Lydon

On Trans-Saharan Trails

Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa

This study is the first of its kind to examine the history and organization of trans-Saharan trade in western Africa using original source material. It documents the internal dynamics of a trade network system based on a case study of 'Berber' traders from the Wad Nun region, who specialized in outfitting camel caravans in the nineteenth century. Through an examination of contracts, correspondence, fatwas and interviews with retired caravaners, Professor Lydon shows how traders used their literacy skills in Arabic and how they had recourse to experts of Islamic law to regulate their long-distance transactions. The book also examines the strategies devised by women to participate in caravan trade. By embracing a continental approach, this study bridges the divide between West African and North African studies. The work will be of interest to historians of Africa, the Middle East, and the world and to scholars of long-distance trade, Muslim societies and Islamic law.

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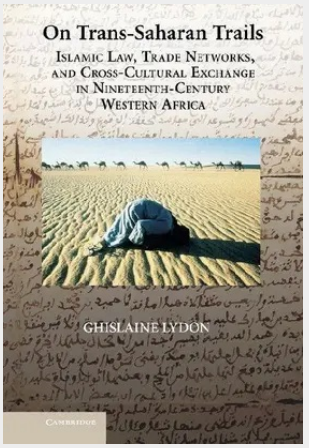

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