

the 1918–19 protests throughout Egypt were motivated by a range of factors and, occasionally, acted at cross-purposes with one another. After the war, state extraction of agricultural resources continued, making it difficult to sustain a basic living. In one of his most convincing arguments, Anderson asserts that attacks on infrastructure were not attacks on imperialism, in theory, but the very real state and foreign interference in the lives of Egyptian villagers.


There is much to contend with in the final chapter and one wishes that Anderson had spent more time unpacking the blurred edges between class and race. While it is clear that Egyptian elites made a connection between an imposed color line and independence, it is less clear how those who experienced the violence of racial prejudice and subjugation, a Black subjecthood, imagined their position vis-à-vis the nationalist movement. Part of this confusion may be due to an organizational quirk of the book in which the author analyzes the rural uprisings in Chapter 2, while the 1919 revolution is not addressed until Chapter 9, thus tempering the drama of the moment and the strength of his claim. Even so, he makes a provocative argument linking racial identity and Egyptian nationalism that is sure to invite further conversation on the part of scholars and contemporary commentators who are bringing new perspectives to traditional, top-down interpretations of the 1919 revolution.

Within the broader field of Middle East studies, race and Blackness have only begun to receive the analytic attention that they deserve. As Anderson notes in his acknowledgments, he did not set out to write a book about race but found he could not ignore what the sources were telling him (p. xiv). *The Egyptian Labor Corps* is a timely example of the productive avenues that open when race and racialized experience are incorporated into once-familiar narratives. Anderson displays a sensitivity to the source material and generosity toward his subjects. Accessible writing and short thematic chapters make this recommended reading for an informed general audience and academic readers alike.

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The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt

Alexander Kitroeff (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2019). Pp. 256. £39.95 cloth. ISBN: 9789774168581

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Variously cast by scholars as members of a privileged resident minority, the beneficiaries of a colonial order, middleman capitalists, a touchstone of Mediterranean cosmopolitanism, or, especially by many Greeks and philhellenes, romanticized as a showcase of Hellenism, the Greeks of Egypt are often name-checked, but much less often analyzed, in the literature on modern Egypt. Defined most conveniently in terms of ethnicity, they, in fact, straddled different categories of nationality, country of origin, education, language, and even religion, that were mediated through a variety of relationships with the local and national community, state, and religious authority. Accordingly, when conceived as a single group, the Greeks of Egypt pose a particular challenge for the historian.

In this new book, *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Alexander Kitroeff puts Greeks fully center stage, building on his previous work (*The Greeks in Egypt, 1919–1937: Ethnicity and Class*, Ithaca Press, 1989) by expanding its temporal scope and taking on a greater interpretative ambition. Consistent with his earlier approach, the author seeks to distance himself



from a Hellenocentric view that simply sees the Greeks of Egypt as an outpost of the Greek state, and instead stresses a more local Greek community perspective within the Egyptian context. Despite their diverse origins and civic status—the majority held Greek nationality but a significant minority possessed Egyptian, British, Italian, and other nationalities—Kitroeff holds that Egyptian Greeks, or “Egiptotes,” to employ a more local usage, shared a collective “sense of cohesion and solidarity” (p. 6). This common consciousness rested on four factors: their broad geographical distribution within the country, their diverse socio-economic profile, a strong attachment to a national (Greek) identity, and a close relationship with Egyptians. He explores these themes in a narrative that takes us from the reign of Muhammad ‘Ali at the beginning of the 19th century, through to the British invasion in 1882 and the subsequent long occupation as the Egyptian nationalist movement pursued its struggle for independence. The critical period following the end of World War II and the 1952 revolution ultimately sees the British withdrawal and the shift from the cosmopolitan to the “new” Egypt. In ending the discussion at this point, the author binds the Egyptian Greek presence to a colonial regime of relative privilege and obscures the genuine connection many held with Egypt, which was maintained by those who remained.

