

interpretation, arguing that the realities of terrain, climate, and maritime connections played a crucial role in the fluid construction and reconstruction of Arab identities in the Indian Ocean World.

The growing trade along the coasts soon led to numerous caravan routes to Central Africa where new trading centres and new societies emerged; these societies were deeply influenced by Asian and Arab actors, especially from Oman, who soon became economically influential in the Great Lakes region and started menacing Great Britain imperialist strategies in East Africa. The threat represented by European influence – Cameron and Stanley on the Congo, the German colonists, Leopold II's Congo Free State, and the missionary societies that fought the slave trade – presented major challenges for Omani economic interests in the Tabora and Ujiji regions. The portrait of the legendary figure of the slave trade, Tippu Tip (Hamad b. Muhammad al-Murjabi), offers a valuable view into the interconnections between colonial interests, regional conflicts, and trading influences in East and Central Africa.

In his conclusion, Wilkinson suggests that the Omanis will have to come to terms with their colonial past in the same way that British and European powers have had to, although perhaps through a different political process. There is a deep need for such reckonings with the histories and linkages that span the Indian Ocean region.

The eight maps are interesting, although the editing – plus some misprints in the text – could have been attended to with more care. This book is nonetheless strongly recommended not only for those interested in Eastern and Central Africa, but in Arabia and the Indian Ocean as well.

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THE MAHDIST STATE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY SUDAN

Shari'a and the Islamic State in 19th-Century Sudan: The Mahdi's Legal Methodology and Doctrine.

By Aharon Layish.

Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. xxx + 348. \$149.00, hardback (ISBN 9789004311381).

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Key Words: East Africa, Sudan, Islam, religion, politics.

In March 1881, a Sudanese holy man named Muhammad Ahmad began to confide to his intimate associates that he was the Expected Mahdi, a prominent figure in Islamic eschatology. In the months and years to follow, he and his supporters overthrew the Ottoman colonial regime in the Sudan and united much of the country under a Mahdist State that endured until the colonial conquest by the British of 1898. The Mahdi himself died in June 1885, but his Companions, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad, thereafter recorded anecdotes concerning his words and deeds, which were broadly comparable in their legal effects to the *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad.

Before his call to become the Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad had been master and guide to a leading Sudanese Sufi brotherhood. Within the Mahdist State that he subsequently established, the Mahdi abolished all Sufi brotherhoods and every established *madhhab* (school of Islamic law). (He placed a pejorative emphasis upon the Hanafi *madhhab* of the Ottoman Empire and the Maliki *madhhab* prevalent under precolonial Islamic Sudanese governments. A few *Shafi'i* sympathizers among those in Berber and Suakin who did business with East Asia were included in the prohibition but their suppression was not emphasized.) The Mahdi alone claimed the supreme authority over the dispensation of justice.

The book under review here by Aharon Layish is a discussion of the Sudanese Mahdi and his all-powerful 'legal methodology and doctrine', or in technical jargon, his *usul al-fiqh* (roots of the law). Having dismissed precedent in its established forms (*taqlid*), the Mahdi became the ultimate source of law. Layish explains that he 'elaborated a unique, though simple and unsophisticated, legal methodology, according to which a Prophetic *sunna* [precedent by word or deed] might abrogate (*naskh*) a Qur'anic text. He rejected analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) and the consensus (*ijma'*) of the *fuqaha'* [qualified interpreters of the law] as sources of law. Instead, he adopted inspiration (*ilham*) from the Prophet and God as a source of law, alongside the textual sources of the Qur'an and the *sunna*. In the event that he could not find an appropriate legal solution in the textual sources, the Mahdi would derive law by resorting to inspiration from the Prophet himself by means of a colloquy (*hadra*). Direct communication with the Prophet practically rendered the Mahdi an independent legislator with almost unrestricted discretion to interpret the word of God' (1–2). The Mahdi's word – like that of a traditional precolonial Sudanese king – was law.

