



The Shaykh of Shaykhs: Mithqal al-Fayiz and Tribal Leadership in Modern Jordan

Yoav Alon

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Shaykh Mithqal al-Fayiz's life spanned a period of dramatic transformation in the Middle East. Born in the 1880s during a time of rapid modernization across the Ottoman Empire, Mithqal led his tribe through World War I, the development and decline of colonial rule and founding of Jordan, the establishment of the state of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict that ensued, and the rise of pan-Arabism. As Mithqal navigated regional politics over the decades, he redefined the modern role of the shaykh.

In following Mithqal's remarkable life, this book explores tribal leadership in the modern Middle East more generally. The support of Mithqal's tribe to the Jordanian Hashemite regime extends back to the creation of Jordan in 1921 and has characterized its political system ever since. The long-standing alliances between tribal elites and the royal family explain, to a large extent, the extraordinary resilience of Hashemite rule in Jordan and the country's relative stability. Mithqal al-Fayiz's life and work as a shaykh offer a notable individual story, as well as a unique window into the history, society, and politics of Jordan.

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