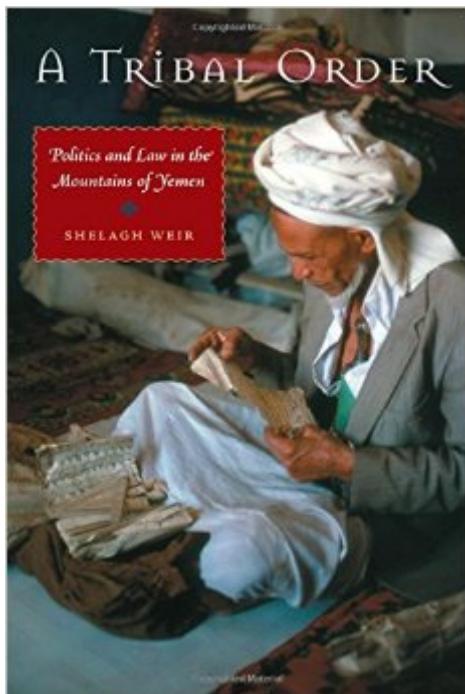


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Synopsis

Winner, British-Kuwait Friendship Prize in Middle Eastern Studies, British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 2008A Tribal Order describes the politico-legal system of Jabal Razih, a remote massif in northern Yemen inhabited by farmers and traders. Contrary to the popular image of Middle Eastern tribes as warlike, lawless, and invariably opposed to states, the tribes of Razih have stable structures of governance and elaborate laws and procedures for maintaining order and resolving conflicts with a minimum of physical violence. Razih leaders also historically cooperated with states, provided the latter respected their customs, ideals, and interests. Weir considers this system in the context of the rugged environment and productive agricultural economy of Razih, and of centuries of continuous rule by Zaydi Muslim regimes and (latterly) the republican governments of Yemen. The book is based on Weir's extended anthropological fieldwork on Jabal Razih, and on her detailed study of hundreds of handwritten contracts and treaties among and between the tribes and rulers of Razih. These documents provide a fascinating insight into tribal politics and law, as well as state-tribe relations, from the early seventeenth to the late twentieth century. A Tribal Order is also enriched by case histories that vividly illuminate tribal practices. Overall, this unusually wide-ranging work provides an accessible account of a remarkable Arabian society through time.

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