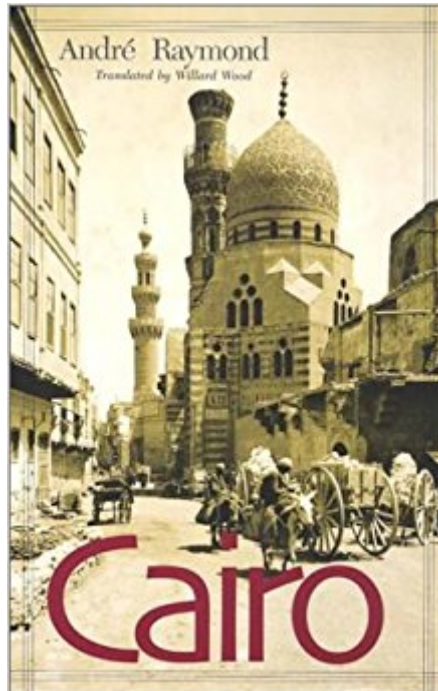




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Cairo



Synopsis

Gaze toward the Nile from the desert hills of Mukattam, and the vast city of Cairo unfolds before you, with its monumental architecture, teeming populace, and thousands of years of rich history. The extraordinary tapestry of Cairo's past and present comes vividly to life in this magisterial study by Andr   Raymond, arguably the premier social historian of the Arab world. The most deeply observed and historically nuanced account ever given of the greatest Arab city of northern Africa, this book shows us Cairo from the glimmer of its beginnings in the Arab conquest of Egypt in 640 through its transformation into the modern center of Middle Eastern life today. Here are the Fatimids, the Mamluks, and the Ottomans, the invasions, dynastic changes, and religious conflicts that one after another altered and shaped Cairo's destiny. And here, alongside rulers and religious leaders, are the merchants and artisans who have given Cairene life its distinctive character over time. Raymond depicts life in Cairo through the centuries, chronicling the coming of European influence, the vagaries of social evolution, and the development of economic structure and urban design. His work reflects all facets of Cairo's historical and social reality, weaving commerce, politics, religion, and culture into a finely worked portrait of the foremost Arab city on the continent of Africa. With its splendid illustrations and maps and its meticulous attention to the topography and archaeology of the city, this book will prove as valuable to the serious traveler as to observers of Middle Eastern history and society. It stands as the definitive work on Cairo, unparalleled in scope, depth, and detail.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Compared to many things Egyptian, Cairo, founded in A.D. 642, is relatively modern. Eminent French historian Raymond lucidly delineates how the city, intrinsically tied to Egypt's Islamic history (it was founded during the Arab conquest of this North African country), also reflects the multifaceted trends of modern Egyptian history and brings the city up-to-date in its transformation into the overcrowded, bustling, crumbling metropolis it is today. In the first of the book's four sections, Raymond focuses on archeological and architectural sources to show the ancient foundations upon which Cairo was built. Here and through most of the book the author offers a history less of people and daily life than of structures and space, of how buildings came to be erected. He maintains, for instance, that during the years 642-1250, Islamic leaders were generally tolerant of diverse religious communities, allowing synagogues and churches to be built. The book's two middle sections deal with medieval and traditional Cairo, while the last section, covering the years 1792 to 1992, offers a stimulating exploration of Egypt's contact with the rising powers of the West and the desperate attempt to catch up to the demands of Cairo's ever-growing population. Adeptly translated and equipped with fabulous maps of Cairo during each historic phase, this is a useful and reliable primer on the physical, economic and political history of an important and vibrant city. 63 b&w photos. (Jan. 15) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A remarkable book, unlike any other in Middle Eastern history. Raymond offers a beautifully balanced longitudinal view of Cairo from the Arab conquest to 1992. Balance is a crucial term. You get archaeology, topography, architectural history, political history, social evolution, economic structure, and urban design, all in moderation and integrated into a holistic view of the urban fabric and experience. (Richard Bulliet, author of *Islam: The View from the Edge*) A major contribution to the history of Egypt and the Middle East and a book that will command the attention of urban sociologists working on third world cities. Raymond is one of the leading social historians of the Arab world. He has an enviable reputation as a meticulous and authoritative researcher on Arab social history. He is clearly one of those historians of the Middle East influenced by the *Annales* school of social history, so popular for many years in French history and general European history and so influential now in the study of the third world. *Cairo* is a work of high scholarship--an important addition to the history of Cairo and Egypt. It is based on wide-ranging research, especially in the Arabic materials on the city, and it is especially good on the Ottoman period. Scholars will regard the work as authoritative and will be delighted to see it translated into English. I think anyone teaching courses on Arab history will find a wealth of illustrative material here from which to draw

