

A Commitment to Tradition and Science:

Ethical and Operational Framework for Ethnomycological Research

In pursuit of a responsible and ethical approach to researching and documenting fungi in Southern Africa, this manifesto serves as our guiding framework. It is rooted in internationally recognized ethical standards and aims to preserve and honor the cultural heritage of indigenous communities. We seek to build respectful, collaborative relationships not only with these communities but also with the natural environment they have stewarded for generations.

Foundational Ethical Principles

Our work is underpinned by four key documents that set a high standard for ethical practice in ethnobiological and scientific research:

- **The International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) Code of Ethics:** Emphasizes free, prior, and informed consent, respect for local customs, and fair compensation for indigenous communities.
- **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (2014):** Establishes a legal framework for the equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources.
- **South Africa's Bioprospecting, Access, and Benefit-Sharing Regulatory Framework:** Governs the collection, research, and commercial use of biological resources in South Africa, ensuring benefits return to local communities.
- **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007):** Asserts the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain control over their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.

By adhering to these principles, our research prioritizes ethical considerations that safeguard both the cultural and biological diversity in Southern Africa.

Data Collection and Fieldwork Structure

Our fieldwork is carefully structured to ensure transparent and respectful documentation of indigenous knowledge. We operate under a legal permit, granted in collaboration with Free State University, which allows for the ethical harvesting of fungi and the acquisition of knowledge from traditional healers.

In addition:

- **SAPHRA License:** We are protected under Free State University's SAPHRA license to collect, distribute, and analyze psychedelic fungi, including Psilocybe, Paneolus, and Gymnopilus among others.
- **Data Recording:** Field data will be systematically collected, including ethnographic and scientific information. Traditional healers will have the opportunity to review the recorded information, with field notes, audio recordings, and photographs securely stored. Confidentiality will be maintained for sensitive cultural knowledge not intended for publication.

Alignment with the Fungi Foundation Elders Program

We are guided by the framework outlined in the Fungi Foundation's Elders Program, which ensures the voices of indigenous elders are central to our work. This framework for engaging with traditional knowledge keepers in a respectful manner, honoring their expertise and cultural heritage is a cornerstone of how we wish to conduct ourselves in the field and through this research. The resources outlined in the elders program acts as a guiding light for maintaining cultural sensitivity and ecological mindfulness throughout our research process.

Acknowledging Human Fallibility

In recognition of my own human limitations, I openly acknowledge that mistakes may happen throughout this process. However, I am committed to acting in alignment with the highest ethical standards, striving to be a force for good. My goal is to learn from any missteps, correct them promptly, and remain accountable to the communities and ecosystems we engage with. I hope to shine a light on South Africa's rich heritage of traditional knowledge, which is a core mission of The Lost Muti project. Feedback or guidance from the communities we work with will be welcomed and incorporated into our evolving practices.

Financial Remuneration and Acknowledgment

We believe in fair compensation for the time and knowledge shared by traditional healers. Our plan includes both immediate financial remuneration during fieldwork and long-term support through:

30% of book profits allocated to a trust managed by the Better World Foundry, which will fund:

- Continued research into traditional fungi used in Southern Africa.
- Establishment of a culture library: A repository for preserving valuable fungal species, ensuring access for future generations.
- Educational outreach programs: Initiatives aimed at teaching local communities how to cultivate edible mushrooms, helping to combat hunger in areas of need.

Public Recognition

In addition to financial remuneration, traditional healers will receive recognition in all publications and on my website. Due to the extensive number of contributors, recognition will not occur in public forums, but a detailed list of acknowledgments will be made available in the book and on www.lostmuti.com, where their contributions can be explored further.

Collaborations with Academia

We recognize the importance of collaboration in advancing our understanding of indigenous fungi and their uses. As part of our commitment to academic integrity and knowledge dissemination, we have an obligation to participate with Free State University.

We welcome collaborations with individuals or entities interested in joining us in this important work. Any collaborative efforts will include the following provisions:

- 1. Joint Authorship:** All publications resulting from these collaborations will list the primary researchers, including representatives from Free State University, myself, and the collaborating entity, as well as any indigenous healers or advisors involved.
- 2. Acknowledgment of Indigenous Communities:** We commit to ensuring that the contributions of indigenous communities are acknowledged in all outputs. This acknowledgment is essential to honoring the knowledge and practices of these communities.
- 3. Ethical Guidelines Compliance:** All collaborators must adhere to the ethical guidelines outlined in this manifesto, ensuring that our work respects and uplifts the indigenous knowledge systems involved.

By fostering collaborative relationships, we aim to enrich our research and share valuable insights with a wider audience, while remaining committed to ethical practices and community recognition.

Data Recording

Systematic Documentation

Effective data recording is essential for the integrity of this research. All data will be collected systematically, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative information to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

1. Qualitative Data

Definition: Qualitative data refers to non-numerical information that captures the qualities, characteristics, and meanings of phenomena. This type of data provides insights into the experiences, perceptions, and cultural contexts of individuals or communities.

- **Interviews and Focus Groups:** Conducting open-ended interviews with traditional healers to gather insights about their practices, beliefs, and the cultural significance of specific fungi.
- **Field Notes:** Documenting observations during fieldwork, including the context of fungal harvesting, the interactions between community members, and any rituals or practices associated with the use of fungi.
- **Descriptive Accounts:** Recording narratives from community members that describe how fungi are traditionally used in medicine, food, or rituals. These accounts can highlight the social and cultural importance of fungi in their lives.
- **Photographic Documentation:** Taking photographs of the environment, fungi, and community practices to visually represent the context and significance of the research.

2. Quantitative Data

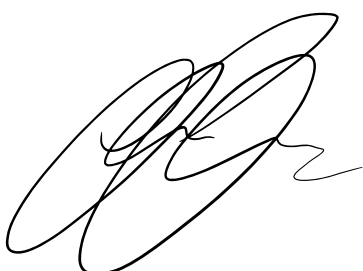
Definition: Quantitative data refers to numerical information that can be measured and analyzed statistically. This type of data allows researchers to quantify relationships, test hypotheses, and identify patterns.

- **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Administering structured surveys to community members to collect data on the frequency of fungal use, types of fungi harvested, and demographic information (age, gender, etc.).
- **Measurement of Fungal Characteristics:** Collecting data on the size, weight, and growth conditions of fungi. For instance, measuring the diameter of mushroom caps or recording the weight of harvested fungi.
- **Species Identification:** Cataloging the number of different fungal species found in a specific area, along with their respective uses as reported by the community.
- **Statistical Analysis:** Using statistical methods to analyze data trends, such as the correlation between specific fungi usage and health outcomes or community practices

Commitment to Ethical Legacy

Our work seeks to contribute positively to both the scientific community and the traditional cultures of Southern Africa. By preserving and promoting traditional knowledge, we aim to build a lasting legacy of respect, understanding, and collaboration. This manifesto is not just a set of principles but a living document, evolving alongside our research to ensure we stay true to the ethics and values of the indigenous communities we serve.

Cullen Taylor Clark

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cullen Taylor Clark'.