



## Genii of the River Niger

By Jean-Marie Gibbal

University Of Chicago Press. Paperback. Condition: New. 232 pages. Dimensions: 9.0in. x 6.1in. x 0.6in. The river Niger, a source of life and danger for the people in impoverished eastern Mali, is also the origin of elaborate mythology. From his travels through Mali and down the Niger in a dugout canoe, Jean-Marie Gibbal has created a personal documentary of the cultures of the region. The result is at once an ethnography of cultures in crisis and a poetic evocation of the environment and people he encountered. Gibbal portrays the river as the dominant, cohesive force among people in the face of social and environmental strife. He focuses on the Ghimbala healing cult, which centers on the river, and how the cult structures social relations in the region. Gibbal vividly recreates the Ghimbala rites, nocturnal ceremonies of spirit possession and seance which animate the water spirits, or genii, that inhabit the river. The genii, he finds, provide the strength of social identity in a world where famine and competing versions of Islam threaten to overpower traditional culture. In its original French publication, *The Genii of the River Niger* was honored with an Alexandra David-Neel literary prize in 1989. Its powerful lyricism, combined...

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