

MIDDEN-OOSTEN

GAUBE, H. with contributions by A. AL SALIMI — The Ibadis in the Region of the Indian Ocean. Section One: East Africa. (Studies on Ibadism and Oman, 1). Georg Olms Verlag AG, Hildesheim, 2013. (31 cm., 446). ISBN 978-3-487-14800-7. € 68,-.

In the introduction of his book, the author describes the concept of his work as “the concept of a handbook [that] is addressed to Omani readers in the first place [for] many of them are somehow connected to East Africa. [The book is] a critical compilation of many scholarly works and historical sources written in different languages”. And this is exactly what it is.

Heinz Gaube, retired professor of *Irakunde* at Tübingen University, seems a man who is able to turn his hand to anything. He had a varied career and he participated in numerous research projects, which is reflected in the thoroughness of the composition of this work on (Oman and) East Africa, that he undertook, as he himself put it -with a good deal of understatement- in an interview of May 2011, three years after his retirement, “starting from scratch” (www.tageblatt.de).

We have here a comprehensive, careful survey of the architecture/material culture and history of the East-African coast. The book contains 320 illustrations: detailed maps, plans of archaeological sites and buildings, and many colour photographs taken by the author himself, and it ends with a substantial bibliography. The book is a beautiful publication.

As the table of contents apparently cannot be found on the internet, it seems useful to give the contents of the book in a somewhat abbreviated form:

– *Section one*: the material sources: Historical sites between Lamu Archipelago and Kilwa (archaeological work in the region; the coast of Kenya; the coast of Tanzania). Key sites and chronology (Gedi, Kilwa, Manda, Shanga). Historical sites on the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba.

– *Section two*: the written sources: The pre-Islamic period (Periplus of the Erythrean sea; Claudius Ptolemy’s geography). The Islamic period (Tuan C’eng-Shih’s voyage; Buzurg b. Shahriyar of Ram Hurmuz; al-Mas’udi; al-Idrisi; Chao Ju-Kua on Zanzibar; Abu ’l-Fida on Malindi, Mombasa, Sofala; Marco Polo; Ibn Battuta on Mombasa and Kilwa Kisiwani). Portuguese sources (Vasco da Gama; Pedro Alvares Cabral; Ruy Lourenço Ravasco in Zanzibar; Dom Francisco d’Almeida; the sack of Kilwa and Mombasa 1505; Nuno Vaz Pereira’s settlement of Kilwa affairs; Diogo de Alcaçova to the king of Portugal; Duarte Barbosa on the East Coast; Gaspar de S. Bernardino’s journey along the coast; Father Joao Dos Santos; Rezende on Mombasa). The local tradition (Swahili and Arabic chronicles on Kilwa, Juani island, Pate, Mombasa, Lamu, Pemba, Lindi Sudi, Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo).

– *Section three*: analysis and synthesis: Chronological summary (pottery, mosques, mihrabs); Oman and the Swahili coast (pre-Islamic period; early Islamic period; middle Islamic period; Qalhat; Hormuz; Shirazis of East Africa; decline of the coast of East Africa after the Portuguese conquest; revival under Omani rule to the second period of Sayyid Said b. Sultan’s rule (1824-1856)).

Readers already familiar with the material culture and the history of East Africa could be somewhat disappointed not to find an internalized survey of the latest published research on the different subjects of the three sections of the book -they already know most sources the author used and will not be charmed by the long extracts from published works the author gives, but this would probably have led to too many details, and anyhow would not have fulfilled the intended purpose of the book. They will, however, have at their disposal a well-arranged survey of the material culture and history of (Oman and) East Africa, amply provided with maps of the coast and the islands and plans of archaeological and historical sites and buildings, and moreover with very good colour photographs. Less specialized readers and those with simply an interest in East Africa and its historical ties with Oman will find a beautiful, pleasant and well-readable book on the region.

