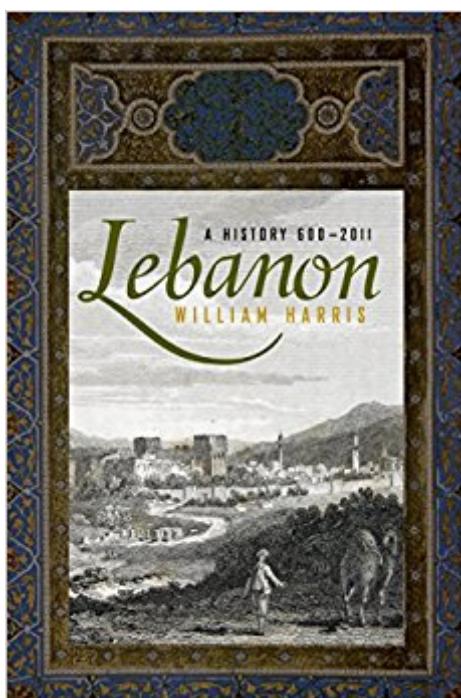


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Lebanon: A History, 600 - 2011 (Studies In Middle Eastern History)



Synopsis

In this impressive synthesis, William Harris narrates the history of the sectarian communities of Mount Lebanon and its vicinity. He offers a fresh perspective on the antecedents of modern multi-communal Lebanon, tracing the consolidation of Lebanon's Christian, Muslim, and Islamic derived sects from their origins between the sixth and eleventh centuries. The identities of Maronite Christians, Twelver Shia Muslims, and Druze, the mountain communities, developed alongside assertions of local chiefs under external powers from the Umayyads to the Ottomans. The chiefs began interacting in a common arena when Druze lord Fakhr al-Din Ma'n achieved domination of the mountain within the Ottoman imperial framework in the early seventeenth century. Harris knits together the subsequent interplay of the elite under the Sunni Muslim Shihab relatives of the Ma'ns after 1697 with demographic instability as Maronites overtook Shia as the largest community and expanded into Druze districts. By the 1840s many Maronites conceived the common arena as their patrimony. Maronite/Druze conflict ensued. Modern Lebanon arose out of European and Ottoman intervention in the 1860s to secure sectarian peace in a special province. In 1920, after the Ottoman collapse, France and the Maronites enlarged the province into the modern country, with a pluralism of communal minorities headed by Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims. The book considers the flowering of this pluralism in the mid-twentieth century, and the strains of new demographic shifts and of social resentment in an open economy. External intrusions after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war rendered Lebanon's contradictions unmanageable and the country fell apart. Harris contends that Lebanon has not found a new equilibrium and has not transcended its sects. In the early twenty-first century there is an uneasy duality: Shia have largely recovered the weight they possessed in the sixteenth century, but Christians, Sunnis, and Druze are two-thirds of the country. This book offers readers a clear understanding of how modern Lebanon acquired its precarious social intricacy and its singular political character.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Really good look at the personalities, history and actions, in only lightly masked circum-speak, of the 1400 years since the Romans/Byzantines were forced out of what today is Lebanon. The family names of the tribal leaders mark one of the hidden (from outsiders) continuities of Lebanon and its politics and history which this book lays out very clearly. A good place to start for anyone wanting to understand why Lebanon is the way it is today, and why the Lebanese do so very well - once they leave Lebanon.

A lot of information presented in a rush. It seems to assume the reader already has some knowledge of the subject

wished it was a little more indepth.

good

The book traces the various religious sects, as well as major families and clans, back to before the Crusades. Lebanon seems to be different from almost all other modern nations in that it was never really a nation. At no time did the average person feel they owed their allegiance to a country; they were Shia, or Sunni, or Alawite, or Druze, or Maronite, but never Lebanese. Despite this, they formed a collective that, for a time, functioned well and produced prosperity. But that seems gone now, and unlikely to return. I think the book might have done a bit more to amplify the surrounding empires and cultures that washed over Mount Lebanon over the centuries, but I found it informative and a good companion to the History of Byzantium and of the Ottoman Empire.

good information for an unknown country

This book although factual is poorly constructed and jumps all over the timelines, not worth the money. I would suggest you look elsewhere

Well written and researched work on an important historical entity in the Mediterranean. Offers good historical coverage and analysis of the various religious communities and political families.

Interesting parallels between modern and medieval Lebanon are elaborated.

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