



**Islam, Power, and Dependency in the Gambia
River Basin: The Politics of Land Control, 1790-
1940 (Rochester Studies in African History and the
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Assan Sarr

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Islam, Power, and Dependency in the Gambia River Basin: The Politics of Land Control, 1790-1940 (Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora) Assan Sarr

Islam, Power, and Dependency in the Gambia River Basin draws on new sources to offer an original approach to the study of land in African history. Documenting the impact of Islamization, the development of peanut production, and the institution of colonial rule on people living along the middle and lower Gambia River, the book shows how these waves of changes sweeping the region after 1850 altered local political and social arrangements, with important implications for the ability of elites to control land. Author Assan Sarr argues for a nuanced understanding of land and its historic value in Africa. Moving beyond a recognition of the material value of land, Sarr's analysis highlights its cultural and social worth, pointing out the spiritual associations the land generated and the ways that certain people gained privileged access to those spiritual powers. By emphasizing that the land around the Gambia River both inspired and gave form to a cosmology of ritual and belief, the book points to what might be considered an indigenous tradition of ecological preservation and protection. Assan Sarr is assistant professor of history at Ohio University.

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