As for (mild) criticism, editorially there are flaws here and there. To mention a few: “afford” instead of “effort” (p. 14), “b. Abban” instead of “b. Abbad” (p. 394), “Trimingham” for “Trimingham”, “Kiwa” for “Kilwa” (p. 440), “lead” instead of “led” (p. 441), “Ibn Mudad” for “Ibn Maddad” (p. 398), “Julfan” for “Julfar” (p. 443), the phrase “many of the latter then in Shiraz” (p. 400), “al-Kashif wa al-Biyan” in stead of “al-Kashf wa’l-Bayān” (p. 407), Freeman-Grenville 1957, mentioned on p. 396, is missing in the bibliography (probably “1957” is an error), Tolmacheva 1979: “*International Journal of African History* 12 (1979), 296-324” should be “*International Journal of African Historical Studies* 12 (1979), 259-269”, and Tolmacheva’s edition *The Pate Chronicle* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993, (xiv, 607 pp.) ISBN 978.0.87013.336.7) is nowhere mentioned.

Maastricht, March 2014

Martin CUSTERS

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HOFFMANN-RUF, M., und A. AL SALIMI (Hrsg.) — Oman and Overseas. Proceedings of the International Conference ‘The Ibadism of Oman – Its Overseas Development and its Perception Overseas’ held at Tübingen University, 16th-19th of May 2011. (Studies on Ibadism and Oman, 2). Georg Olms Verlag AG, Hildesheim, 2013. (31 cm., 506). ISBN 978-3-487-14798-7. € 68,-.

Studies on Ibadism are experiencing a considerable growth in the West during the last decade, which is reflected in books, articles, doctoral theses, as well as in international conferences. Of the latter, in the last five years alone we have seen examples in Thessaloniki (Nov. 2009), Tübingen (May 2011), Lyon (June 2011), Madrid (Dec. 2012), Naples (May 2012) and Cracow (May 2013), all organized with the (financial) encouragement of the Omani Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, or within the framework of the project Maghribadite (Lyon, Madrid; see www.maghribadite.org), while two more are projected in 2014, in Cambridge and Lyon. The proceedings of these conferences have been or are being published, which, of course, signifies a welcome addition to the corpus of Ibadi materials in Western languages. However, perhaps some caution in the frequency

of international conferences could be in place, as not very many researchers are doing in-depth research in the field of Ibadism and quality should not be substituted by quantity in the publication of Ibadi studies.

The conference in Lyon within the framework of Maghribadite has resulted in the publication of a special issue of *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée (REMMM)* (Lyon), vol. 132, Dec. 2012: L'ibādisme, une minorité au cœur de l'islam (texts on www.remmm.revues.org), although the articles in this issue don't reflect exactly the lectures of the conference. Future publications of proceedings of international conferences on Ibadism (those of Thessaloniki and Naples) are in preparation in the series *Studies on Ibadism and Oman*, of which volume 2, that brings the proceedings of the Tübingen conference in May 2011, is reviewed here.

The book has four sections. In the first section: *Oman and the Outside World until the early 17th Century* (pp. 11-76), Paul Yule ("Late Pre-Islamic Oman: The Inner Evidence — The Outside View," pp. 13-33) gives a survey of the state of archaeological research for the formative history of Oman. John C. Wilkinson ("The Origins of Omani Identity," pp. 35-39) gives a short explanation of how Oman's national identity has largely been formed by the interaction of three principal features: its geography, its tribal structure, and the religious ideology of Ibāḍī Islam. Dionisius A. Agius' contribution ("Omani Seafaring Identity before the Early 1600s: Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity," pp. 41-56) examines the ethnic composition of the Omani coastal communities, where there appears to have been a dominance of Persians, to conclude that "precisely this ethnic and cultural mix ... has created a dynamism ... enabling Oman ... to become a great maritime power of the western Indian Ocean". Ralph Kauz ("Umani Ports in Chinese Sources," pp. 57-64) treats the very limited Chinese sources on Oman and the information they provide. Tom Vosmer ("Omani Seafaring and Omani Boats," pp. 65-76) treats the technical aspects of seafaring and boat building in Oman.

In the second section: *Oman and East Africa* (pp. 77-140), Abdul Sheriff ("The Swahili Coast: Africa's Window on the Indian Ocean," pp. 79-91) describes in broad outline the history of East African — or Indian Ocean- trade from Roman times onwards. Then he treats the formation of the Swahili society around the question whether it is oriental or African. Mark Horton ("Ibadis in East Africa: Archaeological and Historical Evidence," pp. 93-106) examines archaeological evidence of early trade and settlement on the East African coast, early Islamic historical sources, the Kilwa documents, and ethnographic evidence. Mohamed Bakari ("The Main Languages of East Africa and their Literatures," pp. 107-123) gives us an interesting survey of ethnic and linguistic variety in East Africa, with maps of the language situation in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and some reflections on Swahili literature. Malyn Newitt ("The Portuguese in East Africa and the Omani Reconquest of East Africa," pp. 125-140) relates this history from the Portuguese perspective, explaining the manifold causes of the course of history, describing independent coastal towns and the rivalry between them, and the role of Africans from the mainland.

