

AFRICA

OSUN-OSOGBO SACRED GROVE

NIGERIA

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

OSUN-OSOGBO SACRED GROVE (NIGERIA) ID N° 1118

IUCN undertook a desk review of this Cultural Landscape nomination, the full text of which was provided to ICOMOS as an input to their evaluation process. In addition the IUCN World Heritage Panel approved the following brief summary for the information of the World Heritage Committee.

Natural values

The Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove is situated in the southern part of Nigeria. The property is nominated as an “organically evolved cultural landscape”.

The nomination dossier displays some information on the natural features of the 75 ha property, mainly consisting of forests, the Osun river and its banks. According to this the “Grove is a large area of undisturbed primary forest along the banks of the Osun river.” With 400 plant species of 63 families, including more than 200 plant species of medicinal values, the floral biodiversity is remarkable, but there is only a comparison to a permanent sample plot in a forest reserve and another forest reserve. There are also 7 species of primates, among them some threatened species, and other vertebrate species in the property. A comprehensive ecological study of the property is apparently existing but not added to the file. On basis of the given information, the natural values are significant on a local to regional level but would not be of ‘outstanding universal value’.

Management aspects

The following management issues and recommendations were highlighted by the IUCN desk review:

No specific information is given on the legal state of protection of the ecosystem and the species. However, the strict sacred state of this place might be an example of nature protection by other means than legal ones. In general the factual state of protection is obviously high.

The draft management plan (exclusively relating to cultural aspects) highlights impacting activities by poachers, illegal fishers, hunters and encroachment arising from Christian and Islamic fundamentalists. There is a report on the “Development of a Management Plan”, carried out by the University of Ibadan, but there is a need to prepare a comprehensive management plan that takes into consideration impacts on the natural and cultural values.

There is some confusion resulting from the fact that the property is nominated as an “organically evolved cultural landscape”. Such a landscape should be the result of the interaction of humans and nature, which normally becomes manifest by significant changes of the natural ecosystems (like in agricultural landscapes). In this

case, however, the nomination file claims that the property is covered by a “true primary rainforest”. Nonetheless, the ecosystem structure is impacted and changed by harvesting medical plants and the considerable pressure by pilgrims and visitors, including two roads and several footpaths.