The Mahdi's legal methodology may be inferred from an abundant surviving written literature of legal opinions (sing. *fatwa*), proclamations (sing. *manshura*) and sayings (sing. *qawl*). After the Mahdi's death, additional information was derived from the memory of his companions at 'instructional sessions' (sing. *majlis*). The Mahdist legal literature has been studied extensively, notably by Professor P. M. Holt, and significant portions have been published in the Sudan and elsewhere, conspicuously by the long-time director of the National Records Office, Dr Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim. The author has tracked down, scrutinized, and evaluated very many, if not all, of these previous collections.

The volume reviewed here offers an invaluable set of 72 documents translated into English with detailed annotations. The author brings to this eloquent and magisterial work not only a comprehensive understanding of the Mahdist literature in all its forms, but also a deep familiarity with the non-Mahdist jurisprudence that surrounded and opposed it. Thus the reader may learn at each point how the Mahdist position resembled or differed from its predecessors and rivals. They may well also learn why these differences came to exist. The topics addressed are arranged according to categories any legal scholar may recognize: they include slavery, property, obligations and contracts, family law, inheritance and wills, homicide and bodily harm, international law, alms and public morality, and testimony. One category is specifically Islamic; the penalties enjoined by scripture (sing. *hadd*).

A concluding essay summarizes the general thrust of why the Mahdi's jurisprudence differed from what otherwise exists in Islamic law. The present reviewer was impressed by the kind and alert sensitivity expressed by the Mahdi in his rulings towards women. For many readers, particularly those encountering the early Sudan for the first time, this book will

open the door to a little-known universe of profoundly complex interpretations concerning Sudanese intellectual, religious, and social history.

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CHIEFS, MAU MAU, AND COLLABORATION IN COLONIAL KENYA

Controversial Chiefs in Colonial Kenya: The Untold Story of Senior Chief Waruhiu Wa Kung'u, 1890–1952.

By Evanston N. Wamagatta.

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. Pp. xiv + 188. \$80.00, hardback (ISBN 9781498521475).

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Key Words: East Africa, Kenya, colonialism, resistance.

Throughout the colonial period in Kenya, chiefs were appointed by the colonial government, and they worked under the direct supervision of local British District Commissioners. In Kikuyuland, chiefs took advantage of their position to accumulate land at the expense of their subjects. Indeed, land scarcity was a major driver of the Mau Mau peasant revolt of the 1950s.

This book by Evanston Wamagatta has as its focus one such colonial chief, Waurhiu Wa Kung'u. In it, Wamagatta does not deny that chiefs abused their power for personal gain. As he states, 'there was little official control exercised over chiefs because the District Commissioners were busy and they rarely toured the locations. Consequently, in order to legitimize and preserve their unnatural positions, many chiefs became a law unto themselves' (5). Chiefs commonly resorted to brutal force to levy taxes from the population, as well as to recruit men to labor for settler farms and public works projects. Chiefs also routinely employed force to facilitate land alienation and impose colonial directives. While encouraged and often demanded by the colonial government, these actions, unsurprisingly, did little to endear these chiefs to their own people. Chiefs became the despised local representatives of the hated colonial regime. Among the most resented chiefs in Kikuyuland after 1920 was Waruhiu. He was appointed as chief in 1922, together with other well-known Kikuyu chiefs, including Koinange, Karanja, and Njonjo.

Wamagatta pursues a divided agenda in this book, and as a result there is an inherent contradiction in both his analysis and conclusion. On the one hand, Wamagatta argues that Waruhiu was 'a wealthy and powerful chief when he died' and that he had acquired this wealth and power by 'exploiting the colonial system for his own social and economic advancement' (x). On the other hand, Wamagatta holds the position that Waruhiu did not 'sell his country to the British colonizers for money since his wealth was lawfully acquired'. But Waruhiu was one of the major collaborators in central Kenya. As Wamagatta himself notes, Waruhiu 'believed his own white superior's authority was God-given and to disobey them was tantamount to disobeying God himself' (x). In his duties, Waruhiu obeyed and rarely, if ever, contradicted official pronouncements. He was furthermore quite notorious