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Robert M. Baum

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In this groundbreaking work, Robert Baum seeks to reconstruct the religious and social history of the Diola communities in southern Senegal during the precolonial era, when the Atlantic slave trade was at its height. Baum shows that Diola community leaders used a complex of religious shrines and priesthoods to regulate and contain the influence of the slave trade. He demonstrates how this close involvement with the traders significantly changed Diola religious life.

"Robert M. Baum's book on Diola religion and society is an important contribution to the history of Senegambia and to the history of African "traditional" religion.... This book will be an important resource for scholars of African religion and readers interested in the history of the slave trade."--American Historical "[a] groundbreaking study.... Robert Baum's mastery of the rich details underlying Diola Esulalu thought has few parallels. It demonstrates what four years of intense participation and sympathetic observation can produce in the way of a fascinating history of an African indigenous philosophy."--International Journal of African Historical Studies "...[a] superb study."--The Journal of Interdisciplinary History "[A] judicious mix of ethnographic detail and processual theory.... It is odd how rare and valuable a work this is."--Religious Studies About the Author Robert M. Baum is at Harvard University.