	muvhazwi,	a) leaves	vegetable - potherb	-	1
	muugana,	b) fibre	cordage	-	1
	muendanathavha	c) root	snake-bite	-	1
285. Pouzolzia mixta	muthanzwa	a) leaves	edible, vegetable	various	1
		b) root	divhu, dysentery, magic	-	1
VELLOZIACEAE					
286. Xerophyta retinervis	tshikundandadzi	stem	prevent uterine lesions after child birth	228	3
VERBENACEAE					
287. Clerodendrum glabrum	munukhatshilongwe	a) leaves	sore throats, colds, magic	-	1
		b) root	fractured bones	-	3
		bark			
288. Lantana camara	tshidzimbambule	fresh leaves	eye injuries	-	3
289. Lantana rugosa	tshidzimbambule	a) fruit	edible		
		b) leaves	sore or painful eyes	-	1, 3
		c) root	promotes strong and lusty growth in children	-	2
290. Lippia javanica	musudzungwane	a) leaves	colds, headaches, stomach disorders, malaria, dysentery and diarrhoea, general	-	1, 3
		b) root	sprained joints	-	1, 3
			cough	45+96+111+233	3
VITACEAE					
291. Rhoicissus capensis	dyathoho	fruit	edible	-	1
292. Rhoicissus tridentata	murumbulambudzana	a) fruit	edible	-	1
			blood in faeces	10 + 202	3

		b) root	stomach disorders in children, blood in faeces	-	1, 3
			pulsating anterior fontanelle in babies, infertility	-	3
		c) leaves	anti-emetic for children	-	3
ZYGOPHYLACEAE					
293. Tribulus terrestris	tsetwana	a) leaves	vegetable	-	1
		b) whole plant	syphilis	280	1
294. Tribulus zeyheri	tseto	leaves	vegetable	various	1