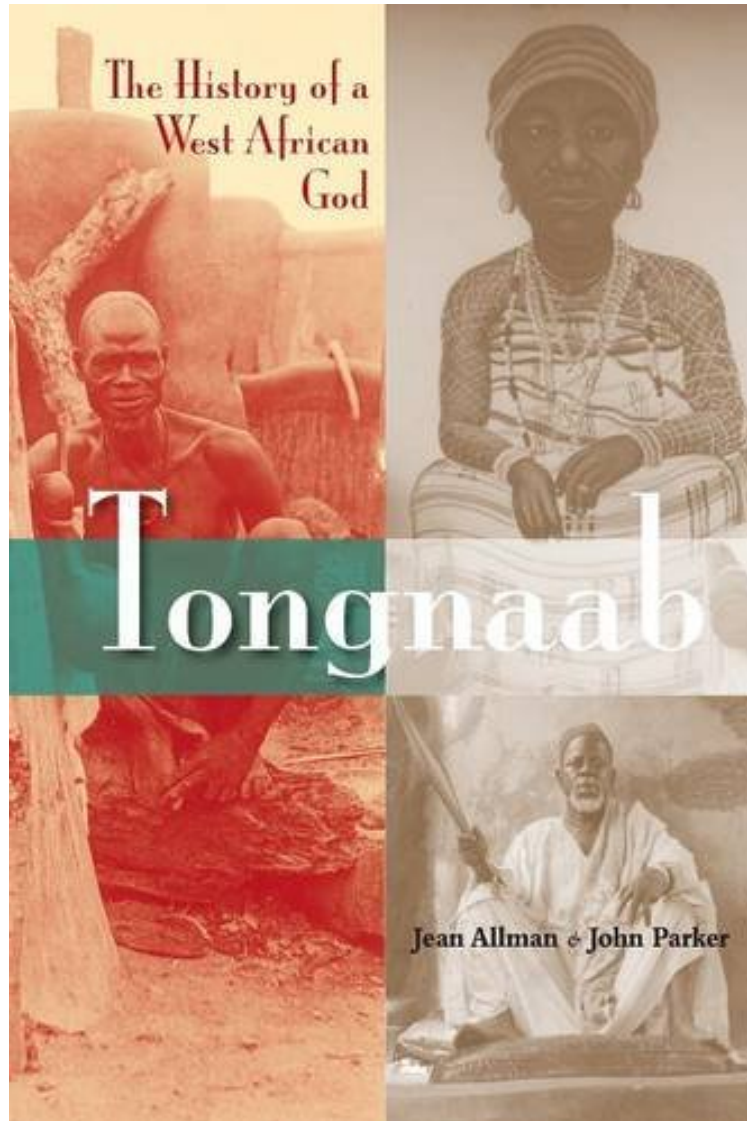


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Tongnaab: The History of a West African God

Jean Allman, John Parker

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Jean Allman, John Parker : Tongnaab: The History of a West African God before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tongnaab: The History of a West African God:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. BRILLIANT By kwadwo oppong This book is simply brilliant. It is very well researched and now a reference book in my library. It is simply a must have for anyone interested in the traditions of Ghana and West Africa as a whole. Excellent job done by the authors. I enjoyed reading every page of it. Valuable information throughout. A job well done!

For many Africanist historians, traditional religion is simply a starting point for measuring the historic impact of Christianity and Islam. In *Tongnaab*, Jean Allman and John Parker challenge the distinction between tradition and modernity by tracing the movement and mutation of the powerful Talensi god and ancestor shrine, Tongnaab, from the savanna of northern Ghana through the forests and coastal plains of the south. Using a wide range of written, oral, and iconographic sources, Allman and Parker uncover the historical dynamics of cross-cultural religious belief and practice. They reveal how Tongnaab has been intertwined with many themes and events in West African history: the slave trade, colonial conquest and rule, capitalist agriculture and mining, labor migration, shifting ethnicities, the production of ethnographic knowledge, and the political projects that brought about the modern nation state. This rich and original book shows that indigenous religion has been at the center of dramatic social and economic changes stretching from the slave trade to the tourist trade.

"Until recently, Ghanaian historiography has focused on the Asante and other Akan states, but has neglected the so-called stateless societies. In this well-researched book, Allman (Univ. of Illinois) and Parker (Univ. of London) have undertaken to fill the gap by shedding light on the Talensi of northern Ghana. They examine the spread of an indigenous god, Tongnaab, from its base in the Tong Hills to the south, where it became Nana Tongo in the Gold Coast, and Anatinga in western Nigeria. The authors argue that this cross-cultural ritual exchange must be understood in the context of British colonialism and ! anticolonial resistance in the increasingly competitive ritual market place of West Africa. The British ordered the destruction of the great fetish and, in 1925, recognized the Yanii bo'ar shrine as the official Tongnaab, thus misunderstanding the complexity of the ritual practice in the Tong Hills, where Tongnaab had multiple sites. Despite the paucity of archival documentation and the problems posed by oral sources, the authors have contributed to the understanding of the structural transformations and social history of some rural communities in northern Ghana under colonial rule. Summing Up: Recommended. Upperlevel undergraduates and above. CHOICE, March 2007" K. J. Ngalamulume, Bryn Mawr College (K. J. Ngalamulume, Bryn Mawr College) Until recently, Ghanaian historiography has focused on the Asante and other Akan states, but has neglected the so-called stateless societies. In this well-researched book, Allman (Univ. of Illinois) and Parker (Univ. of London) have undertaken to fill the gap by shedding light on the Talensi of northern Ghana. They examine the spread of an indigenous god, Tongnaab, from its base in the Tong Hills to the south, where it became Nana Tongo in the Gold Coast, and Anatinga in western Nigeria. The authors argue that this cross-cultural ritual exchange must be understood in the context of British colonialism and ! anticolonial resistance in the increasingly competitive ritual market place of West Africa. The British ordered the destruction of the great fetish and, in 1925, recognized the Yanii bo'ar shrine as the official Tongnaab, thus misunderstanding the complexity of the ritual practice in the Tong Hills, where Tongnaab had multiple sites. Despite the paucity of archival documentation and the problems posed by oral sources, the authors have contributed to the understanding of the structural transformations and social history of some rural communities in northern Ghana under colonial rule. Summing Up: Recommended. Upperlevel undergraduates and above. CHOICE, March 2007 (K. J. Ngalamulume Bryn Mawr College) About the Author Jean Allman teaches African History and directs the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is editor of *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress* (IUP, 2004). John Parker teaches African History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is author of *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*.