

scientists evolved in Ottoman reality. In “The Calendar” (Chapter 4), he situates the Ottoman astronomers in bureaucratic concerns, for instance tax calendar reform, rather than the general and theoretical planetary hypotheses originating in Europe. Chapter 5, “The Recipe” concentrates on the new drug-based movement and its immense popularity in Istanbul from the 1660s onward. This is where money was to be made in the medical market, Küçük says.

The third and final tier in the analysis appears in chapters 6 to 8. In this section, the focus is on Ottoman elites close to the palace and their skepticism of pure practical naturalism. In “Distinction: A Social Critique of Scientific Taste” (Chapter 6), the author argues that early 18th-century critics like the librarian Esad of Ioannina and the poet Yusuf Nabi wanted to distance themselves from the material and mercantile components of practical naturalism. They succeeded in adding more philosophical and moral tones to the work done by practical naturalists. Chapter 7, “Like Ants on a Watermelon: Practical Naturalists Encounter Philosophy,” discusses Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi and İbrahim Müteferrika. The chapter narrates how two well-known 18th-century Ottoman educated bureaucrats advocated management of practical naturalism because this knowledge could help Ottoman imperial governance. The eighth and last chapter, “Maritime, Mercantile, Sacred: Empiricism and the Compass,” suggests that one of the outcomes of the elite push against practical naturalism was the emergence of an empiricist discourse. All in all, only very few people felt the need for a philosophy of nature and complained about its absence.

The Conclusion brings the reader back to the bird’s-eye perspective of how science looked in a very large and very cosmopolitan Istanbul between 1660 and 1732. The author connects the histories of Istanbul and science to revisit the main historiographical discussions of the history of early modern science.

Küçük’s narrative reveals a fascinating reality of Istanbul and early modern science. According to Küçük, Istanbul required a very intensive struggle to make a living. It was an enthralling place, but not at all easy. He places scientific activity in the city into global contexts, distancing it from both the so-called scientific revolution in Europe and the so-called medieval Islamic Golden Age. The author rejects the usual evaluation of the quality and extent of modernization of Ottoman and Islamic science according to the degree of exposure to European science and the degree of interest in its adoption, arguing that this yardstick does not capture Ottoman realities. Küçük instead claims that early modern science in Istanbul and elsewhere was in fact hypermodern, oriented toward functions and objects.

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Egypt’s Occupation: Colonial Economism and the Crises of Capitalism. Aaron G. Jakes (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020). Pp. 376. \$90.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper. ISBN: 9781503612617

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Some books are scholarly works of the finest type, impressively researched and crafted, whereas others are altogether groundbreaking in how they push the boundaries of

knowledge and elicit novel ways of looking at things, reinterpret, and conceptualize previously seldom questioned categories and notions. Aaron G. Jakes's latest book definitely belongs in the latter category. Radically revisiting and critically engaging a long tradition of the economic and social history of colonial Egypt, Jakes has written an arresting history of the British occupation of Egypt from 1882 until the proclamation of the country's independence in 1922 through the prism of colonial economism, a discourse prioritizing economic development over political reform in the context of the imperial civilizing mission.

In the second half of the 19th century, after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 had such a profound impact on British imperial policies, British colonialists started being less optimistic about the applicability of classical liberal principles to colonial peoples. Colonial economism contended that although liberal political theory (political emancipation, sovereignty, constitutionalism, and democracy) was not suitable for all people and places, liberal political economy was. As Jakes writes, Egyptians were credited with having "a basic capacity to recognize and act upon their own material interests" (5). Because of this, the argument followed, once enabled to accumulate the prosperity necessary to "reason beyond the calculus of personal profit and loss" and therefore think in terms of a common good, they could be set on a gradual path of self-government under British tutelage. British colonial control would then be secured, unhindered by any local opposition, because, the theory went, such newly found prosperity would lead to political acquiescence and social pacification among Egyptians. As Jakes explains, in the mind of the colonizers, "the varieties of popular discontent that the occupation critics mistook for political consciousness, meanwhile, would evaporate as the country prospered" (6).

The productive and transformative, not just extractive, character of colonial economism is very convincingly discussed and evidenced throughout Jakes's book. In Egypt, ultimately flawed experimental policies aimed at the capitalist expansion of the local economy, in particular by focusing on rural development (*isti'mār*) and the transformation of peasants (*fellahin*) into market-oriented agrarian petty entrepreneurs, were tested for the first time. These policies often had unanticipated and uneven outcomes: although they shaped state institutions and brought about an unprecedented foreign investment boom, they were followed by a crisis that eventually spurred the emergence of a vocal nationalist movement.