In the third section: *The Omani Maritime "Empire"* (pp. 141-216), Valeria Fiorani Piacentini's contribution ("The Growth of the Relationships between Oman, the Gulf and the Western Waters of the Indian Ocean. Oman: The

Corner-Stone of a Maritime System," pp. 143-183) actually is a history of the landmass of Iran with a focus on the importance of the international trade of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, tipping on the position of Oman during the developments in the 10th-13th centuries. Eric Staples ("The Formation of Oman's Maritime Power under the Yaariba and Sayyid Said," pp. 185-202) draws a comparison between the implementation of the maritime power of the Yaariba and the early Al Bu Said. He also discusses the Omani fleets in both periods and their actions. Pius Malekandathil ("From Slumber to Assertion: Maritime Expansion of the Ibadis of Oman and the Responses of *Estado da India*, 1622-1720," pp. 203-216) looks into the nature of maritime expansion of the Ibadis and at the Portuguese-Omani relationship and its impact on Indian soil. The Omanis and the Portuguese remained in commercial partnership and political alliance as long as there were shared interests and common enemies like the threat from the Ottomans and later from the Safavids. With the weakening of these threats, the Yaariba Imam Saif managed to create a strong anti-Portuguese sentiment among the Ibadis.

The fourth section: *The Outside View on Oman and Ibadism* (pp. 217-500), offers a kaleidoscope of "outside views" coming from almost all the continents, some of which a bit dragged in by the head and shoulders under this title. Ali Akbar Ziaee ("Omani Trade and Cultural Relations with East Asian Countries," pp. 219-225) sketches trade between Oman and India, China, Malaysia-Indonesia-Singapore. His reproduction of titles of Arabic works in the bibliography seems peculiar here and there. João Teles e Cunha ("Oman and Omanis in Portuguese Sources in the Early Modern Period (ca. 1500-1750)," pp. 227-263) points out that despite Portugal's long contact with Islam and its presence on coastal Oman a description of Ibadism remained lacking: Oman never played a central role in the Portuguese empire in Asia and the political aspect of Portuguese-Omani interaction always had the upper hand on the religious aspect. Jan Just Witkam ("Wood, Horses and Friendship. The Arabic letters from Muscat to the Dutch in Kochi (1779) and Batavia (1798-1806)," pp. 265-297) presents a little cache of letters, preserved more or less by accident, that form the only original material we have on Omani-Dutch contacts in that period of time, placing them in historical context. James Worrall ("The British Historical View of Oman and Ibadism," pp. 299-312) depicts, in a quick survey, Anglo-Omani relations from the 17th century onwards and how Ibadism impinged upon British perceptions of Oman and the religion itself (calling the Imam who was elected in 1913 Salim bin Salih al-Harithi (p. 307) instead of Sālim b. Rāshid al-Kharūṣī). In a second section of his article he explores the perceptions of British explorers and travellers of the country and the perception of Ibadism in this literature, as far as there is any. Moez Dridi ("Oman and Ibadism in Modern French Historiography: Assessing a Semi-Failure," pp. 313-324) gives a survey of French research on Oman and Ibadism jumping forwards and backwards in time. Efim Rezvan ("Oman: The Russian View since the 15th Century," pp. 325-339) gives a survey of the few contacts between Russia and Oman, and of the not so many scientific Russian studies related to Oman or Ibadism. Amal N. Ghazal ("Oman: The Arab View," pp. 341-352), after having pointed out the neglect of Omani history in general works on the history of the Arabs, shows that in modern times also the

