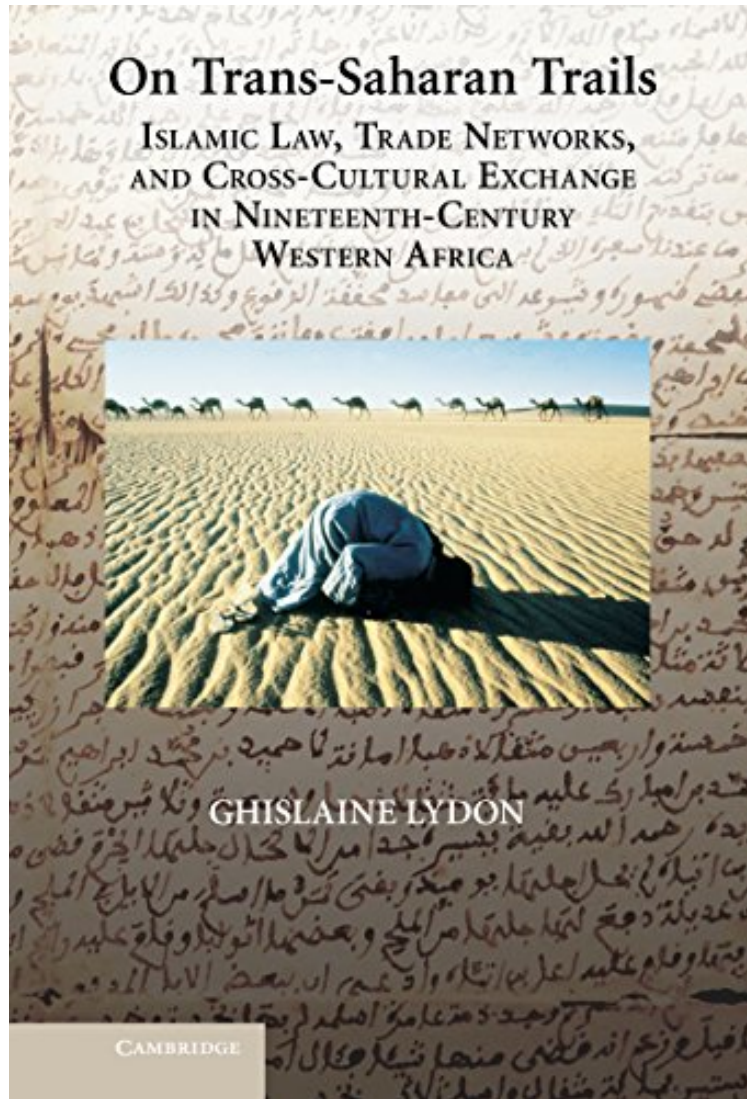


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# On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa

Ghislaine Lydon

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**Ghislaine Lydon : On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. brilliant scholarshipBy Eric J. ArnouldI wish I had the linguistic

skills to write a similar book about the central Saharan trade, as Ms. Lydon does a great service in opening up the history of trade in the western side of the Sahara. Fascinating for the specialist and even for the casual reader of African history. A boost to what Eric Wolf famously called *The People without History*.<sup>3</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent! By M. Walbrecht This is a fabulous look into an area that not a lot has been written about before! I especially like the fact that the role of women is discussed in detail. I highly recommend this book.

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 Wd Nn 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.

"This superbly written and deftly organized book provides a vast array of information concerning the mechanics of caravanning across the Sahara in the nineteenth century, the commodities traded in that period among the region's tribes, and the participants in their exchanges.... On Trans-Saharan Trails is an excellent book both for what it uncovers and for the questions it raises. Decades from now scholars in several fascinating disciplines will be using, but also seeking to refine and develop, its many fascinating findings." - *The Journal of Economic History*"On Trans-Saharan Trails, with its focus on regions bordering Western Sahara in the nineteenth century, is essential reading for understanding the mental landscape and social stratification, as well as the political and economic order within this specific ecological space. Its precise yet accessible style allows for a concrete appreciation of the workings of global history, providing a welcome reminder of the interconnectedness of our world-in terms of goods, techniques, or skills exchanged, but also in terms of the dissemination of shared vocabulary, cultural practices, ideas, beliefs, and peoples' migratory patterns." - *H-Net*"This is a rich book. Its scope ranges from a discussion of terminology of directions and the meaning of 'Sahel', via a history of tea consumption in the Sahara, to theoretical arguments on early modern trade networks. As a Saharan would say, 'Lydon has drunk deep.'" - Baz Lecocq, Ghent University, *The Journal of African History*"The text is a significant contribution to the literature on North and West Africa and deserves to be widely read, not only by historians but also by anthropologists, students of religion, art historians, and others." - Amanda Rogers, Emory University, *H-AfrArts*"Using family and court records, a breathtaking number of interviews, and a vast knowledge of Islam and northwest Africa's religious cultures, Lydon's lengthy book provides a wealth of information about the trans-Saharan trade on the eve of colonial conquest and will serve as a benchmark." - Sean Hanretta, Stanford University, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*"...scholars looking for an account of trans-Saharan trade in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will find Lydon's book to be an indispensable resource, enriched by the author's meticulous and detailed study of Arabic private correspondence, legal documents, and commercial records." - James F. Searing, *American Historical* About the Author Dr Ghislaine Lydon is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of California, Los Angeles. The author of several articles on West Africa, she has done extensive fieldwork in both West and North Africa and archival work in France.