Based on a phenomenal array of primary sources, ranging from colonial administration papers and dispatches to local petitions and the press, most of the book is a fascinating account of how the many articulations of colonial economism in Egypt produced the very conditions of its questioning. As colonial economism was inherently Eurocentric in trying to reproduce and extend patterns of capital accumulation beyond their Western point of origin, British colonial officers identified Egyptian small landholders as the class to empower to boost the capitalist transformation of the local economy. The launch of large rural infrastructure projects, the abolition of coercive practices of labor extraction (*corvée*), and the implementation of policies and institutional arrangements such as the standardization of property law were all thought of as correctives to the former bankruptcy caused by despotic and egotistic landed elites. They also were seen as a way to bolster the expansion of cotton cultivation, the ultimate goal of British colonialism, by attracting European financial capital in the form of credit readily available to the peasantry (Chapter 1). At the same time, an engrained Orientalist bias about the lack of political rationality in the "subject races" explains the abolition of local elections in 1895 and the following takeover of the Ministry of Interior by the British, to streamline the administrative practices presiding over the radical restructuring of rural space (Chapter 2). If we subscribe to the view that the main objective of British occupation remained the incorporation of Egypt into the global economy as a peripheral supplier of cheap raw cotton to metropolitan industries (the central tenet of most economic histories of British colonialism over the past half-century or so), Jakes's original focus on the 1897–1907 financial boom tells a much more complex and nuanced story. The unprecedented influx of foreign capital into the country was a game changer. The

British brought in banks and mortgage companies to generate the wealth that would buy the political allegiance of the Egyptians, in addition to securing Britain's economic agenda. But the increasing financialization and speculation fell short of delivering the prosperity and economic security Egyptians had been promised. As Jakes notes, "this program to channel foreign capital into loans to peasant smallholders was altogether dwarfed by the initiative of private companies to make investments they deemed more desirable and secure" (104)—for instance, lending to big landowners, thereby consolidating old class cleavages and socioeconomic asymmetries (Chapter 3). Far from delivering the expected prosperity, the investment boom starting in 1897 turned into a stock market crash and ultimately a full-blown financial crisis (*azma māliya*) by the spring of 1907. In this regard, one of the major merits of the book is that it provincializes the political economy debate of boom and bust during this era by exploring the sparse and long-overlooked critical interventions made by a number of prominent Egyptian nationalist leaders and their positioning on the occupation's political economy, in the first place, and more in general on such issues as the relationship between politics and economics, prosperity, freedom, and democracy in a capitalist world (Chapter 4). As the crisis made the lives of millions of ordinary Egyptians more insecure than ever before, it proved to be a solid factual basis for Egyptian economic nationalists' claims about the need for political sovereignty as a prerequisite for national development and a bulwark against the vagaries of global financial capitalism (Chapter 5). The crisis triggered an upsurge in mass politics: workers, students, and professionals took to the streets to claim rights they deemed economic and political at once, as they protested the entanglement of economic exploitation and political subordination forming their colonial condition. In doing so, they challenged the postulate of colonial economism, the binary distinction between economics and politics (Chapter 6). The following chapters in the book explore the disciplinary turn of British colonial economism after 1910 (Chapter 7), and the genealogy of a local discourse of economic nationalism through the perceptive analysis of the work of 'Umar Bey Lutfi, Yusuf Nahhas, Muhammad Tal'at Harb, Muhammad Zaki 'Ali, and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i (Chapter 8).

In this impressive work, Jakes does a number of very important things. First, he contributes to the decentering of the political economy approach by showing how the supposed margins of the capitalist system provided a space to constitute normative, apparently universal, discourses like, in this case, economism. In no way was Egypt peripheral to the metropole and the workings of global capitalism. On the contrary, it served as a laboratory where the economic practices, institutions, and tools that have played a central role in the financialization of the global economy since the end of the 19th century—the "colonial-era precursors to the subprime loans, mortgage-backed securities and credit insurance of our own times" (7)—were tested, and contested.

In sum, Jakes convincingly challenges the received ontological differentiation between politics and economics by showing how economics and politics are interrelated. The very same use of the term economism in the book charts a critique of more conventional forms of economic history, among which are some long-time dominant trends in Middle Eastern economic history positing the economic as a discreet, autonomous realm of social life and prioritizing its role in shaping other areas of human activity. Accordingly, Jakes' work brilliantly converses with that variety of approaches in capitalism studies that subscribes to an expansive notion of capitalism and looks at economism as a distinct aspect of the historically changing discourse about capital and its role in shaping the world. It is a category that definitely needs to be historicized and situated as the author does with reference to Egypt in this splendid book.

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