

Izaci namaqhalo esiXhosa

Xhosa idioms and proverbs referring to plants

African culture and language diversity remain closely linked to biodiversity

"Converging with the ecological extinction crisis, the planet has been experiencing a severe erosion of the diversity of human cultures and languages, reducing the pool of knowledge, behaviors and values from which individual communities and humanity at large can draw to respond to social and environmental stresses"***



ABOVE: Inkanga or a giant Senecio pterophorus. The saying goes, 'Mukho inkanga idubula ingethi' (there is no inkanga that comes into flower and does not wither), which means, 'Pride goes before a fall.' Photo: Tony Dold.

by **Tony Dold**, Selmar Schonland Herbarium, Rhodes University
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Rhodes University

With a land surface area of 1.1 million km², representing just 1% of the earth's total land surface, South Africa is home to almost 10% of the world's known bird, fish and plant species, and over 6% of the world's mammal and reptile species. Not only do we claim to have the third-highest level of biodiversity in the world, we call ourselves the 'Rainbow Nation', a title that reflects the country's rich cultural diversity.

Recent research suggests a strong correlation between the geographical distribution of biological 'megadiversity' and that of cultural and linguistic diversity with a trend towards increasing linguistic diversity in areas of increasing plant diversity and vice versa. It is possible that biological and cultural-linguistic diversity may be related through co-evolution and that the causes and consequences of declining biodiversity may be linked to those threatening the diversity of human cultures and languages. It is estimated that half the people in the world now use one of eight global languages. Experts say 234 African languages have already disappeared and that 32% of the endangered languages on earth are African. Yet, by and large, the destruction of both natural and cultural habitats continues unabated. The loss of languages, cultural practices and indigenous ecological knowledge all reflect the breakdown in the relationship between humans and their environment. It has been suggested that solutions for the sustainability of both cultural heritage and the environment require recognition of the inextricable link between cultural diversity and biological diversity.

Xhosa idioms and proverbs

While documenting folk-ecology over almost ten years we have collected a number of Xhosa proverbs (amaqhalo) and idioms (izaci) referring to plants. The wording and interpretation of these differ widely but nevertheless illustrate the complex relationship between culture/society and nature/environment. It is said that cultures and languages are defined by the natural environment in which they evolve, expressed here by the use of plant names in nuances of the Xhosa language.

"We hope that by presenting these in written form they may be kept alive for future generations of the Rainbow Nation."

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R Barnett



Izaci Namaqhalo Esixhosa Bio Cultural Diversity 63397:

The Top Books of the Year Izaci Namaqhalo Esixhosa Bio Cultural Diversity 63397 The year 2023 has witnessed a remarkable surge in literary brilliance, with numerous captivating novels captivating the hearts of readers worldwide. Lets delve into the realm of bestselling books, exploring the captivating narratives that have charmed audiences this year. Izaci Namaqhalo Esixhosa Bio Cultural Diversity 63397 : Colleen Hoovers "It Ends with Us" This heartfelt tale of love, loss, and resilience has captivated readers with its raw and emotional exploration of domestic abuse. Hoover skillfully weaves a story of hope and healing, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, the human spirit can prevail. Uncover the Best : Taylor Jenkins Reids "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo" This captivating historical fiction novel unravels the life of Evelyn Hugo, a Hollywood icon who defies expectations and societal norms to pursue her dreams. Reids captivating storytelling and compelling characters transport readers to a bygone era, immersing them in a world of glamour, ambition, and self-discovery. Discover the Magic : Delia Owens "Where the Crawdads Sing" This evocative coming-of-age story follows Kya Clark, a young woman who grows up alone in the marshes of North Carolina. Owens crafts a tale of resilience, survival, and the transformative power of nature, captivating readers with its evocative prose and mesmerizing setting. These popular novels represent just a fraction of the literary treasures that have emerged in 2023. Whether you seek tales of romance, adventure, or personal growth, the world of literature offers an abundance of compelling stories waiting to be discovered. The novel begins with Richard Papen, a bright but troubled young man, arriving at Hampden College. Richard is immediately drawn to the group of students who call themselves the Classics Club. The club is led by Henry Winter, a brilliant and charismatic young man. Henry is obsessed with Greek mythology and philosophy, and he quickly draws Richard into his world. The other members of the Classics Club are equally as fascinating. Bunny Corcoran is a wealthy and spoiled young man who is always looking for a good time. Charles Tavis is a quiet and reserved young man who is deeply in love with Henry. Camilla Macaulay is a beautiful and intelligent young woman who is drawn to the power and danger of the Classics Club. The students are all deeply in love with Morrow, and they are willing to do anything to please him. Morrow is a complex and mysterious figure, and he seems to be manipulating the students for his own purposes. As the students become more involved with Morrow, they begin to commit increasingly dangerous acts. The Secret History is a masterful and suspenseful novel that will keep you speculating until the very end. The novel is a warning tale about the dangers of obsession and the power of evil.

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