

THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE VHAVENDA

by

DOWELANI EDWARD NDIVHUDZANNYI MABOGO

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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. A.E. van Wyk

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ABSTRACT

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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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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

DOWELANI EDWARD NDIVHUDZANNYI MABOGO

Studieleier: Prof. Dr. A.E. van Wyk

Departement Plantkunde

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA

MAGISTER SCIENTIAE

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 dië plante wat as belangrik beskou word.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Dowelani 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.