



Law, Society and Culture in the Maghrib, 1300-1500 (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization)

By David S. Powers

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David Powers analyzes the application of Islamic law through six cases which took place during the period 1300 to 1500 in the Maghrib. The source for these disputes are fatwas issued by the muftis, which Powers uses to situate each case in its historical context and to interpret the principles of law. He demonstrates that, contrary to popular stereotypes, muftis were dedicated to reasoned argument. The book represents a ground-breaking approach to a complex subject area for students and scholars.

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- Sales Rank: #3923847 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Cambridge University Press
- Published on: 2009-10-22
- Released on: 2009-10-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x .63" w x 5.98" l, .91 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 280 pages

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Review

"...an exceptionally valuable addition to the scholarly literature on the workings of Islamic law, on the one hand, and on the social history of the Maghrib on the other." American Historical Review

"Law, Society, and Culture in the Maghrib is an extremely well-crafted account of Islamic justice in Morocco between 1300 and 1500. The quality of historical research in this book and its theoretical contributions to our understanding of legal practice in the post-colonial Islamic West will guarantee its place in the growing literature on Islamic law." Islamic Law and Society

"It is the individual cases, however, that anchor these conclusions in the context of a particular society at a particular time and place, and make Powers's work a convincing demonstration of his argument. For an understanding of [Maghribi] society and its history, his analysis is a gem." Times Literary Supplement

"By enabling us to understand the rules of the legal system and the choices litigants and legal practitioners had before them, Powers has succeeded in making his ground breaking study of law and society in the late medieval Maghrib also a highly readable one....Powers's real achievement is in using Rosen's errors as a springboard for an attempt to identify these 'extra-legal elements' in the crafting of legal opinions....essential reading for students of pre-modern Islamic law....breaks new ground in our understanding of the relationship between law and society in medieval Islam. " Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam

"The book is a must for anyone who wants to understand how Islamic law functioned in practice after 287/900. The material...is presented in a clear and systematic manner, not only making it accessible for the non-legal mind but also actually engaging the reader in such a way that one awaits the outcome with interest." Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations

"Law, society and culture in the Maghrib, 1300-1500 is a valuable new addition to the corpus of studies on Islamic law and its interaction with society and culture, as well as a worthwhile contribution to the social history of Marinid Morocco. Law, society and culture in the Maghrib, 1300-1500 sheds new light on the role of the muftî in the medieval Maghrib and is an important contribution to the growing corpus of works on the interplay between law and society in the Islamic world, works which dispel earlier prejudices about the supposedly dysfunctional aspects of Islamic law." Continuity and Change

"This work contains a veritable mine of information for the Western reader and for academics...It should be essential reading for advanced students of Islamic studies and comparative religious traditions. Powers is to be heartily congratulated for opening the door to further studies of the social context of the Shari'a in medieval Islam." Journal of Religion

About the Author

David S. Powers is currently Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Cornell University. He is the author of *Studies in Qur'an and Hadith: The Formation of the Islamic Law of Inheritance* (1986), and co-editor of *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and the Fatwas* (1996), and Editor of the journal *Islamic Law and Society*.

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