

Searching for Religious Authority (*marji'iyā*): Muslims and Religious Leadership in Kenya  
*Annual Review of Islam in South Africa (ARISA) 2005 – Vol. 8, 76-80.*, Centre for  
Contemporary Islam, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Abdulkadir Hashim

Abstract

The responsibility of delivering fatwa in Kenya used to be solely upon the Chief Kadhi who assumed the role of *Sheikh al-Islam* or *mufti*. This was the case during the British rule and later the Busaidi sultanate in the coastal strip of Kenya. The famous issue of moon sighting for the starting and ending of the month of Ramadhan was centralised in the Chief Kadhi's office. However, after independence, the delivering of fatwa was decentralised in various fraternities which led to much a controversy on the issue of moon sighting. This article seeks to trace the background of the institution of religious authority (*marji'iyā*) in Kenya and its development in the post-independent era.