lectures. (Robert L. Tignor, author of *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*) Egypt has long served as the pulse of the Arab world...[and] a fascinating country for scholars and foreign travelers alike...In this comprehensive study, Raymond...meticulously traces Cairo's history to the present day. The narrative is enhanced by 15 interesting maps, drawings, and photos. Highly recommended. (Nader Entessar *Library Journal* 2000-11-15) Eminent French historian Raymond lucidly delineates how the city, intrinsically tied to Egypt's Islamic history...also reflects the multifaceted trends of modern Egyptian history and brings the city up-to-date in its transformation into the overcrowded, bustling, crumbling metropolis it is today...Adeptly translated and equipped with fabulous maps of Cairo during each historic phase, this is a useful and reliable primer on the physical, economic and political history of an important and vibrant city. (*Publishers Weekly* 2000-11-20) This is a fabulously interesting work...Most books by westerners which even approach Cairo lose their marbles fairly quickly. [Raymond's book] maintains such a strong hold on them it should be required reading. (Louisa Young *The Independent*) [Raymond describes] an evolving Cairo connected to its visible history but not defined by it...If you want to know a place (and, in this case, really know a place), it's vastly more rewarding to read about the whole of that place's culture and people throughout history than to skim over a glorified rundown of what there is to 'see and do.' (*Travelocity Magazine* 2001-03-01) Raymond has written a thorough, detailed, and interpretive biography of one of the world's great cities. (B. Harris Jr. *Choice* 2001-07-01) André Raymond, who traces the growth of Cairo from the founding of the garrison city of Fustat by the Muslim conqueror Amr ibn Al-As in the 7th century to the present, has a sanguine attitude. He celebrates the city even as he charts its many problems. His book, like all good history, puts the present in context. He reminds us that however dodgy it is to walk along Cairo's streets in 2001, dodging people and animals, coping with intermittently unpleasant smells, the same walk 300 years ago would have been much worse. (Zachary Karabell *Los Angeles Times* 2001-11-25)

This is a large book dedicated to Cairo's emergence as the eminent city of the Middle East. It gives an exhaustive account of the various historical periods that have shaped its history, using its architecture as the medium for telling this story. It is very thorough, and the illustrations are of high quality, something you would expect from a Rizzoli publication. Considering that there are relatively few books that actually show and reveal the subject of Cairo in any real depth, this book, when seen in that light, becomes even more of a treasure. Moreover, the Pyramids are mentioned only infrequently throughout the book. This is a book about Cairo...if you want one on the Pyramids, there are plenty of others to choose from!

It's difficult to give this book a bad review, as it's a masterful, scholarly...collection of facts. The problem, and I don't believe it's entirely one of translation, is that there is little narrative throughout the book. It's a big book full of facts. Quite often, this reader got so bogged down in how many hectares Qahira covered as opposed to Fustat, or how many suqs were built in a given decade, that I lost track of where I was in the book. The only good narrative begins at the section where Maqrizi's era starts. But it doesn't hold out. I just sort of trudged on, feeling I wanted to finish, but without any joy in the reading or the discovery. It's too bad because Al Qahira is one of the world's great cities and a fascinating topic. I wish Raymond had gotten someone to ghost write.

A bit dry but ok

Good Product

I can sympathize with the reader who found Raymond's book boring and therefore gave it a middling rating. I used the French edition of this book for an MA years ago and while I found it useful because it is of the school of social history that digs out the facts and figures and puts them out there for us to use, it is most definitely useful, not fun. A ghost writer would have been a nice idea to make it an appealing book for general readers. For the academic writer who is looking for facts and figures to bolster an argument, this book is very useful, as are many of Raymond's boring books. Thus, I improve the rating by a star because the content is academically useful, if not intellectually or emotionally appealing beyond academic pursuits. This one's for the professors, and others should surely avoid.

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