Ibadis participated in the current movements in the Arab world (anti-colonialism, pan-islamism). Mohammed Z. Gol ("Zanzibar: The Sultanate and the Ottoman State in Africa," pp. 353-375) describes the presence of the Ottoman State in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the activities of the Ottoman State in the East of the African continent, exchange of messages between Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1908) and the Sultans of Zanzibar (1880-1907), the idea of Islamic unity, dwelling a bit long on the general history of the region. Gulshan Dietl ("Mosaic View: Views from India," pp. 377-386) offers "a series of snap shots" of positive and negative contacts and relations of all sorts between Oman and India through the ages, dwelling on developments in modern Oman, based mainly on Indian writers. Chapurukha M. Kusimba ("African Perspectives," pp. 387-401) discusses the influence of Ibadism in Africa in sections of a very general nature, that could be characterized more as ponderings of an intellectual person, interesting for the general reader, than as a critical survey of the available literature. Anne K. Bang ("Danish and Norwegian Travel Accounts of Oman, 1765-1995: Changing Views across Sea and Land," pp. 403-410) reviews travel accounts from the 1760s (Carsten Niebuhr), the 1930s (Georg Wasmuth Sjersted) and the 1980s-1990s (Troels Kløvedal) and how these travel writers' observations differ over time. Stefan Schreiner ("Oman through Jewish Travellers' Eyes," pp. 411-435) depicts the presence of Jews in the Gulf and especially in Muscat, where, as it seems, there were not many of them and where they disappeared by the middle of the 20th century. Douglas Leonard ("A Historical Survey of US-Omani Relations from 1790 to the Present," pp. 437-448), after a brief review of commercial and diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Oman, that started in 1790, focuses on the philanthropic and social service-related relationship, being the activities in Oman of the Reformed Church in America, for which the cornerstone was laid by a visit of the Rev. Samuel Zwemer to Sultan Fayṣal b. Turkī Āl Būsa'īd in 1891. Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf ("The Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen (SOS) at Berlin: Aspects of the Relationship between Oman and Germany in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century," pp. 449-461) brings us the history of the Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin, established in 1887, its staff and students, and its publications, focusing on the period up to the end of the First World War. Leila M. S. Pacheco ("Historical Coincidences between Oman and Brazil: Portuguese Invaders, African Slaves and the *Majlis al-Jinn*," pp. 463-479) sees coincidences in Portuguese activities in the Gulf and Oman on the one hand and in Brazil on the other, in Omani and Portuguese slave trade and its consequences, and in the infiltration of African religions in Catholicism in Brazil and Islam in Oman. Angeliki Ziaka ("The South East European View," pp. 481-491) starts with, quite rightly, implicitly establishing that there is no relation between Greece and Ibadism and Oman, proceeding then with mentioning a few ancient Greek writers who wrote on the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Peninsula, offering long quotes in Greek in the notes, followed by some information on Muslim communities on the Balkan, and rounding up with the international conference on Ibadism and Oman which took place in Thessaloniki in November 2009. Uzi Rabi ("A Political Culture and Foreign Policy Shaped by a Moderate Religious View: The Case of the Sultanate of Oman," pp. 493-500) assesses the nature of the political process in the country and the

nature of its foreign policy during the rule of Sultan Qaboos, as well as the influence of the Ibadī tradition in the country.

The edition of this book is as beautiful as number 1 in this series, the book of Heinz Gaube on East Africa (see my review in the present volume of *Bibliotheca Orientalis*), with many illustrations. As for the articles in it, they offer interesting reading rather than scientific, innovating research, and their quality differs, ranging from rather simple, and perhaps quickly written, to more in-depth studies and good surveys. Like the book of Gaube, that was "addressed to Omani readers in the first place," I suppose that Omani readers will like this book too, as it treats many different aspects more or less related to their country.

Throughout the book there are minor "slips of the pen". Of other, less minor "slips", the following could be mentioned: p. 202, "Serjeant 1975, 1,2 (1975) 81", should be: "vol. 6 part 1 (1983), 77-89"; p. 216, "Özbaran 1972, 59-64", should be: "45-87"; p. 318, a Bayt Faransa in Muscat, the former residence of the French consul, is well known, of that in Ṣuḥār I have never heard; p. 343, the son of Nūr al-Dīn al-Sālimī is called 'Abd Allāh in stead of Muḥammad; p. 346, al-Shahāb instead of al-Shihāb; p. 352, Taima should be Tu'ayma; p. 352, with "fi al-daawa-l-dawaa" "fi 'l-Dā' wa'l-Dawā" is meant; p. 353, Emir Ali Bey grnered (*sic*) experience in fighting the Portuguese near Muscat in the 1580s, on p. 357 he did that in the 1780s.

