

Ayşegül Turan

İstanbul Kültür University

İstanbul, Turkey

In the Time of Empires: Inter-imperiality in Jamal Mahjoub's

In the Hour of Signs

Jamal Mahjoub's *In the Hour of Signs* depicts one of the tumultuous periods in Sudanese history, namely the Mahdist War in the late nineteenth century. The novel focuses on the Mahdi and his followers' rebellion against the Khedive's rule and the arrival of the British forces to help the Ottoman officials to regain control over the territory. Mahjoub presents a compelling and rather exceptional narrative about empire(s) given that it portrays British and Ottoman forces as two imperial powers not necessarily competing with each other but joining forces to control the land and suppress the uprisings. While the narrative meticulously draws attention to the delicate power relations and the tension between these two forces, it also conveys the perspective of the Sudanese toward them, thus creating a triangular structure with the presence of two imperial powers and the local population on the same territory. By going beyond the colonizer-colonized divide, the novel invites a comparative reading of the representation of imperial powers present on Sudanese soil as well as the Sudanese reaction to this complicated web of relations. In this paper, I will analyze the spatio-temporal representation of late nineteenth-century Sudan within the framework of this triangular relationship among different parties. In doing so, I will argue that the inter-imperial relations between the Ottoman and the British necessitate a more nuanced approach to comprehend the status of the Sudanese as well as the power imbalance between different empires.