

Action for Integrating Women in Development (NPA) (p. 87). Moreover, although the Moroccan monarch authorized political parties to contest elections, constitutionally, the King was not obliged to appoint a leader of the winning party to form a government. And when he did, key ministries such as interior, defense, foreign affairs, and religious trusts remained under the direct control of the *makhzen*. Ultimately, these facts ought to be made available to the reader in order to develop an understanding that is both general and specific. ✂

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KIM SEARCY. *The Formation of the Sudanese Mahdist State: Ceremony and Symbols of Authority: 1882-1898.* Leiden: Brill, 2010. vii + 165 pages, footnotes, bibliography, index. Cloth € 89, US\$126 ISBN 978-9-004-18599-9.

Since P.M. Holt published his classic study of the Mahdist state in 1958, few historians have broached this chapter of Sudanese history. Kim Searcy's volume represents the newest contribution to this subject. Searcy focuses on the two figures of the Mahdi, who founded the Mahdist state but who died suddenly in 1885, and the Khalifa Abdullahi, his successor, who ruled from a capital in Omdurman until the Anglo-Egyptian conquest toppled his regime in 1898. "A core concern of this study," Searcy explains, "is the insignias and symbols of the Mahdists," with attention to how they shaped a state that was "uniquely Mahdist and Sudanese" (p. 2). The author takes up this concern in Chapter 2, entitled "Protocol, Ceremony, and Symbols of Authority," when he considers the Mahdist state's use of items of material culture ranging from garments like the turban (*imama*), to items like rosary beads (*subha*) and coins.

The author contends in the introduction that, "It was primarily through the use of symbols and ceremonies appropriated from the Sufi brotherhoods of mystical Islam and two Sudanese Islamic polities—the Funj and Fur sultanates—that the Mahdists articulated their claims to authority" (pp. 2-3). Implicit in this claim is the author's disagreement with P.M. Holt, who suggested the Mahdist state inherited much of its apparatus and style from the Turco-Egyptian colonial regime (r. 1820-85) that immediately preceded it. The emphasis on the Mahdist state's connection to the Funj and Kayra dynasties (as they prevailed during the period from roughly the

sixteenth through the early nineteenth century), reflects the author's belief in the authenticity, and autochthony, of the Sudanese Mahdist system and its wholesale rejection of the Turco-Egyptian regime. Yet while this idea of the Mahdist state's conscious emulation of Funj practice is fascinating, the book offers little to sustain it, aside from offering general observations such as that, "The Funj kings were ostensibly among the first ruling Muslim elites in the Sudan to articulate their political legitimacy by using Islam and descent from the Prophet's tribe as a buttress to their authority" (p. 13).

Although the book's title emphasizes attention to Mahdist ceremonies and symbols, the book engages just as much with the Mahdist state's invocation of deep Islamic historical precedents, going back to the early Islamic era. In this regard, Searcy emphasizes the strong influence of Sufi culture on the Mahdist enterprise and illustrates, too, the centrality of a broader popular Islamic cultural imagination. For example, the author notes the significance of visions and dreams about the Prophet Muhammad, which both the Mahdi and Khalifa claimed to have had and to which they attributed guidance in statecraft.

The author adheres very closely in this book to the text of his 2004 Ph.D. dissertation from Indiana University. He draws upon English and Arabic sources, including memoirs, histories, and primary-source texts (such as proclamations and budget registers of the Mahdi and Khalifa, which earlier scholars in the field have compiled and published). For secondary sources, the author's use of books is quite selective—in some ways too selective—so that there are some surprising omissions. Notable omissions include Yusuf Fadl Hasan's classic history, *The Arabs and the Sudan* (1967); Anders Bjørkelo's book, *Prelude to the Mahdiyya* (1989); as well as works by Gabriel Warburg, and particularly *Historical Discord in the Nile Valley* (1992), which considers debates over Sudanese history and historiography vis-à-vis the post-1820 period. The author leaves occasional points unsubstantiated or unexplained, and assumes a higher level of expertise in Islamic studies than many readers may have. For example, he challenges a claim that the British Christian missionary and observer of Islam, J.S. Trimmingham, advanced in 1949, to the effect that "animist" cultural elements persisted in Sudanese Islam. The author counters that, "This argument does not entirely resonate because there can be found in Islamic mysticism...Hindu elements as well as Neoplatonic influences" (p. 9), a point that may pertain to Sufism in general across the centuries of the Islamic era, but that says little about the Sudanese experience.

Given, again, that so few historians tackle the Mahdist history of the Sudan, scholars will welcome Kim Searcy's book for continuing the

discussion about this fascinating period in Islamic African history. In this regard, scholars may appreciate reading Searcy's study of the performance of Mahdist power alongside Robert S. Kramer's recent urban history of Mahdist Omdurman, entitled *Holy City on the Nile* (Markus Wiener, 2010). ✂

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RADWAN ZIADEH. *Power and Policy in Syria: Intelligence Services, Foreign Relations and Democracy in the Modern Middle East.* London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011. xi + 228 pages, notes, references, index. Cloth US\$92 ISBN 978-1-848-85434-5.

Radwan Ziadeh's *Power and Policy in Syria* sheds light on policymaking in contemporary Syria and comes at a time the al-Asads' rule is nearing its end. Ziadeh opens a window on to Syria that is useful in understanding not only its recent history but also its future. The reader will find this text helpful in delineating decision-making processes in Syria and interpreting internal power struggles in Syrian society and politics. Ziadeh's observation that "Syria is [in] a unique stage in its history" (p. 72) may appear like a prophecy now, as the so-called Arab Spring continues to evolve in various parts of the Middle East. In fact, it is but a confirmation of the accuracy of Ziadeh's analyses in this book. Now, "Syrians' re-discovery of politics" in the aftermath of transition of power from father to son is arguably at its height. As such, whether Bashar al-Asad stays in power or not, *Power and Policy in Syria* promises to be a major reference to explain Syria's political struggles in the past decade as well as in the future.

Dr. Ziadeh covers Syria's foreign policy with respect to Lebanon, Iran, and Iraq. The argument in *Power and Policy* is that Syria's domestic challenges demand more attention and hence Bashar al-Asad should institute a "strategic retraction" in foreign affairs. That is, Ziadeh claims, Syria should progressively withdraw "from some commitments (while trying to avoid any adverse regional and international repercussions) with a view to establishing domestic politics on a new footing" (p. 127). The major strength of the book is its analysis of policymaking processes in Syria and in doing so illustrates the impact of Hafez and Bashar al-Asad in the making of Syria's foreign and defense policy. Ziadeh also illustrates how Bashar al-Asad is