

Servants of Sharia: Kadhis and the Politics of Accommodation in East Africa”,  
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Abstract

This article attempts to explore the existence of Kadhis in Eastern Africa and examine the extent to which such popular figures have been accommodated within the state and society. They played the role of jurist-consultants in their respective communities and even served as consultants to the state in religious matters at various capacities. Inheriting colonial legal structures was among the dilemmas that faced the post-colonial states. The Kadhis' court system was not an exception to this predicament. Post-independent states managed to abolish native customary courts but for political reasons could not dare to change the Kadhis courts system. The argument of this article is that since colonial rule the policy was to accommodate the religious leadership, including the Kadhis courts, within the ambit of the state apparatus so as to control their operations. This seems to be the case with the Sultans who employed the *'ulama* to consolidate their rule. The trend was not only confined to the legal arena but included other areas such as Islamic education and the administration of *waqf* properties.