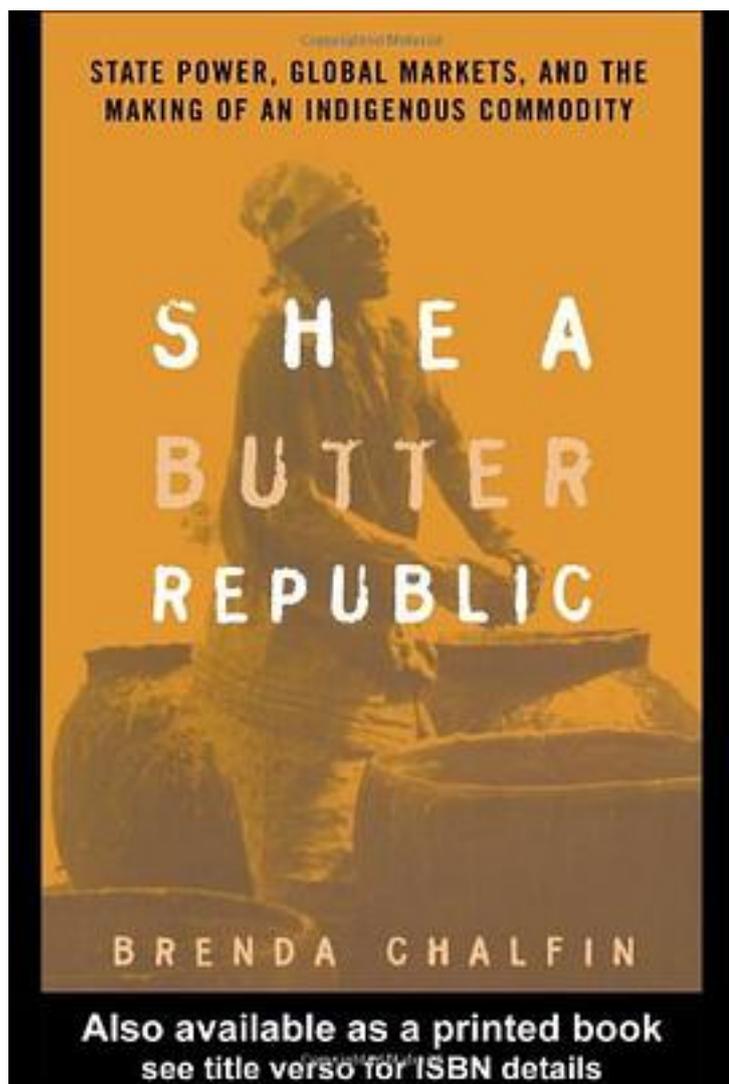


Shea Butter Republic



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Indigenous to the savanna zone in West Africa, shea (*Butyrospermin parkii*) has been produced and sold by rural women and circulated on the world market as a low-priced and little-known raw material for more than a century. Locally, shea butter is used for cooking, making soap, leatherworking, dying, and as a medical and beauty aid. Globally, it has been used in producing soaps, candles, margarine, and most significantly, as a substitute for cocoa butter in chocolate production. In the past decade, however, shea has come to occupy a new position at the cutting edge of global capitalism. Now sold in exclusive shops as a high-priced cosmetic and medicinal product, it caters to the desire of cosmopolitan customers worldwide for luxury and exotic self-indulgence. This ethnographic study traces shea from a pre- to post-industrial commodity to provide a deeper understanding of emerging trends in tropical commoditization, cosmopolitan consumption, global economic restructuring and rural livelihoods.

作者介绍:

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