

The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa

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For more than a thousand years, from A.D. 500 to 1700, the medieval kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay grew rich on the gold, salt, and slave trade that stretched across Africa. Scraping away hundreds of years of ignorance, prejudice, and mythology, award-winning authors Patricia and Fredrick McKissack reveal the glory of these forgotten empires while inviting us to share in the inspiring process of historical recovery that is taking place today.

Patricia and Fredrick McKissack were writers of children's fiction and nonfiction with a particular interest in the African American experience. Patricia received a Coretta Scott King-Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement, as well as three individual Coretta Scott King Awards for books co-written with Frederick: *A Long Hard Journey: The Story of the Pullman Porter*, *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural*, and *Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters*. Grade 5-7-The McKissacks describe the West African civilizations that flourished between the years 700 C.E. to 1700 C.E. A chronological account is given of each successive kingdom, and there is also substantial information about the social history of Mali and Songhay, e.g., education, the treatment of women, religion, and arts and crafts. The relationship between Islam and politics, and the interplay between traditional and Islamic customs in Mali and Songhay are highlighted. The authors have attempted something unique with their inclusion of indigenous and contemporaneous historical accounts (by such historians as Leo Africanus and Ibn Battuta), as well as in their substantial use of oral history. While this makes for an interesting perspective, it prevents the line between history and mythology from being clearly drawn. For example, in the story of Sundiata, visits from a powerful king in the magical form of an owl are not distinguished from the factual dates that Sundiata ruled Mali. This might limit the usefulness of the book to situations in which adults are able to help students think critically about the text. Adequate but uninspired photographs of ancient artifacts and modern people with traditional life styles illustrate the text. Unfortunately, the maps do not make clear the geographical relationships among the three kingdoms (they existed at different times, and in each case the territory of the earlier kingdom was wholly or partly subsumed under the later kingdom). The helpful notes discuss the validity of certain bibliographical sources. The informative time line links events in Africa to those in other parts of the world, and the bibliography is impressive. In spite of its limitations, this title will be an important addition to most collections.

Susan Giffard, Midtown Ethical Culture School, New York City

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Other Books

Pathways to Public Relations. Over the centuries, scholars have studied how individuals, institutions and groups have used various rhetorical stances to persuade others to pay attention to, believe in, and adopt a course of action. The emergence of public relations as an identifiable and discrete occupation in the early 20th century led scholars to describe this new iteration of persuasion as a unique, more systematized, and technical form of wielding influence, resulting in an overemphasis on practice, frequently couched within an American historical context. This volume responds to such approaches by expanding the framework for understanding public relations history, investigating broad, conceptual questions concerning the ways in which public relations rose as a practice and a field within different cultures and countries at different times in history. With its unique cultural and

contextual emphasis. Pathways to Public Relations shifts the paradigm of public relations history away from traditional methodologies and assumptions, and provides a new and unique entry point into this complicated arena.

❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ ❓ . The royal kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay : Life in Medieval Africa . New York: Henry Holt and Company. Mescon, T. and Tilson, D. (1987). Corporate philanthropy: a strategic approach to the bottom line. California Management Review ..."