



**OCEAN OF LAW II:
Islamic Legal Crossings in the Indian Ocean World**

12-14 December, 2016
Leiden University, The Netherlands

Call for Papers

After the successful conference, “Ocean of Law: Intermixed Legal Systems across the Indian Ocean World” held at Leiden University in December 2015, most participants were enthusiastic about following it up with another event to further explore various aspects of legal interactions in the Indian Ocean world. The Ocean of Law II is a step towards that end.

We take up the same foundational questions that Ocean of Law-I raised: How did legal ideas and texts travel across borders? How did ideas and texts shape legal traditions and systems they encountered during their journey? How and why did legal cultures negotiate, influence and contest each other at the moments and sites of their interactions? However, in the Ocean of Law-II, we will focus on Islamic legal circulations across the Indian Ocean world. This field has been largely neglected by historians of Islamic law, Middle East specialists, and scholars of the Indian Ocean, despite South and Southeast Asia together being home to the largest Muslim population in the world. The unique predominance of Shāfi‘ī school of Islamic law in this Indian Ocean rim has been a vital phenomenon in shaping many social, cultural, religious and political perspectives of its Muslim communities across centuries. Although the school was not predominant in the rim until the sixteenth century, it dominated the legal sphere while coexisting with many other legal systems within and outside Islam. We hope to unravel such nuances in a long-term historical perspective and/or with multi-cited ethnographic approaches.

Moving beyond the Middle East-centric analysis of Islamic law, this conference thus aims to explore the ways in which Muslim communities from the so-called “peripheries” of the Islamic world shaped their lives and thoughts within and beyond the juridical frameworks of their religion. The conference will focus on the encounters Islamic law made in the Indian Ocean region with local and imperial legal cultures (including texts, people, practices and institutions). Did Sharia historically matter in their lives, or were they only Muslims-by-name, as many Arab travellers and European colonial officers accused them through centuries? Did their “customs” dominate religion

to such an extent that customary law received more prominence than Islamic law, as European scholars argued in the last century? More important, to what extent did Islamic law contribute to the making of different legal systems and the practices of different empires, states and communities in the Indian Ocean rim? How did it appeal to the legal practitioners and religious followers in East, Southeast and South Asia, and East and South Africa? What impact did the increasing mobility of Islamic legal ideas, texts and jurists across the Indian Ocean world have on the transformation of Muslim legal thoughts and practices across these regions? How did European colonial empires codify Islamic law in the last few centuries and how did their perception of the law affect or effect Muslim legal practices in the rim? Following these questions, the main themes of the conference would be:

- Formation of Islamic law in the Indian Ocean world
- Mobility of legal ideas, texts, and scholars—the maritime networks
- Production of legal knowledge: institutions, teachers and authors
- Practicing Islamic law in the “periphery”: *qāḍīs*, courts, litigants, prosecutors
- Shāfi‘ism and other legal schools of the Indian Ocean
- Customary law against or with Islamic law
- Colonial empires and reformulation of Islamic law

Abstracts:

We aim this to be an interdisciplinary platform and therefore welcome a range of contributions from historians, anthropologists, legal scholars and others whose research is related to the Indian Ocean Islamic legal world. The conference is aimed at scholars who in their research combine Islamic legal history with regional and/or imperial (legal) history to deepen the discussions about the place and development of Islamic law in the Indian Ocean world, instead of limiting it exclusively to the Middle East.

Abstracts of 500 words are due by **September 20, 2016** and should be sent to oceanoflaw@gmail.com. We plan to publish the conference papers as an edited volume or a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal. We encourage those who are interested in publishing to submit their full paper of no more than 10,000 words prior to the conference by 1 December 2016.

Keynote Speakers:

Prof. Ronit Ricci (Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Australian National University), **Prof. Léon Buskens** (Leiden University) and **Dr. Iza Hussin** (Cambridge University) are the keynote speakers for this conference. The work of Ricci explores religious and literary cultures of Muslims and conversion into Islam in the Indian Ocean world. Her suggestion of an “Arabic Cosmopolis” is a useful framework to approach the Muslim histories across the rim. Her book, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (University of

Chicago Press (2011), won the Benda Prize in Southeast Asian Studies and the AAR's Best First Book in the History of Religions Award. The recent researches of Buskens focus on everyday understandings of Islamic law and customs, textual practices in Muslim societies in a historical perspective and the history, theories and methods of orientalist and anthropological scholarship. At present he works on two projects: the genesis of the modern legal system in Morocco, and the history of Western understandings of Islamic and customary law. Hussin analyses travels of Islamic law in the Indian Ocean with a focus on colonial India, Malaya and Egypt. Her recent book is *The Politics of Islamic Law: Local Elites, Colonial Authority and the Making of the Muslim State* (University of Chicago Press 2016)

Registration/Funding:

The conference has no registration fee. For the expenses of your travel and accommodation, we strongly recommend that you seek funding at your home institution. However, we have limited funding for junior scholars and PhD candidates. If you would like to be considered for funding, please mention that while sending the abstract.

Conveners:

Sanne Ravensbergen MA

Mahmood Kooria MPhil

Sponsored by:

Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS)

Leiden University Institute for History