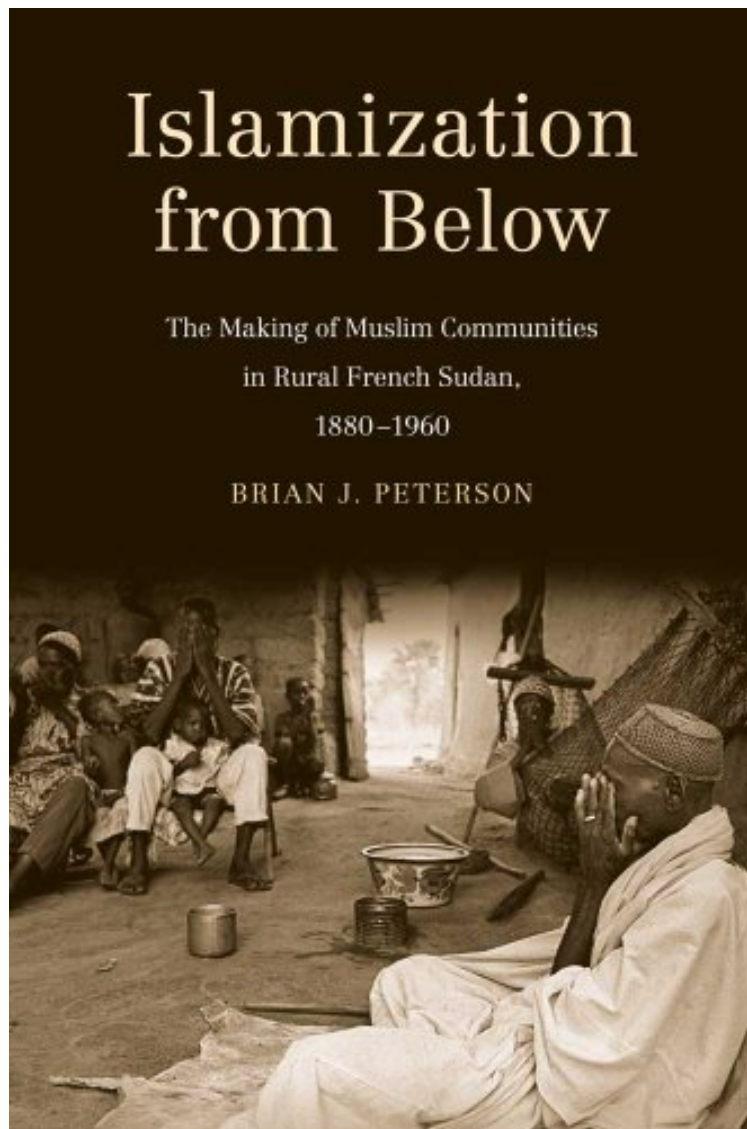


(Read ebook) Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960

Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960

Brian J. Peterson

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Brian J. Peterson : Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insightful but Anthropologically AcademicBy TMegThis book seeks

to explore the reasons why the people in a particular region in rural present-day Mali turned from a largely pagan background in 1880 (before the colonial period) to becoming largely Muslim by 1960 (the end of the colonial period). It is based on (somewhat limited) French colonial reports and the author's visits to this region, interviewing residents and obtaining oral histories. The author provides strong support for his thesis, that the primary driver of Islamization was young men returning from more cosmopolitan areas after the displacements from the wars of Samori in the 1880s, and after trips to the coastal colonies as slaves or later as soldiers or itinerant workers for peanut production. People returning to their villages brought Muslim prayer. In this sense it's a story of globalization. Peterson's research is unique, and as such provides interesting insights into the process of Islamization, not only in Mali, but in other parts of Africa, as well as in parts of the Muslim world (India, Indonesia) where the rural villages turned to Muslim prayer too long ago for oral history. Appreciating his one-of-a-kind contribution, as a non-anthropologist, I found this book to be a slow read. Peterson works within the paradigms and verbiage of academic anthropology, which I find somewhat offputting. However, for those whose interest in his question and thesis provides the perseverance required (I am one), I would recommend his book.

The colonial era in Africa, spanning less than a century, ushered in a more rapid expansion of Islam than at any time during the previous thousand years. In this groundbreaking historical investigation, Brian J. Peterson considers for the first time how and why rural peoples in West Africa "became Muslim" under French colonialism. Peterson rejects conventional interpretations that emphasize the roles of states, jihads, and elites in "converting" people, arguing instead that the expansion of Islam owed its success to the mobility of thousands of rural people who gradually, and usually peacefully, adopted the new religion on their own. Based on extensive fieldwork in villages across southern Mali (formerly French Sudan) and on archival research in West Africa and France, the book draws a detailed new portrait of grassroots, multi-generational processes of Islamization in French Sudan while also deepening our understanding of the impact and unintended consequences of colonialism.

"A well researched and written narrative and analysis, Islamization from Below lives up to its promise of bringing new insight to the process by which Islam has become the majority religious practice of significant areas of West Africa. I do not know of any comparable works. His work should interest students and scholars of African and West African history, Islam and religious studies." David Robinson, Michigan State University