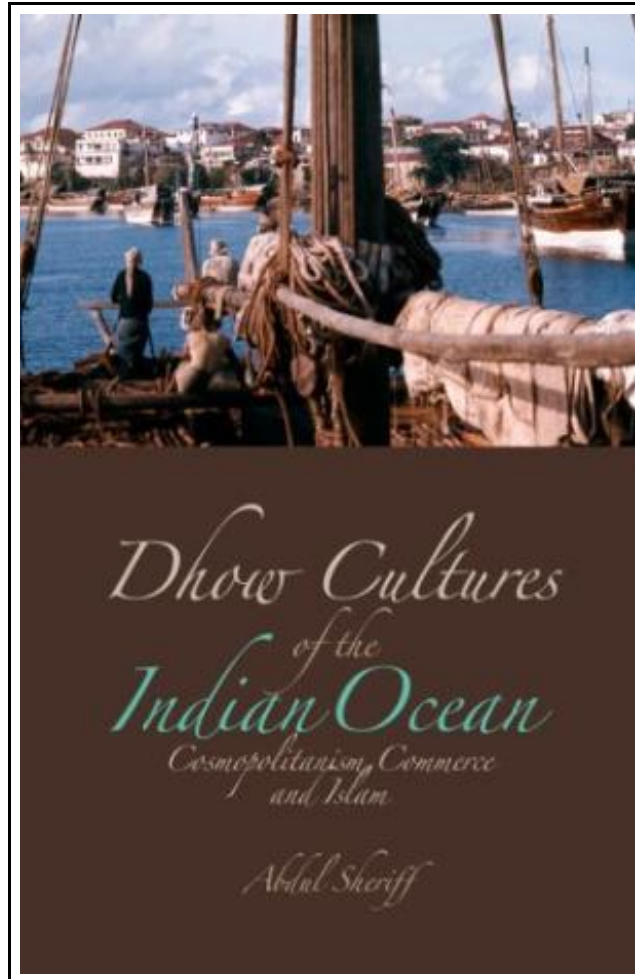


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Reviews

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DHOW CULTURES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN: COSMOPOLITANISM, COMMERCE AND ISLAM



C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce and Islam, Abdul Sheriff, The wooden dhow, with its characteristic lateen sail, is an appropriate icon for the early trading world of the Indian Ocean. It was based on free trade unhindered by monopolies or superpower domination and pre-dated 'globalisation' by thousands of years. It carried a motley crew of sailors, traders and passengers, and many commodities, but the dhow was not merely an inanimate transporter of goods and people, but an animated means of social interaction. The dhow was at the mercy of the seasonal monsoons, but mercifully this very fact multiplied opportunities for social interaction between the sailors and traders with their hosts around the rim of the Indian Ocean, giving birth to cosmopolitan populations and cultures. The dhow was thus a vehicle for a genuine dialog between civilizations. The global world of the Indian Ocean had matured by the fifteenth century. Islam was the most widespread religion along its rim, but it had spread not by the sword but through peaceful commerce. The heroes of this world were not the continental empires but a string of small port city-states, from Kilwa in East Africa to Melaka in Malaysia. Nor was their influence confined to the littoral, but penetrated deep into continental hinterlands economically, socially and culturally. Into this world two major incursions occurred from opposite directions, the Chinese expeditions in the early fifteenth century and the Portuguese at the end of it. The contrast could not have been more stark between the Indian Ocean tradition of free trade that the Chinese espoused, despite their enormous strength, and the Vasco da Gama epoch of armed mercantilism that ultimately led to colonial domination. This sweeping and vividly written popular...



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