

English summaries

The Decline of a Science: the Crisis of Cosmography at the End of the Renaissance

F. LESTRINGANT

Cosmography, or universal geography, was born in the sixteenth century from the encounter between the newly rediscovered Ptolemean cartography and the progress of the Great Navigations, registered in portolan charts. The rapid growth of this science—whose theoretical ambition was to describe the earth according to the celestial circles—at first brought fruitful results, manifest in the amount of free play accorded to the practician and in the role given to the so-called prospective “imagination.” But the same rapid growth quickly led to a decline, precipitated, towards the end of the Renaissance, by the suspicion which catholic and protestant theologians cast upon the pride and the vain curiosity presiding over the constitution of any universal science, a type of science which, according to them, held authorities in little respect and proudly based itself on the supremacy of mere experience.

From Tlāloc to Hippocrates: Water and the Organization of Space in the Mexico Basin (15th-18th Centuries)

A. MUSSET

By founding, in 1521, the capital of New Spain on the site of Tenochtitlán, Hernan Cortés created a rupture between the Spanish city and its natural environment. The conquerors, heirs to a specific philosophy of water, were in effect badly prepared for life in the middle of a region of lakes, and they lacked the kind of knowledge needed to profit it. Two cultures then confronted each other: that of the Spaniards, who wished to protect themselves from floods, and that of the Indians, who drew a large portion of their resources from the lakes. This conflict was finally resolved by the draining of the lakes (desagüe), an act reflecting the victory of Hippocrates over Tlāloc, the Mexican god of water; but also that of the creoles over the Crown, protector of Indians. This decision still burdens life in the world’s largest city, exposed as it is to numerous ecological problems.

Monetary Turbulence at the End of the Sixteenth Century and the Ottoman Decline Consciouness

C. KAFADAR

The Ottoman empire experienced a major monetary turbulence and inflation as well as related political disturbances in the final decades of the sixteenth century. It was then that a concern with decline took hold of Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats while the formative works and ideas of the decline and reform discourse, that later

dominated Ottoman cultural life, were produced. The first section is an overview of the monetary turbulence in the latter part of the 16th century and a brief survey of the discussion on the price movements. The second section focuses on the contemporary Ottoman response to these phenomena and introduces a hitherto unknown text which contains a discussion of the currency crisis by a scholar-administrator.

Egypt Under Muhammad-'Ali: Political Power and Economic Development, 1805-1848.

J. BATOU

The attempts at industrialization of Egypt in the first half of the 19th century have been generally underestimated. In 1830-1840, however, this country of about 5 millions inhabitants was the world's fifth producer of cotton yarn per capita. The required resources had been accumulated by means of a strict public monopoly on agriculture and trade. The formulation of an integrated industrialization program should also be stressed (transports, energy, raw materials, equipment, formation, new channels of trade, etc).

Furthermore, the state aimed to secure the perennality of its efforts by training a new national elite and by allowing the first rise of popular national feeling. In view of England's direct responsibility in the failure of this plan, the author wonders if this state-conceived and state-led process might not have succeeded, had it not been stopped by foreign intervention.

Cornering the Market: State Intervention in Comparative Perspective (Brazilian Coffee and Mexican Henequen)

S. TOPIK

Brazil, through the valorization of coffee program it initiated in 1906, became the first Third World state to control the international price of one of the world's most traded commodities. Brazilian politicians constructed a state capitalist model in the commercial sphere while perpetuating traditional social and property relations on the land. At the same time, henequen planters in Yucatan, Mexico initially failed to enlist state aid even though their crop, market power, and political influence resembled that of Brazilian coffee planters. When the Mexican state finally did intervene in the henequen market, it revolutionized social relations and destroyed the political power of the planters. The object of this essay is to compare the multiple causes of state interventions in coffee and henequen and to suggest the very different social content that state interventions may contain.

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