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Martin CUSTERS

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WILKINSON, J.C. — Water and Tribal Settlement in South-East Arabia. A Study of the Aflāj of Oman. (Studies on Ibadism and Oman, 5). Georg Olms Verlag AG, Hildesheim, 2013. (25 cm, XVI, 276). ISBN 978-3-487-14884-7. € 48,-.

In the Introduction to his book, the author declares the objective of his writing to be "understanding the fusion between the physical and traditional social environment [in Oman]". For this to be achieved, "it is necessary ... to try and study both the physical and the social elements with the tools of the respective specialist disciplines. A true interdisciplinary approach is called for, research [is required] into the Persian origins of the settlement pattern, the Ibādī concepts of community organization, and the structure of the country's so-called 'tribal' society, ... we must expect to have to enter into the fields of the Arabist, the Islamic historian, and the social anthropologist, as well as those of the hydrologist and geographer". Indeed, it is in all these fields that the author demonstrates his competence, accomplishing a study that is not confined to irrigation and water management systems, but covers a wide range of topics, while at the same time he proves to have a background of extensive personal familiarity with Oman and oasis settlement, all of which give this work extraordinary depth and insight.

The book starts with a general description of the regional, maritime and landward settings. The physical characteristics of the interior, distribution of the population. Regional, maritime, and agricultural economy. The duality of the region: Sultanate and Imamate, Muscat and Oman, bedu and ḥaḍar, tribal and non-tribal societies, subsistence and exchange

economies, coastal and interior Oman, conservatism and acceptance of change, and so on.

In chapter 2 the hydrology — drainage system, Batina coast, water potential and utilization — of the mountain zone is discussed, where, together with the associated *bajada* zone, all fresh water resources are located, the distribution of water being the one feature which above all has determined the settlement pattern in Oman.

The next chapter is devoted to the desert foreland, where livestock-herding meets limited land-use for agriculture, where differences in the economic resources of the various zones of land-use tend to produce demographic equilibrium between the socio-economic groups which occupy them, where there is no real urban society, and where all the inhabitants are incorporated in a 'tribal' society. The societies of the two major provinces of interior Oman are, although different, integrated by complementary resource specialization. In this chapter also the rights of ownership (*mulk*) in relation to wells of all types (*miyāh*), irrigation systems (*aflāj*) and distributory irrigation channels (*sawāqī*) are discussed. *Mulk* regulates not only what land may and may not be owned by individuals, but also clearly defines the territorial rights of the villagers and thereby reduces the potential for conflict with nomads.

Then follows a detailed discussion of the traditional techniques of water-exploitation: wells, semi-permanent surface or near-surface flow in a wadi (*ghayl aflāj*), horizontal well bringing water from an aquifer (water bearing formation) by means of a tunneled or open channel (*qanāt aflāj*), and of the physical factors affecting the flow of water.

Based on fieldwork and Omani written sources, the *falaj* organization is explained, with always the Arabic terms being given: the *falaj* layout, how the water, which is very much regarded as communal property, reaches the residential area of the village from the well. The upkeep of the main network of primary channels is the responsibility of the *falaj* organization, while individual owners are responsible for the garden channels. The principles of water shareholding and the complex ways in which *falaj* water is distributed are explained. The author discusses the problem of equal shareholding, subdivision in time shares, measuring time, organization for ensuring that the irrigation system is properly maintained, and gives a detailed description of the *maliki falaj* system in Izkī. This chapter concludes with a description of division of labour and responsibilities in Omani villages, *falaj* officials and judicial rulings. In Wilkinson's time of research (closed 1974) the system was already rapidly breaking down as a result of the labour crisis in the villages.

As an introduction to his primary object of chapter 6 -to try and find out something about the origins of the *qanāt* in Oman and the land-organization associated with the constructional periods, the author starts with the observation that the present tenure system of small tribal *mulk* holders in Central Oman is not suited to maintain a system of irrigation that demands a very large capital investment, that major investment in Oman's economic infrastructure can hardly be expected, that the present population of Oman has no real knowledge of the techniques of *qanāt* building, even the 'awāmir (specialist *falaj* builders) don't, that the local population is completely ignorant of the history of *qanāt*, and finally that Omanis don't even distinguish between the various types of irrigation system.

