



History of Libya

John Wright

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John Wright's concise history of Libya begins in the prehistoric Sahara and concludes with the bloody overthrow of the Gadafi regime and the emergence of a "new" Libya in 2011. After surveying the story of the central Sahara's early hunter-gatherers and its Garamantian civilization, Wright briskly recounts the land's succession of foreign invaders, followed by the semi-independent Karamanli regime in 1711 and the return of the Turks in 1835. He discusses the workings of the historic trans-Saharan slave trade to Tripoli, Benghazi and other ports for local sale or export to the Eastern Mediterranean, and highlights Tripoli's nineteenth-century role as a base for European penetration of the Sahara and the lands beyond it. Wright's modern history assesses the controversial Italian era (1911-43), describing in detail the long, harsh conquest while giving due credit to the material achievements of the colonial regime. This fair and comprehensive overview provides a clearer understanding of Libya's subsequent history, covered in four final chapters. These start with the World War Two campaigns that ended Italian rule; the fairly easy ride to an early UN-supervised independence under the Sanussi monarchy in 1951; the discovery and exploitation of oil in the 1950s and 1960; and Moammar Gadafi's 1969 coup bringing to power a bizarre revolutionary regime that was to last for forty-two years. Wright's final chapter summarises the main events of 2011--the successful popular uprising; the NATO air intervention; the end of Gadafi and his regime; and the emergence of a "new" and perhaps rather different Libya.

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