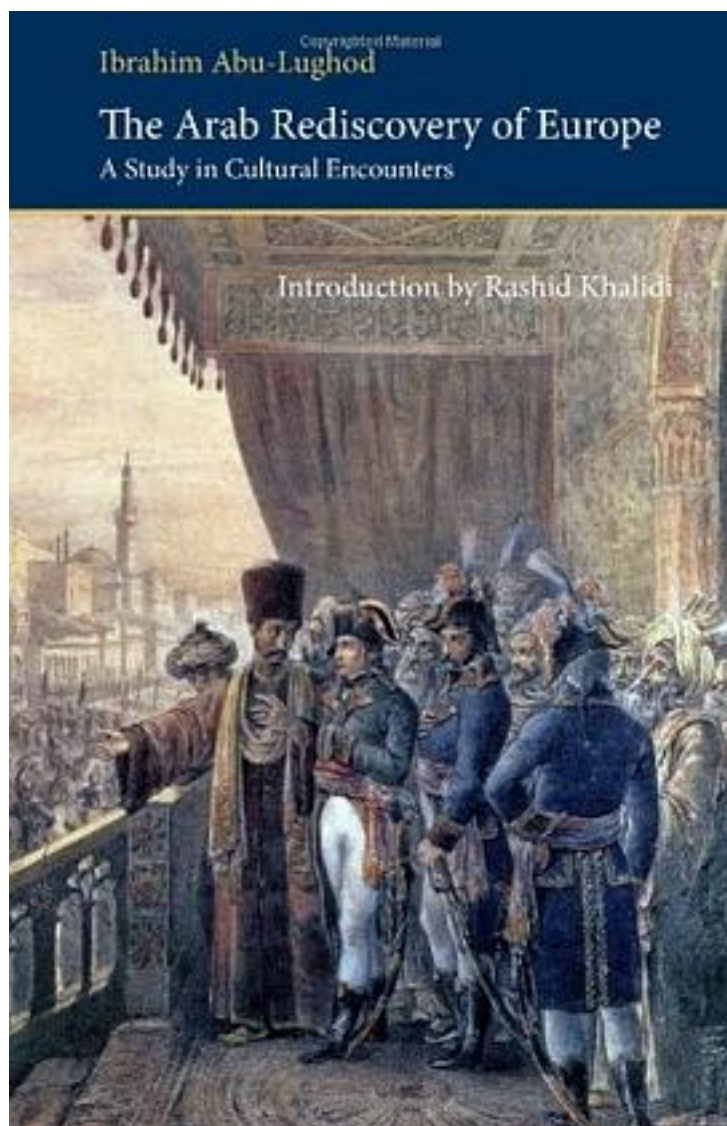


The Arab Rediscovery of Europe



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Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 suddenly exposed the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire to a Europe vastly different from the one known to the Arabs of the Middle Ages. At the start of the nineteenth century, Arabs were totally unprepared for the social, economic, and political progress made in Europe. By 1870, however, their vague notions had evolved into a fairly sophisticated knowledge of the historic background and contemporary achievements of various European nations, and the new reform movements in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent had incorporated into their programs the ideological premises and political institutions of European liberalism. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod traces the role of the Arab intelligentsia in increasing Arab awareness of Europe and in shaping an Arab image of the West that is still a latent force in contemporary political relations. In the early Arab chronicles of the French expedition certain basic political concepts were introduced. The state-supported educational missions and translations encouraged by Muhammad 'Ali added depth to the emerging image of Europe, while the accounts of Arab travellers supplemented theoretical knowledge with first-hand impressions of Europe. In analyzing these writings, the author sees foreshadowed the basic lines of today's polemics. In a final chapter he evaluates the contributions made by Arab authors studied and outlines subsequent developments.

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