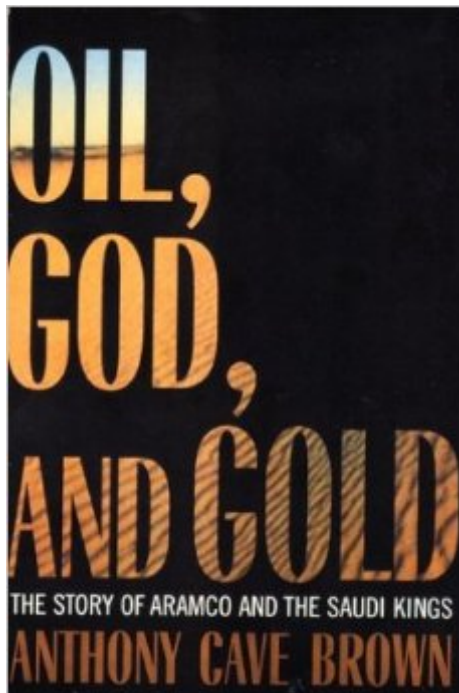


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Oil, God, And Gold: The Story Of Aramco And The Saudi Kings



Synopsis

Here is the extraordinary tale of what the U.S. State Department once called "the most valuable commercial prize in the history of the planet," the vast oil reserves beneath the sands of the Arabian desert. Using Aramco files never before available to scholars or journalists, dozens of personal interviews, and U.S. and British government documents, Anthony Cave Brown recounts the unceasing diplomatic and corporate maneuvers aimed at obtaining this unimaginable wealth, an ongoing drama that involved such figures as the great warrior-king Ibn Saud, founder of the Saudi dynasty; H. St. John Philby, the British scholar-adventurer who was a chief advisor to the king; the American philanthropist Charles Crane; Winston Churchill; Franklin Delano Roosevelt; and assorted oil-industry executives and engineers across the United States. Played out against a background of war and the turmoil of an ancient culture thrust abruptly into the twentieth century, the struggle to obtain the prize was won b

Book Information

Hardcover: 480 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin (February 26, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0395592208

ISBN-13: 978-0395592205

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 6.4 x 1.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #540,886 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in [Books > History > Middle](#)

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Customer Reviews

Every history book should be written this well. An insider's view, sweeping in scope, fascinating and well written. Moves easily from minutiae of roughnecks in dusty barracks near the oil fields to high level geopolitics. Fascinating throughout. Buy it even if you have no interest in Saudi or oil; you will by the time you finish this fine book. (Why is it that Brits write history so much better than Americans?)

For those unfamiliar with the Middle East this work may seem daunting in its detailed analyses not

only of events but of the background and character of the people involved in them. The author takes full advantage of access to sources not previously used in studies of this kind and presents his findings in an orderly and fluent, easily readable fashion. As a participant in some of the events he describes I can vouch for the authenticity of his accounts of early times. On the other hand he betrays a lack of familiarity with the technical aspects of the oil industry. This does not detract from the value of the work for the general public who even from a quick read will gain an idea of the complex problems that Aramco encountered and overcame with varying success.

This is the story of Aramco whose formation in 1947 helped launch the interest in Saudi and Gulf Politics by America and its oil producers. For years America had looked for a safe place to have an oil concession. Iran, Libya and Iraq were looked at but in the end the Gulf states and Saudi has become our anchor of oil stability, an asset we would defend at all costs. This book details the intrigue of British and American agents in the area and reads like a spy novel. FDR visited Saudi and met Ibn Saud in the 30s. This book also details the exploits of St. John Philby, whose grandson became a double agent. A very readable account of an important history of why America has such interests in Saudi Arabian stability.

This author knows how to write. Completely fascinating story, told at a good level of detail, covering 50 years in 400 pages. One weak section, toward the end. Overall, strong. I don't know oil, don't know Arabs or the Muslim world. This book gave a good historical perspective, a sense of how we got to this crazy place we're in now. Saudis cozy with our Texan Prez, Iraq in chaos, Osama hating his country (Saudi Arabia) and the foreigners who (he thinks) corrupted it. The book lacks depth in covering Bedouin society. You get that it's REALLY different, but you don't get a comprehensive picture of how Saudis are. Aside from that, there's not much wrong. Excellent material, well told.

This is a fascinating story. A real page turner. I enjoyed it tremendously. It is true the editing is rather sloppy but the crisp writing style and the great story more than overcome it.

Brown's book suffers from a lack of good editing; accounts are out of sequence and disjointed, whole paragraphs are repeated and participants confused. The tale of ARAMCO and the Kingdom's transformation is a remarkable one that Brown fails to do justice.

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