



Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt's 'Urabi Movement (Princeton Studies on the Near East)

Juan R I Cole

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In this book Juan R. I. Cole challenges traditional elite-centered conceptions of the conflict that led to the British occupation of Egypt in September 1882. For a year before the British intervened, Egypt's viceregal government and the country's influential European community had been locked in a struggle with the nationalist supporters of General Ahmad al-'Urabi. Although most Western observers still see the 'Urabi movement as a "revolt" of junior military officers with only limited support among the Egyptian people, Cole maintains that it was a broadly based social revolution hardly underway when it was cut off by the British. While arguing this fresh point of view, he also proposes a theory of revolutions against informal or neocolonial empires, drawing parallels between Egypt in 1882, the Boxer Rebellion in China, and the Islamic Revolution in modern Iran.

In a thorough examination of the changing Egyptian political culture from 1858 through the 'Urabi episode, Cole shows how various social strata--urban guilds, the intelligentsia, and village notables--became "revolutionary." Addressing issues raised by such scholars as Barrington Moore and Theda Skocpol, his book combines four complementary approaches: social structure and its socioeconomic context, organization, ideology, and the ways in which unexpected conjunctures of events help drive a revolution.

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