



Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Legal Practice: A Survey of São Tomé and Príncipe

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Abstract

São Tomé and Príncipe is a small archipelago nation in West Africa with a rich tapestry of indigenous knowledge systems that have coexisted alongside formal legal structures for centuries. The research employs a survey methodology involving interviews with legal practitioners and community leaders. Data collection was conducted through structured questionnaires and semi-structured focus group discussions. A notable finding is the significant role played by traditional healers in resolving disputes related to health issues, where their knowledge systems complement but do not fully replace formal medical regulations. The survey reveals a complex interplay between indigenous legal practices and statutory law, highlighting both areas of convergence and potential for conflict. Policy recommendations include fostering dialogue between traditional healers and the legal system to ensure equitable access to justice while respecting cultural sensitivities.

Keywords: *African geography, Indigenous legal traditions, Legal pluralism, Ethnolaw, Anthropology of law, Jurisprudence, Comparative legal studies*

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