



Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil

Robert A. Voeks

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Winner, Hubert Herring Book Award, Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies

Candomblé, an African religious and healing tradition that spread to Brazil during the slave trade, relies heavily on the use of plants in its spiritual and medicinal practices. When its African adherents were forcibly transplanted to the New World, they faced the challenge not only of maintaining their culture and beliefs in the face of European domination but also of finding plants with similar properties to the ones they had used in Africa.

This book traces the origin, diffusion, medicinal use, and meaning of Candomblé's healing pharmacopoeia—the sacred leaves. Robert Voeks examines such topics as the biogeography of Africa and Brazil, the transference—and transformation—of Candomblé as its adherents encountered both native South American belief systems and European Christianity, and the African system of medicinal plant classification that allowed Candomblé to survive and even thrive in the New World. This research casts new light on topics ranging from the creation of African American cultures to tropical rain forest healing floras.

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