

ON THE ÒSÁNYÌN TRAIL: THE POLYPHONY OF THE FOREST IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES OF AFRICAN MATRIX IN THE STATE OF SANTA CATARINA, BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify traditional communities of African origin in Santa Catarina linked to Candomblé and Batuque and the relationships established between these communities and the remaining forest areas of the Atlantic Forest used as places for cultural practices and celebrations in the light of the traditional knowledge of African origin about the forests, perpetuated by the orality of these communities, which establish the relationship between society and nature and organize themselves socially and culturally based on oral tradition. The study was interested in where these territories are, how the public areas for the celebrations are chosen and how the members of the communities in the 12 municipalities treat these territories, which, strictly speaking, can be interpreted as cultural/natural heritage of an intangible nature. The religious tradition of African origin makes important contributions to society, especially with regard to the use and conservation of forests, opposing the philosophy of domination propagated by Western society, in which man subjugates nature only to make use of it. For traditional communities of African origin, deities and nature are inseparable, and Òsányìn is one of the pillars of this culture, considering that plants provide the basis for ritual practices and therefore link the àiyé (material world/human beings) and the òrun (immaterial/sacred world). No ritual in traditional African communities is carried out without the presence of plants/leaves; they are the holders of the essential àse in all ceremonies. The study analyzed the importance of natural spaces as ritual spaces and, therefore, areas subject to protection, not only for their environmental aspect, but also for their cultural use. Through interviews with Bábàlòrìsà/Ìyálòrìsà, the study looked at how the forest and the Atlantic Forest areas of the 12 municipalities are used in their rituals and whether the legislation and public policies in force, regarding the remaining forest areas, meet the demands for use and access by these communities. We identified the channels of participation, as instruments for exercising participatory democracy and social control, in which traditional communities of African origin are included. The traditional communities of African origin in Santa Catarina carry out environmental education activities in their terreiros with the aim of protecting the forest as a source of resources and habitat for the

Òrìsà. They see the forest entirely as sacred territory, considering that, according to the tradition of kosi Ewé, kosi Òrìsà (without leaves, there are no Òrìsà), leaves are interpreted as having food, medicinal and mythical properties. The forest is indispensable territory for human life in general and sacred to members of traditional communities of African origin and urgently needs public protection policies, conservation actions and guaranteed access to forest remnants.

Keywords: traditional communities of African origin; forest heritage; ritual plants; Atlantic Forest; cultural heritage; public policies; bio-narratives