

# Caravels & Caravans

## Histories of the Sahel

Today, about 30% of the world's Muslims live in Africa, where Islam has a long history. In the 14th century, the pilgrimage of Mali's ruler Mansa Musa to the Islamic heartlands of Mecca and Medina caused commotion, as he carried so much riches that he caused the price of gold to collapse in Cairo as he journeyed through the city. By the 16th century, the first Muslims to reach the Americas were West Africans caught up in the transatlantic slave trade.

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Artwork: Obi Nwaegbe, *Tainted Visions II (A Cultural Dialogue)*

SPRING  
2023

This seminar follows West African Muslims as they traveled and migrated, built communities and states, produced literature and scholarship, and contended with overlapping systems of slavery, and colonialism. Our focus will be on the West African Sahel, a region that includes parts of today's Nigeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Senegal, located at the confluence of two distinct worlds: the Atlantic Ocean and Sahara Desert. Represented in our seminar by the encounter of the caravel and the caravan, the Sahel was shaped by the circulations of people, ideas and goods stemming from both worlds. Our historical investigations will be at once firmly grounded in the Sahel, and often on the move, following the movements of West African Muslim pilgrims, scholars, slaves, soldiers, merchants, rulers, and revolutionaries.

Prof. Madina Thiam

W 2:00-4:45pm

KJCC, 701