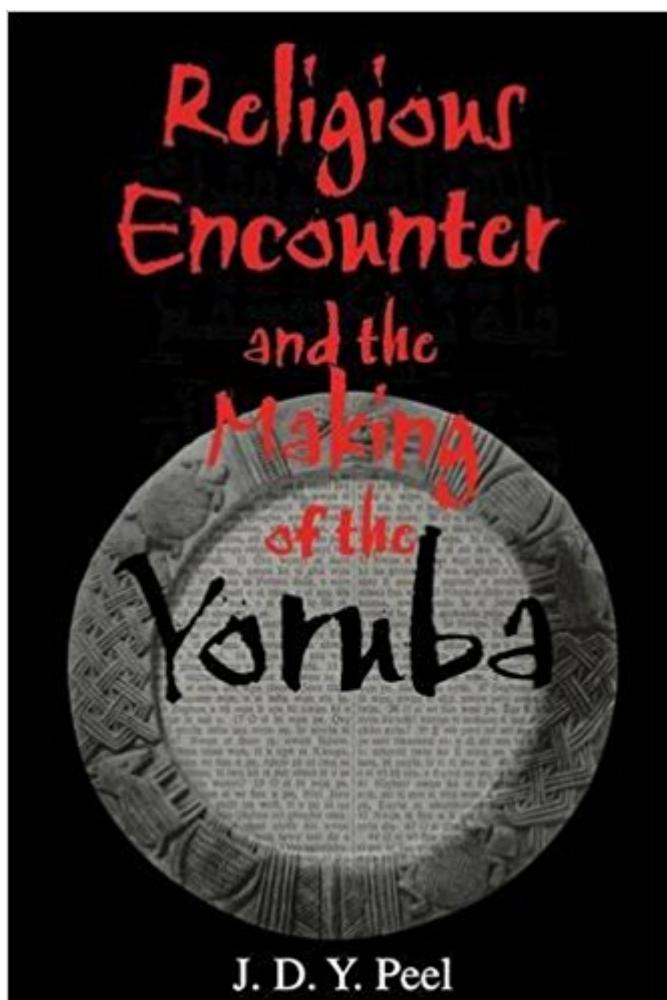


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Religious Encounter And The Making Of The Yoruba (African Systems Of Thought)



Synopsis

"Peel is by training an anthropologist, but one possessed of an acute historical sensibility. Indeed, this magnificent book achieves a degree of analytical verve rare in either discipline." •History Today "[T]his is scholarship of the highest quality.... Peel lifts the Yoruba past to a dimension of comparative seriousness that no one else has managed.... The book teems with ideas... about big and compelling matters of very wide interest." •T. C. McCaskieIn this magisterial book, J. D. Y. Peel contends that it is through their encounter with Christian missions in the mid-19th century that the Yoruba came to know themselves as a distinctive people. Peel's detailed study of the encounter is based on the rich archives of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, which contain the journals written by the African agents of mission, who, as the first generation of literate Yoruba, played a key role in shaping modern Yoruba consciousness. This distinguished book pays special attention to the experiences of ordinary men and women and shows how the process of Christian conversion transformed Christianity into something more deeply Yoruba.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

J. D. Y. Peel is on the faculty of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He has held appointments at the London School of Economics, Nottingham University, Liverpool University, and the University of Chicago. He is author of *Aladura and Ijeshas and Nigerians*, for which he won the Herskovits award. He has been editor of *Africa* and is former president of the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom. He was elected a Fellow of the

British Academy in 1991. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"... a magnificent excursion into Yoruba religious history of the nineteenth century." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*"For three decades Peel has published on the Yoruba •Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba (1968) has become an anthropological classic. Now Peel sets an anthropological aim (studying the impact of the Church Missionary Society on a group of Africans who became the Yoruba) but takes form and mode from history (employing events and missionary journals as sources). Early missionaries in the later 19th century included Europeans and ex-slave returnees from Sierra Leone; these men were the quintessential cultural middlemen, adapting Christianity and transforming Yoruba identity in a single seamless process. This 11-chapter book presents a useful discussion of narratives of religion and of empire, and Peel makes a very important point: early missionaries saw heathenism as an absence or vacuum, rather than as something with durability, style, and an ethos of its own. Further chapters are titled Yorubaland at War, Missionary Power, Preaching the Word, Paths to Conversion, and The Making of the Yoruba. In Engaging with Islam, Peel explains that Islam and Christianity were in competition and both religions had to.. offer a means to individual and collective empowerment and they had to offer attractive, viable identities. Well documented with valuable notes and references-cited section. General readers; all academic levels." •B. M. du Toit, emeritus, University of Florida, Choice, November 2001

This book is a scholarly look at 19th century Yorubaland through close reading of Church Missionary Society archive materials (reports, journal entries, letters, etc.) which detail Mission activity, historical events, religious proselytization, and numerous anecdotes of daily life and cultural struggle (between competing factions of Africans, as well as between Christianity and indigenous religion) during this chaotic period of Yoruba history. Many of the missionaries were themselves African and thus had a solid cultural and linguistic background from which to draw their observations, though, as Peel notes, they also had their agendas. As the foundation of the Yoruba modern intelligencia came out of the missionary movement (as did the written form of the Yoruba language and the first inscribed histories), this is a critical historical moment that Peel explores using contemporary 19th century eye-witness accounts. As the title notes, Peel feels that this religious encounter between Yoruba indigenous religion and British/Yoruba Christianity is very relevant and formative to the modern notion of being Yoruba. It is very thorough (and thus a tad slow) and aimed primarily at a scholarly readership.I truly doubt the previous reviewer actually read

the book, as it is the 19th century missionaries who use the word "pagan" to describe indigenous religion, not the author.

"Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba" is a modern classic in the field of African studies and the capstone of John Peel's distinguished academic career. The book combines a lifetime of fieldwork in Nigeria with an impeccable reading of archival sources, making it a model for historians and anthropologists alike. Peel's study is of relevance not only to those in the fields of African history, but anyone interested in the history of Christianity and religious conversion. The one negative review posted on [Amazon](#) has received enough rebuttals for its deficiencies and should not dissuade potential buyers from purchasing this important book.

The stance of this book is in the tradition of those promoters of the imperialist tactic cloaked as the "Caucasian burden" that suggests that their presence Africa is a "civilizing" one.

I found this book to be unfocused, and the title, misleading. It's repeated description of the Yorubas and their religion as "pagans" and "paganism" is a throwback to the 18th century. The chapter, "Making Country Fashion", which takes an 18th century "pidgin english" phrase by "Saro" returnees and applies it to the Yoruba religion patently trivializes the religion. His translation of Yoruba words and phrases, in many instances, is erroneous or misleading. His conclusions, in many instances are unsupported or at best tenuous. For instance, his confident "certainty" that the Ifa divination system was derived from Islamic geomancy. He also dredges up old controversies, such as the existence, or lack thereof, of one God in Yoruba religion. In conclusion, this book contributes nothing to the discourse, and is a waste of money.

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