



Merchant Capital and Islam

Mahmood Ibrahim

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The rise of merchant capital in Mecca conditioned the development of Meccan social, economic, religious, and political structure. Mahmood Ibrahim traces the roots of capitalism from the emergence of merchants as the main force in Mecca through the first civil war in Islam (656–661). Through a rereading of original Arabic sources and drawing from modern scholarship on the subject, Ibrahim offers a new interpretation of the rise of Islam.

He argues that Islam contributed certain institutional beliefs and practices that unblocked obstacles and helped merchants gain political and economic hegemony over western Asia. Ibrahim contends that, with the conquest of Mecca, the newly formed Muslim state spread its control to the rest of Arabia, which mobilized a significant social force and allowed for further expansion outside Arabia, thus extending merchant control to include new surplus-producing regions, a vast network of trade routes, and wider markets.

This extensively researched study offers a new interpretation of the history of Islam, including the formation of Islamic society and the unfolding of the first civil war. In offering a better understanding of the Umayyad Caliphate that ruled Islam for a century to come, Ibrahim helps lay the groundwork for understanding the Middle East as it is today.

Of interest to scholars of Middle Eastern studies, this important work will be necessary reading for students of Near Eastern and North African history, as well as students of the history of Medieval Europe.

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