As Kitroeff notes, one of the enduring claims made by the Egiptotes to justify their presence in Egypt was that they served as a civilizing, modernizing presence. Indeed, Athanasios Politis, a Greek diplomat and favored source writing in the late 1920s, called them “pioneers of Western civilization” (p. 86). In engaging with this claim, Kitroeff grants prominence to the very wealthy Greek families whose fortunes were amassed in the course of an impressive record of economic activity largely in trade, and particularly cotton, something graphically illustrated by the Choremi-Benachi-Salvago family tree set out in the opening pages of the book. This Egyptian Greek plutocracy used its largesse to support many of the local institutional communities established around the country with their affiliated network of associations, schools, orphanages, hospitals, and clubs, playing an influential role in community life and promoting the worldview of its conservative leadership. Even within these circles, there were at times tensions. Kitroeff, for instance, examines the interesting case of ELPOA, a progressive business association that sought to challenge the hegemony of the Greek Chamber of Commerce in Alexandria within the Egyptian Greek business community in the 1930s. Ultimately, however, the emphasis placed by the author on economic elites and community establishments means that those who stood apart from this communal mainstream, while at times recognized, are given little more than passing mention. The early role of Greeks in the Egyptian labor movement at the beginning of the 20th century briefly surfaces, but the continuing pattern of connections within the wider working-class militancy is given little consideration by Kitroeff, who affords “boardroom cosmopolitanism” greater attention (p. 154). The communist activism among Egyptian Greeks fares slightly better, but the prominent Greek membership of progressive associations, such as the peace movement in the 1930s, is absent. A broader canvas that recognized the activities of lower-class Greeks and their everyday interaction with both Egyptians and resident Europeans might have offered a more organic and varied picture of the Egyptian Greek milieu that bridged social and economic, legal and criminal, and rural and urban divides.

Kitroeff’s discussion of the political backdrop reflects these priorities, with a narrative dominated by the interplay of state interests. In this story, imperial Britain, an increasingly assertive Egypt, and a Greek state that claimed the notional allegiance of Egiptotes are cast as the leading players in determining their fate. From a high point in the late 1920s, we are taken through a slow dismantling of the imperial order, with the abolition of the Capitulations in 1937, the impact of World War II, and the dynamics of postwar transformation. The discussion of the following decade and a half that witnessed the departure of many Greeks from the country largely revolves around the negotiations between Greek and Egyptian governments, with the Greeks of Egypt cast as rather hapless, if not wholly passive, actors amid the rapidly changing political circumstances. Here, the Egyptian Greek left is a dissenting voice that sought to promote a policy of readjustment, which the conservative

establishment was unwilling to embrace. Left unexplained is the real sense of attachment that resided in a web of personal, occupational, and neighborhood connections, which many Egyptian Greeks felt toward the country they regarded as home and which was ultimately overshadowed by the narrowing space of nationalist rhetoric.

In navigating his way through this material, Kitroeff draws on a wide range of sources. While at times his discussion relies on the over-rehearsed views of British colonial administrators and officials, particularly Lord Cromer, Kitroeff, nevertheless, performs a service to scholars by utilizing a number of Greek-language primary sources and recent secondary scholarship to support his analysis. Particularly welcome is some discussion of Egyptian Greek literature, which involves not just the inevitable Cavafy, but some lesser-known writers, such as Stratis Tsirkas, Christophoros Nomikos, Evgenios Michaelides, and Kostas Tsangaradas. In the final chapter, Kitroeff reflects on the perpetuation of elements of this rich cultural legacy in terms of nostalgia and memory, and the reception of Egiptiotes who relocated to Greece, although most went elsewhere, chiefly to Australia. By contrast, the presence of very few Egyptian voices, much less Arabic-language sources, an absence by no means unprecedented in the literature, provides an incomplete picture of relations between Egyptians and the Greeks who lived among them. Engagement with sources, such as Egyptian popular literature, might have offered a productive window onto the relations between both groups and their respective nostalgia for these times.

In a text of considerable detail, there will inevitably be some disputed assessments. Kitroeff's assertion that the special relationship enjoyed by Greeks with Egyptians is more a mid-20th-century phenomenon than a 19th-century one might be challenged, given the record of close familiarity in the workplace and in popular culture between the two groups from the turn of the century. Radamanthos Radopoulos's "fawning" biography of King Fu'ad was more an example of the royalist school of historiography, actively encouraged by a monarch who sought adulation from many constituencies, than a specific Greek strategy (p. 86). The "abrupt end" of Angelos Kasigonis's bilingual newspaper *Egiptiotis-Ellin* and its transformation to the monolingual *Ellin* (p. 166) overlooks a hiatus of more than two years between the two publications and a radical realignment of international politics. An "increase in anti-Semitism," as the reason for the departure of Greek Jews from Egypt after 1948, seems glib at best (p. 178). The impact of the Egyptian military defeat in Palestine, and the subsequent political tensions between Egypt and Israel that destabilized Jewish life in Egypt, better explain the situation.

These things aside, *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt* makes an important and welcome contribution to our understanding of the Greek presence in Egypt, both as a case study of Greek life beyond the limits of the Greek state and as an account of one of the notable resident communities, among which we might include Armenians, Italians, and Maltese, which made up the pluralist society that was modern Egypt. The complexity of this presence was played out in diverse ways that were a function of the late Ottoman context, the impact of the British occupation and its accompanying colonial regime, the forces of international capitalism and domestic economic structures, local and national influences, and the particularities of Egyptian society. Rather than seeking to produce a narrative that collectivizes that experience, it may be more productive to see its very diversity across areas of Egyptian political, social, and economic life as its more characteristic expression.

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