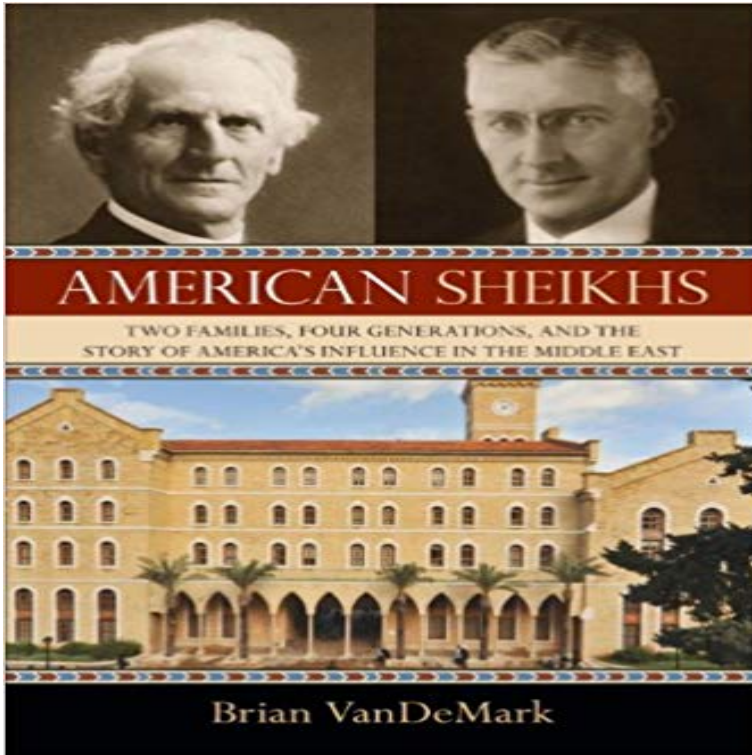


American Sheikhs: Two Families, Four Generations, and the Story of Americas Influence in the Middle East



American Sheikhs is the story of a great institution the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the families who created and fostered it for almost 150 years. Author Brian VanDeMark's vivid narrative includes not only the colorful history of AUB and many memorable episodes in a family saga, but also larger and more important themes. In the story of the efforts of these two families to build a great school with alternating audacity, arrogance, generosity, paternalism, and vision, the author clearly sees an allegory for the larger history of the United States in the Middle East. Before 1945, AUB's history is largely positive. Despite American nationalism and presumptions of Manifest Destiny, Middle Easterners generally viewed the school as an engine of constructive change and the United States as a benign force in the region. But in the post-World War II era, with the rise of America as a world power, AUB found itself buffeted by the strong winds of nationalist frustration, Zionism and anti-Zionism, and eventually Islamic extremism. Middle Easterners became more ambivalent about America's purposes and began to see the university not just as a cradle of learning but also as an agent of undesirable Western interests. This story is full of meaning today. By revealing how and why the Blisses and Dodges both succeeded and failed in their attempts to influence the Middle East, VanDeMark shows how America's outreach to the Middle East can be improved and the vital importance of maintaining good relations between Americans and the Arab world in the new century. From the Hardcover edition.

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