After having explained a distinct pattern in Omani history, which Wilkinson calls Imamate cycles -the cyclical pattern of rising and collapsing irrigation communities throughout Omani history, he demonstrates that during the Golden Age of the First Imamate (9th c.) there is no evidence of *qanāt* construction, although there may have been important reconstructions. The second potential *qanāt* building period is at the height of the Ya'ariba Imamate, c. 1650-1725, but it is not possible to attribute any major part of the basic settlement pattern in Oman to their efforts, only revitalization of the land after the all-time low into which the country's economy had sunk by the end of the Nabāhina times. There are surviving vestiges of the *Jāhili* period that provide positive support for the thesis that the main land development of Oman was completed by the middle of the 7th c. A.D. Wilkinson believes that when the Arabs began to arrive in Oman some form of *qanāt* network already existed there, at least in part developed by the Achaemenids, and that the Sasānid period (mid-3rd to mid-7th c. A.D.) saw an intensification of the old-established *qanāt* network, notably within the mountain area. "Maintaining their tribal organizations and bedu attitudes, there is no reason to suppose that the Arabs did anything to expand the prosperity of the land or create new establishments in pre-islamic times any more than they did when they became masters of the land" (quotation from Wilkinson 1973, "Arab-Persian land relationships in late Sasānid Oman". *Seminar for Arabian Studies* (London), 1973, 40-51, repeated here (p. 133)). Arabs were second-class people among the Persians in the land. For the Arabs the call to Islam was the call to drive out the Persians. They expelled the upper echelons of the Persian ruling organization.

In the following pages of the book the writer explains the influence of Ibādism (ch. 7), and the system of social organization loosely labelled 'tribal' (ch. 8-10).

Chapter 7 is entitled "Impact of Imamate government on social and economic organization of the settled lands in Oman". The author explains the Ibādī concept of community organization (Imamate theory). Imamate government led to unification of village and Arab society (merging of the non-Arab and the Arab population). The Arabs introduced their 'Arab (bedu) system of social organization into village life, and assimilated the sedentary, non-Arab population. A new form of tribal organization grew up around the fixed settlement pattern. The impact of the shar'ā: inheritance laws, taxation, state budget are treated. And finally the author states that Arab government in Oman did little to encourage private investment in the land, and he points out the inability of the tribesmen fully to adapt to the requirements of an agricultural community.

In the following chapter, after having declared that it is frequently impossible to specify what is attributed to Ibādī influence and what to tribalism, a detailed description of tribe organization in Oman is given, illustrated by an analysis of *Nubdhā fī ansāb al-ma'āwil* of Abū Sulaymān Muḥammad b. 'Amir al-Ma'walī. The author points out that the notional concepts which underly the social organization often don't correspond with reality.

Then geographical features affecting the functioning of the tribes are explained. Through some case-studies an explanation is given of how stages in the process of settling bring about changes in tribal organization and attitudes towards the land.

In chapter 10 the relationships between tribal and settlement organization that prevail in the *qanāt* village is explained with a case study of the village of Izkī on the basis of the Malki Falaj Book (c. 1825). The author extrapolates the local situation of tribal polarization (Nizar-Yaman), which occurs wherever sizeable elements from different descent groups share a common economic resource in Oman, to surrounding regions and to the whole of Oman (Ghāfirī-Hināwī). He finds that the tribal system in Oman is based on placing groups in opposition to one another rather than on uniting them, and so is extremely wasteful of both human and natural resources.

Contemplating future developments in Oman, in the conclusion of his book the author says: "This whole picture of traditional life in Oman is radically changing. Effective centralized government has been imposed on the inhabitants, thanks to imported technology. The wealth of the country is no longer in its agriculture (or maritime trade), but in oil. The need for wasteful tribal mechanisms for maintaining internal political balance is fast disappearing."

As the original edition is not easily available anymore, everybody who is interested in irrigation, settlement organization and tribal relations in traditional Oman will be glad to have now the opportunity, through this reprint of the 1977 edition, to acquire Wilkinson's detailed study. Even though the social structure of Omani society has gone through a rapid transition since the mid-1970s, this book can help understanding undercurrents from the past which are still there in Omani society.

