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Enterprise and Society: A Call for Papers for a Special Issue on
“Conflict, Commerce and Consumption: Novel Approaches to the Business History of the Middle East”

Guest editors: Andrew Godley (University of Reading) and Relli Shechter (Ben Gurion University)

The recent intensification of the debate on the interrelations between the West and the Islamic Middle East has starkly reframed several key questions: Is there a fundamental “clash of civilizations” between East and West? Is so-called “traditional” Islam somehow incompatible with modernity, or simply with some sort of Western neo-Imperialism? While such questions have prompted acres of newsprint, scholarly attention has in fact been diverted from more quotidian developments in the business infrastructure of the Middle East, the sphere which has hosted much daily cross-cultural interaction between the ordinary Western and Middle Eastern actors. But while the business history community has considerable expertise on the extent of conflict and commerce in the region, its voice has mostly been absent.

Whether the focus has been on the Arab-Israeli, or the inter-Arab struggles, or the British, French, or, more recently, American encroachments on the region, conflict is the principal focus of the leading paradigms in the modern historiography of the region. While “modernizers” simply presume the source of the conflict to be the unwillingness of Middle Eastern inhabitants to adopt and adapt Western approaches, the “dependency” school supposes that overseas’ parties always frustrate local efforts to converge. Unsurprisingly in these paradigms the analysis of the activities of indigenous entrepreneurs and consumers in the Middle East has often been left out. Why should there be a business history of the Middle East when, according to the modernizers, the culture lacks the necessary prerequisites; or equally, according to the dependency view, indigenous entrepreneurs and consumers are either being exploited by Western economic forces, or, at best, have carved out niches as their go-betweens or “compradors.”

The editors of the special issue of *Enterprise and Society* seek papers that depart from such conventional wisdoms. We would like to revitalize scholarly interest in the business history of the Middle East by connecting detailed empirical studies to a recent, revisionist historiography of the region, as well as to the exciting recent developments in global business history on the structure and meaning of enterprises outside the developed world. What really happened to Western business models when they entered the region? How did indigenous and international companies actually interact? And how have local consumers and overseas entrants really understood and adapted to each other?

Papers are invited on themes central to the above, which might focus on one or more of the following topics and in any area of commercial activity in the Middle East, from oil and agriculture to software development, from finance to infrastructure and transport:

- The development and application of innovations in organizational structures, management practices or finance in the Middle East
- The mechanisms through which business practices in the region developed and changed
- The role of multinational enterprises
- The response of indigenous consumers to novel forms of marketing and promotion

Papers should be sent to the guest editors before September 1st, 2006 at: a.c.godley@reading.ac.uk or rellish@bgu.ac.il