

An investigation into the ethnobotanical use of *Adansonia digitata* in the Sagole community of the Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract

The baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*), with more than 300 cultural and ethnobotanical uses in Africa, has been identified as one of the most important savanna trees on the African continent. A decline in baobab populations due to overexploitation could have a significant negative effect on African livelihoods. Therefore, it is important to determine potential strategies for its conservation. As a case study, the investigation explored the ethnobotanical use, as well as local and institutional conservation efforts of baobab trees by the Sagole community of the Limpopo Province, South Africa. Forty local community members, five traditional health practitioners, and two members from the Limpopo Tourism were selected via convenience sampling. Results indicate that community members primarily use the tree for food and medicine. Medicinally it is used to cure various ailments, such as stomach aches and skin problems. Younger community members have limited knowledge about the cultural taboos related to harvesting material from this majestic tree, which leads to excessive harvesting and damage. Conservation efforts by the provincial Department of Environmental Affairs, as well as the chief seems to be inefficient. Thus a significant educational effort is needed to inform the younger generations.

Keywords: Conservation, cultural taboos, ethno-medicinal uses.

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