



Ottoman Egypt and the Emergence of the Modern World: 1500-1800

Nelly Hanna

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Aiming to place Egypt clearly in the context of some of the major worldwide transformations of the three centuries from 1500 to 1800, Nelly Hanna questions the mainstream view that has identified the main sources of modern world history as the Reformation, the expansion of Europe into America and Asia, the formation of trading companies, and scientific discoveries. Recent scholarship has challenged this approach on account of its Eurocentric bias, on both the theoretical and empirical levels. Studies on India and southeast Asia, for example, reject the models of these regions as places without history, as stagnant and in decline, and as awakening only with the emergence of colonialism when they became the recipients of European culture and technology.

So far, Egypt and the rest of the Ottoman world have been left out of these approaches. Nelly Hanna fills this gap by showing that there were worldwide trends that touched Egypt, India, southeast Asia, and Europe. In all these areas, for example, there were linguistic shifts that brought the written language closer to the spoken word. She also demonstrates that technology and know-how, far from being centered only in Europe, flowed in different directions: in the eighteenth century, French entrepreneurs were trying to imitate the techniques of bleaching and dyeing of cloth that they found in Egypt and other Ottoman localities.

Based on a series of lectures given at the Middle East Center at Harvard, this groundbreaking book will be of interest to all those looking for a different perspective on the history of south-north relations.

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