

A Sea of Debt

In this innovative legal history of economic life in the Western Indian Ocean, Bishara examines the transformations of Islamic law and Islamicate commercial practices during the emergence of modern capitalism in the region. In this time of expanding commercial activity, a *mélange* of Arab, Indian, Swahili, and Baloch merchants, planters, jurists, judges, soldiers, and seamen forged the frontiers of a shared world. The interlinked worlds of trade and politics that these actors created, the shared commercial grammars and institutions that they developed, and the spatial and socio-economic mobilities they engaged in endured until at least the middle of the twentieth century. This major study examines the Indian Ocean from Oman to India and East Africa over an extended period of time, drawing together the histories of commerce, law, and empire in a sophisticated, original, and richly textured history of capitalism in the Islamic world.

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*Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian
Ocean, 1780–1950*

Fahad Ahmad Bishara

University of Virginia



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Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
Prologue	1
1 A Geography of Obligation	24
2 Life and Debt	58
3 Paper Routes	81
Interlude	107
4 Translating Transactions	125
5 Making Africa Indian	150
6 Muslim Mortgages	169
7 Capital Moves	190
8 Unraveling Obligation	217
Epilogue	246
<i>Bibliography</i>	258
<i>Index</i>	275

Figures and Tables

Figures

1	A map of the Western Indian Ocean	page 2
2	An <i>iqrār</i> of debt between a freed slave and an Indian moneylender	72
3	A <i>khiyār</i> sale <i>warāqa</i>	85
4	A page from a registry at the Zanzibar Consulate showing transcribed <i>warāqas</i>	134
5	Musabbah’s <i>warāqa</i>	143
6	Ratansi Purshottam	205
7	One of Ratansi’s <i>warāqas</i>	206
8	A debt <i>iqrār</i> on a state-issued <i>warāqa</i> from Muscat	242
9	The new Zanzibar registered debt deed	243

Tables

1	Number of Land Transfers in Zanzibar, 1925–1933	224
2	Number of Land Transfers in Pemba, 1926–1933	224

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