



An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa

Charles Issawi

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The economic history of the Middle East and North Africa is quite extraordinary.

This is an axiomatic statement, but the very nature of the economic changes that have stemmed directly from the effects of oil resources in these areas has tended to obscure longterm patterns of economic change and the fundamental transformation of Middle Eastern and North African economies and societies over the past two hundred years.

In this study Professor Issawi examines and explains the development of these economies since 1800, focusing particularly on the challenge posed by the use and subsequent decline of Western economic and political domination and the Middle Eastern response to it. The book begins with an analysis of the effects of foreign intervention in the area: the expansion of trade, the development of transport networks, the influx of foreign capital and resulting integration into international commercial and financial networks. It goes on to examine the local response to these external forces: migration within, to and from the region, population growth, urbanization and changes in living standards, shifts in agricultural production and land tenure and the development of an industrial sector. Professor Issawi discusses the crucial effects of the growth of oil and oil-related industries in a separate chapter, and finally assesses the likely gains and losses in this long period for both the countries in the area and the Western powers. He has drawn on long experience and an immense amount of material in surveying the period, and provides a clear and penetrating survey of an extraordinarily complex area.

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