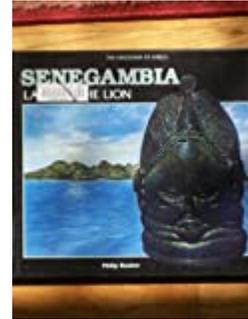


Philip Koslow. *Senegambia: Land of the Lion*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996. 63 pp. \$9.95 (library), ISBN 978-0-7910-3136-0; \$20.85 (library), ISBN 978-0-7910-3135-3.



Reviewed by Kathryn L. Green (California State University-San Bernardino)

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Senegambia and...

Senegambia: Land of the Lion is an attractively produced book, with a deceptive title, divided into five chapters with two picture essays. Chapter One, "The Right of Fire," is followed by a picture essay entitled, "West Atlantic Masterworks." Chapter Four, "Land of the Lion," precedes the picture essay, "Glass Paintings of Senegal." Other chapters include "The Shape of the Past," "Slavery Days," and "War and Deliverance." Unfortunately, the work is misleadingly titled, as the geographical area treated in the text also includes upper Guinea and Sierra Leone. The subtitle "Land of the Lion" suggests that Senegambia is the land of the lion, rather than Sierra Leone, which the text presents correctly. The cover of the hard copy edition has a photograph of a soap stone sculpture piece from Sierra Leone, adding to the confusion.

The introduction presents a three-page historical presentation focused on the centralized states of West Africa, as the title of the series would lead the reader to expect. There is an unfortunate suggestion here of a straight chronological progression with no overlap between the rise of one state and the fall of the next, which is too sim-

plistic, as is the overemphasis on isolation of forest peoples preceding the arrival of the Europeans in the 15th century. There is a confusing and internally inconsistent chronological presentation of the introduction of iron-working, but it nonetheless gives a very good representation of the role of blacksmiths in many West African societies.

In Chapter Two, the author gives a very good explanation of the system of checks and balances that existed in Wolof states, as well as examining effectively the hospitality system for strangers. Chapter Three, which discusses early contact with Europeans, contrasts chattel, plantation slavery with slavery practiced in most African societies. The author gives a succinct treatment of Creole society in Sierra Leone and the development of the Krio language in Chapter Four. He glosses over and probably paints too positively the relationship between Krio society and indigenous Africans. Chapter Five, on the colonial conquest and the marabout/tieddo conflicts in Senegambia, proved to be the most successful of the chapters, very clearly written with important concepts spelled out. The glossary contains only eighteen terms,

though the ones chosen are well explained.

Most striking in this short work are the well-chosen mix of photographs of African artwork—both color and black and white. Included are contemporary and historical photographs of the landscape and peoples and engravings of the region produced in several centuries. These various illustrations could be used to good effect with students of any age or grade level and are worthy of consideration by all teachers dealing with West Africa.

Also effective is the seamless way in which the author uses appropriate African proverbs and stories in the text to illustrate the history and cultural traditions of the region.

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