

Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East



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Until now, we have known very little of the lives of ordinary Middle Eastern men and women, despite extensive research on the modern Middle East. With this collection of essays, the life stories of peasants, villagers, pastoralists, and urbanites can finally be heard—no more will our view of the Middle East be seen only over the shoulders of the elite.

These twenty-four biographies are drawn from the entire Middle East—from Morocco to Afghanistan—and provide vantage points from which to understand modern Middle Eastern history "from the bottom up." Spanning the past 150 years and reflecting important transformations, the stories challenge elite-centered accounts of what has occurred in the Middle East and illuminate hidden corners of a largely unrecorded world.

The essays, divided chronologically, provide a comprehensive framework for those unfamiliar with Middle Eastern social history. "Pre-Colonial Lives" covers the period from 1850 until World War I, "Colonial Lives" chronicles the beginning of European rule, and "Contemporary Lives" relates the massive changes of the postwar era. Through them, we see how specific ecologies, ways of life, ethnic, class and gender situations can shape individual human action.

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