The objectives of Nathan Brown's *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf* are threefold. First, Brown focuses on the development of the Egyptian judiciary and explains why that country's political leaders, beginning with the British occupation, have permitted and even encouraged a somewhat independent judiciary, which can limit their power. He then goes on to consider why many of the Persian gulf nations adopted judicial systems similar to Egypt's when they achieved independence after World War II. Finally, Brown concludes with a discussion of the nature of interactions of Egyptians, from the working class to large businesses, with the court system. The book is useful to those who study legal systems in the Arab world, particularly those who are interested in the complex interactions of colonialism and how the struggle for political power affects the development of political systems.

Brown tests three theories, imposed law (imperialism), legal liberality, and regime domination in explaining the development of the Egyptian judiciary. Brown writes that previous research has placed too much emphasis on the influence of British colonialism and has portrayed Egypt and other Arab countries as offering weak or little resistance to the implementation of the ideas and institutions of their colonial overseers. (5-8)¹ Brown does an outstanding job of taking the reader through the history of the development of the Egyptian judicial system and demonstrating that it has been primarily shaped by the needs of Egyptian political leaders to centralize power and to control the political system rather than being imposed by the British. For example, the Mixed Courts, used for cases involving Egyptians and foreign interests, might be seen as a symbol of weakness and forced Westernization. Brown, however, shows that the Mixed Courts predated the British and were used to prevent the British from taking complete control of such cases. (33-40)

¹ All citations in the text refer to the book under review.
Despite the fact that the primary influence on Egypt's legal system has been the desire of political leaders to centralize power and to control the political system, Brown also points to a somewhat autonomous judiciary that, with the exception of "the massacre of the judiciary" under Gamal Abdel-Nasser in 1969, has suffered little meddling. Ironically, this autonomous judiciary is viewed as a tool for strengthening the state. Brown's analysis of the relationship between the Egyptian judiciary and the various administrations also points to an important tendency in Egyptian politics and most semi-authoritarian political system, the need for weak leaders to loosen the reins of power to cultivate allies. When we look at the periods where Brown shows that judges have had the greatest autonomy, it is at times such as Anwar Sadat's and Hosni Mubarak's ascendants to power, we find weak leaders in search of allies. (122-126) The judiciary is a natural place to look in Egypt because it has credibility and the appearance of being a somewhat independent actor. Brown is careful not to overestimate the importance of the Egyptian judiciary as an important independent actor, detailing how it has almost always been bypassed in cases of crucial significance to Egypt's various regimes. (76-83)

Another strength of the book is the discussion of Egyptian judges, their culture, and how they have struggled to preserve their autonomy. (88-92) Although the focus of the book is political power and the struggles of elites, the author demonstrates a strong knowledge of the Egyptian cultural setting. Legal historians might be disappointed in the lack of detail and primary documents. Brown does, however, provide keen insight into key events and historical periods that shaped the development of the Egyptian and Persian Gulf judicialis, which are well documented and illuminated through the personal correspondence and other writings of the relevant actors. It is also important to note Brown's significant use of Arabic language sources.

Brown's analysis of the role of imperialism is interesting because, in addition to rejecting the notion of colonial domination, he also contradicts those who claim that there was always strong local opposition to Western ideas and institutions. Brown shows that the importation of the French law and legal institutions, which replaced a system that used Islamic law, did not encounter significant resistance. (33) For the most part, the discussion of the dealings of Egypt and the Gulf countries with the British portrays a give and take process between the colonial power and the colonized country, particularly in the later cases when Britain's imperial power was in decline. (157-186) One point of contention does rise from Brown's discussion of the influence
of colonialism. Although Britain's legal and judicial systems were not imposed on Egypt, the British did leave their mark on Egypt's judiciary in important subtle and indirect ways. Would Egypt have maintained the Mixed Courts for so long if it did not need to resist the British?

The final chapters of the book consider how ordinary Egyptians use the court system. Brown concludes that Egyptians are quite skilled in manipulating the legal system to serve their own interests. At the same time, this does not lead the average Egyptian to consider the courts as a legitimating factor for the powers that be. This discussion (189-207) and the one on how domestic workers in Kuwait use that country's legal system (209-216) are very interesting, because they are illustrated by the personal stories of the litigants and their friends and relatives. However, these final chapters (7-8) are a major departure from the theories and arguments that were considered in the rest of the book. Brown appears to be guilty of the mistake of trying to cover too much ground in one volume. This minor flaw, however, does not detract from the significant value of the book as a whole. In short, it is a solid piece of scholarship that serves not only to illuminate the history of Egypt and the Gulf countries, but also to challenge over broad conclusions about the role of Islamic law generally.

Reviewed by Daniel Price