



# African Sacred Groves: Ecological Dynamics and Social Change

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In western scholarship, Africa's so-called sacred forests are often treated as the remains of primeval forests, ethnographic curiosities, or cultural relics from a static precolonial past. Their continuing importance in African societies, however, shows that this "relic theory" is inadequate for understanding current social and ecological dynamics. *African Sacred Groves* challenges dominant views of these landscape features by redefining the subject matter beyond the compelling yet uninformative term "sacred." The term "ethnoforests" incorporates the environmental, social-political, and symbolic aspects of these forests without giving undue primacy to their religious values. This interdisciplinary book by an international group of scholars and conservation practitioners provides a methodological framework for understanding these forests by examining their ecological characteristics, delineating how they relate to social dynamics and historical contexts, exploring their ideological aspects, and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses as sites for community-based resource management and the conservation of cultural and biological diversity.

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