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Martin CUSTERS

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FROMHERZ, A.J. — The Almohads. The rise of an Islamic empire (Library of Middle East History, 18). I.B. Tauris, London & New York, 2010 (24 cm, XIII, 274). ISBN 978-1-84511-651-4. £ 56.50.

In this book Fromherz deals with the Almohads, the well-known dynasty that dominated Morocco and Spain in the last half of twelfth century CE. According to him, he fills the gap, that was left hitherto by historians in Europe and elsewhere by not giving enough attention to the Berber element and the basis of the power structure of the Berber tribes in the Atlas in the beginning of this dynasty. According to him the sources of the Almohads are not researched in a satisfactory manner. Ibn Tūmart, the founder, was very much indebted to the tribal Berber structures of his homeland.

As historical sources Fromherz makes use of historians who are acquainted with the Berber history and surroundings. Such sources included the biography written by Ibn Tūmart's personal scribe al-Baydhaq, found in an unedited collection of manuscripts at the Escorial, the anonymous *Kitāb al-Ansāb* (*Book of Ancestry*); the chronicle of al-Marrākushī, an Almohad; and the chronicle and a treatise on Almohad hierarchy by the writer Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d. circa 1266), and later historians including Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) whose philosophy of history was influenced by the Almohad example.

In dealing with the Almohad founding myth, Fromherz mentions as his predecessors Madeleine Fletcher and Maribel

Fierro, but they are characterized as focusing too much upon the possible influence of the twelfth-century Andalusian milieu, having specific ideas on how the conquest of Andalusia influenced the Almohads. Our author thinks that they think, that the Almohad conquest of al-Andalus was among the most important factors in explaining the construction of the Almohad foundation myth. Fletcher went even so far to consider even the *A'azz mā Yuṭlab*, the book of Ibn Tūmart's doctrine, as mainly the fruit of the pen of Andalusian philosophers like Ibn Rushd. The author argues instead, that the development of Ibn Tūmart's Almohad doctrine should be especially seen in the context of High Atlas Berber society as portrayed in the above mentioned historical sources. Ibn Tūmart used and adapted Berber tribal customs, which already existed. The author considers the rise of the Almohads "as a model for understanding revolution, tribalism, identity and change on the western edge of the Islamic world".

This book gives us insight into the beginning of the Almohad movement and successive dynasty, starting with the description of the life of Ibn Tūmart, his journey from a place called the 'farthest west', to the heart of Islam, and back again. Important in his life is his encounter, fictitious or not, with the Sunni scholar al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) who wrote his famous *On the Revival of the Religious Sciences* [*Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*] as a reaction to the crisis and confusion of Sunnite believers of his time. Al-Ghazālī authorized the Koranic duty "commanding right and forbidding wrong". Ibn Tūmart claimed to have met al-Ghazālī, whose works were destroyed or burnt in Andalusia. When returning, Ibn Tūmart became convinced of his mission "to command right and forbid wrong". From the mountain tribes of his homeland he made a disciplined army. He became a Mahdī "to re-establish justice at the end of time". He promoted the belief in one God without any physical attributes to enforce unity upon his reign.

The author is under the impression of the strength of the Almohads based upon traditional Berber values. To quote some laudatory remarks of his on the Almohads: "The Almohads were the first and only effective system of government in history to control the entire wild and treacherous chain of the Atlas Mountains in North Africa." And: "The Almohad army, a hotchpotch of tribes and tongues, often numbering up to 100,000 for major expeditions, was paid through a complex government bureaucracy: [...] almost every piece of useful land was divided and sorted for tax and revenue collection."

According to Fromherz, the decline of the Almohads afterwards began with the disintegration of relations between the Berber tribal sheikhs, portrayed as defenders of the 'authentic' movement, and the refined caliphs or successors of the Mahdī, such as al-Ma'mūn who finally rejected the doctrine of Ibn Tūmart and massacred the tribal leaders. The sources generally see the later Almohad caliphs in a negative light. Al-Ma'mūn even included Jesus and Mary in his confession of faith to gain the support of the Christian mercenaries of king Ferdinand.

