

Coyle Rosen

Fires of Gold

Law, Spirit, and Sacrificial Labor in Ghana

Fires of Gold is a powerful ethnography of the often shrouded cultural, legal, political, and spiritual forces governing the gold mining industry in Ghana, one of Africa's most celebrated democracies. Lauren Coyle Rosen argues that significant sources of power have arisen outside of the formal legal system to police, adjudicate, and navigate conflict in this theater of violence, destruction, and rebirth. These authorities, or shadow sovereigns, include the transnational mining company, collectivized artisanal miners, civil society advocacy groups, and significant religious figures and spiritual forces from African, Islamic, and Christian traditions. Often more salient than official bodies of government, the shadow sovereigns reveal a reconstitution of sovereign power—one that, in many ways, is generated by hidden dimensions of the legal system. Coyle Rosen also contends that spiritual forces are central in anchoring and animating shadow sovereigns as well as key forms of legal authority, economic value, and political contestation. This innovative book illuminates how the crucible of gold, itself governed by spirits, serves as a critical site for embodied struggles over the realignment of the classical philosophical triad: the city, the soul, and the sacred.



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