Fromherz challenges prevailing views of how primary sources of Almohad history were manipulated at the time they were produced. According to him, Andalusia may have manipulated some Almohad history and doctrine, but he emphasizes that generally the first sources of Almohad history were written by Berber Almohads who were the

first converts to Almohadism. In other words, they go back to the Berber leadership of the Mahdī Ibn Tūmart and his successor, the first Caliph ‘Abd al-Mu‘min. From the mentioned Berber sources can be reconstructed and explained the creation of the myth of Almohad origins within the specifically Berber social framework in which the empire arose.

In the book, together with the Maps and Acknowledgements, a number of introductions and chapters devoted to specific subjects are to be found, as, for instance, the Almohad founding myths and relations between the Almohads and Ibn Khaldūn (pp. 7-15).

The first chapter deals with Ibn Tūmart’s biography and the birth of the Almohad movement, Ibn Tūmart’s name and the myths and uses of ancestry, his Journey to the East, his possible connections with Al-Ghazālī, his Journey Home, and his encounter with the Almoravid prince ‘Abd al-Mu‘min (pp. 19-46). Afterwards Ibn Tūmart stays in Marrakech, in the Mountains, and in the cave of Igiliz, followed by the Mahdī Proclamation (pp. 46-59).

The second chapter deals with the Rise of the Almohads: the Tribal Roots of Monotheism are important to deal with here just like the Almohad *Book of Ancestry* and the manner in which Tribal Traditions are integrated and various aspects dealing with the Almohad Tribes, the Almohad Hierarchy, and a survey of the Almohad Tribal Economy, a mountain and desert economy (pp. 87-128).

The Third Chapter deals with The Doctrine of Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart: the Almohad Mahdī doctrine in view of its historical precedents (pp. 135-147), the Doctrine of the *A‘azz mā Yuṭlab*, the Book of Ibn Tūmart (pp. 155-169) is explained by Fromherz as “the greatest thing that one seeks, the most excellent of what is earned, the most precious of what is preserved, and the best of what is done.” This is followed by his ideas on Law and Society and their interrelationship and a summary of his book (pp. 167-169).

The Fourth Chapter deals with the social factors of the rise of the Almohads: namely the significance of a Tribe, “the illusions of common descent” (p. 190), the role of charisma and the Mahdī (p. 193); Possible Economic Incentives for the Rise of the Almohads: a united coalition of tribes is always more efficient at obtaining economic resources from the urban core (p. 196). The conclusions stress the unifying believe of *tawḥīd* and the tribal cohesion as expression of the Almohad ambitions (p. 199).

The Notes are at the end of the book (p. 203); and also the References (bibliography, p. 255), followed by an Index of persons and places (p. 267).

We find Maps, Figures and Tables through the whole book: Maps, giving the location of tribes south of Marrakech, the twelfth century (p. xii), and giving the coordinates of the return of Ibn Tūmart from the East (p. xiii); Figures about “An ideal segmentary society expansion model” (p. 90) and “A hypothetical representation of the complex state of pre-Almohad social loyalties” (p. 92) also pass in review as well as “the Almohad social pyramid according to Ibn al-Qaṭṭān” (p. 93) and the Gadmīwa context (p. 109); and Tables about the Division of the council of fifty according to tribal affiliation (p. 105); about the Necessary characteristics of an imām and Mahdī according to Ibn Tūmart’s doctrine: the person of the Mahdī is the moral axis of the community, upholding right over wrong (p. 136) and a draft representation of Ibn Khaldūn’s

hierarchy of social cohesion (*‘Aṣabiyya*) (p. 195). In former times¹⁾, the Almohad revolution was usually described by some characteristic changes that were made, such as: the minting of square coins to replace traditional round ones, the reforming of the writing system, the reorientation of the *qiblas* of all mosques, the forced conversion of Christians and Jews to Islam, new ways of calling believers to prayer, while non-Almohads were deprived of their status as believers. This book by Fromherz focuses more upon the tribal Berber background and organization of the new regime. As is clear from the foregoing, this book is necessary for all those who are doing research on the Almohads, as it deals with all the fundamental questions a historian should know. However, the tendency of the book is perhaps slightly idealising the Berber rulers and society of the first Almohads, whereas, according to our views today, they were very much religiously intolerant.

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Arie SCHIPPERS

¹⁾ For instance, Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform*, Brill, Leiden, etc. 2006, pp. 157 ff.