

dealings with Indian business. A balance of perspective is maintained throughout.

For a book that harps on hybridity and eschews generalizations, its emphasis on Tata being “the” global corporation that built Indian capitalism (as claimed in the subtitle of the book) may sound outlandish. That is a shortcoming; the book does little to explain Tata’s behavior in relation to other large Indian firms (outside the Birlas) and especially in the steel sector, on which a large part of the book is focused. The Indian Iron and Steel Company, for instance, is mentioned just once, regarding its nationalization in the 1970s. The book’s emphasis on Tata’s company town Jamshedpur and experiments in urban planning could have benefited from a reading of other Indian company towns, especially Batanagar (set up for Bata, the shoe company).

Raianu’s *Tata* is gripping in the way it fleshes out key protagonists of the company, especially those not carrying the Tata surname, such as B. J. Padshah and Minoo Masani. It has a clear eye for the “big picture” story, though at times it loses chronological focus in the main text, jumping years or even decades, clarified only by a close reading of the extensive footnotes. On balance, though, this is quite easily the best book written to date on the Tata Group, and there have been many.

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London Couture and the Making of a Fashion Centre. *By Michelle Jones.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2022. 320 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. Hardcover, \$30.00. ISBN: 978-0-262-04657-2.

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Reviewed by Véronique Pouillard

Michelle Jones has written a milestone book on the history of the British fashion industry. London is at present one of the four fashion capitals, along with Paris, New York, and Milan. In the most recent decades, new cities have emerged as fashion centers, including Shanghai and Tokyo. The history of the British fashion industry has been the topic of important studies on the aesthetics of the London look, the rise of mass fashions, fashionable British textiles, and the emergence of new stylists in the boutiques of the 1960s. The institutional history of British fashion, however, has long remained under-researched. Jones’s book fills a substantial gap in the historiography. The author has

examined a rich corpus of archives on both sides of the Atlantic. Her study includes the analysis of film archives, and photographs and film stills enrich the text. Most of this iconography shows sober fashions and sleek tailoring, which buttresses the argument that London couturiers had specific skills in the cutting of clothes.

The book is divided into four chapters, following a chronology that spans from the 1930s to the 1950s. The first chapter examines the cultural validation of couture in London's interwar society, including cases of couturiers such as Norman Hartnell, Digby Morton, and Victor Stiebel. This chapter will be read with utmost interest as an innovative addition to the literature on British trade and protectionism. Chapter 2 focuses on the activity of the British branch of the Fashion Group, a professional association that originated in New York in 1928. The British branch became a tastemaking group, gathering prominent British couturiers as well as society and media insiders such as Alison Settle and Margaret Havinden. The British branch, the majority of whose members were men designers, differed from the New York Group, a women's association that pledged to advance the careers of women. In London, the Fashion Group played an essential role in organizing the profession, notably through scheduling calendars for the fashion shows. The British Fashion Group was short-lived, but it was a foundational element of the next chapter of *London Couture*. During the war years, London couturiers, largely forced by the difficult circumstances, formed the Incorporated Society of London Fashion Designers, the first official couture trade association in Great Britain. The society supported the preparation of couture exhibitions, including a successful promotion effort in South American markets. Research on the Board of Trade allows Jones to show in depth the impact of the Utility Scheme - a strict system of rationing - on British clothing. Chapter 4, with a focus on the immediate postwar years, examines initiatives for a national recovery based on rationed domestic consumption and increased production for exports. The promotion of British couture by way of exhibitions and films, in such circumstances, was essential to showcase the status and aesthetics of British couture.

*London Couture* does not focus on the financial industry of the London fashion industry. In chapter 4, the author writes that apart from Jacqmar, the group hosting couturier Victor Stiebel's operation, no accounting records have survived for those London couture firms. This is far from exceptional in the world of couture, where operations often remain on a small scale, and as the author reminds us in the conclusion, despite the fun to be had working in the industry, it would hardly make anyone rich during that era. The book breaks new ground in business history by examining the life of London's couture firms, both as

individual firms and as a group of entrepreneurs who struggled to work together. Importantly, Jones reflects on the individualism of the couturiers, which made intraprofessional collaborations challenging. For example, most professionals remained reluctant to participate in collective exhibitions, doing so only when pressed by circumstances, such as during World War II.

*London Couture's* conclusion offers a sweeping reflection of three decades of the British fashion industry. In examining London couture, some topics are unavoidable, especially the role of the British monarchy and the competition between capitals. The book offers useful analysis and nuance on both of these themes.

Jones's approach remains centered on the British case, with highlights guided by the chronology. Relations with New York were particularly important during the interwar years, the period of activity of the Fashion Group's London branch. The presence of Paris grew as the global business of Christian Dior unfolded in the postwar era. Such choices allow the narrative to remain focused on what made London such a specific city. Jones demonstrates that the strategic choices mattered in the placement of London on the global map. Such choices entailed playing to the entrepreneurs' strengths, by emphasizing the quality of women's tailoring. The London industry, however, did not make especially significant use of British textiles, as the author shows. This differs substantially from the case of France; ongoing research is underlining the importance of the French hinterland to Paris couture. It seems, therefore, that despite a relatively protectionist climate in interwar Britain, London couture remained less constrained in purchasing fabrics from diverse sources. London entrepreneurs, however, struggled with making their own brands known abroad. Similar concerns were voiced at the same time in New York. The occupation of Paris during World War II created some momentum in other fashion capitals. While city politics and funding helped with branding the industry in New York, circumstances in London were very different.

Yet London couture enjoyed the peculiar honor of being close to the British monarchy. In chapter 1, Jones narrates how the death of King George V disrupted the London couture shows in January 1936 but also that the coronation of George VI in May 1937, after the abdication crisis, expanded the promotion of London couture at home and abroad. As the fashions worn by politicians and monarchs are under relentless scrutiny, Jones's book offers a master class in balanced analysis. The social functions of fashion in times of abundance—but also, and especially, during periods of austerity—are analyzed in a model

manner in this important contribution to the history of the fashion industry.

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**Nazi Billionaires: The Dark History of Germany's Wealthiest Dynasties.** By David de Jong. Boston: Mariner Books, 2022. 400 pp. Hardcover, \$28.99. Maps, appendix, notes, index. ISBN: 978-1-32849-788-8.

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Reviewed by Christian Marx

The question of compensation for crimes committed under National Socialism reemerged in the 1990s as a result of the fall of the Iron Curtain and German reunification. In addition to the state, this particularly affected companies that had appropriated firms or exploited forced laborers. As a result, German business history experienced an unprecedented boom. Many German companies ordered scientific research into their role in the 1930s and 1940s. This form of commissioning research from reputable historians—such as Peter Hayes in the case of Degussa—became typical of how German companies dealt with their Nazi past. Siemens, Deutsche Bank, Allianz, Dresdner Bank, and Commerzbank soon followed. A short time later, entrepreneurial families such as Flick, Quandt, Merck, and Oetker also commissioned scientific studies; more recently, Continental and Wintershall did the same. In addition, other longitudinal studies examined the National Socialist era in detail (such as Bosch or MAN), especially the topics of “Aryanization,” forced labor, and exploitation of occupied European countries.

Against this background, it seems surprising when David de Jong claims to tell the untold story of Germany's wealthiest business dynasties and their entanglements with the Nazi regime. Essentially, all of this is already well known and is state of the art research in German business history. Undoubtedly, not all of these studies have been translated into other languages. However, de Jong cannot and does not want to close this gap in international scholarly communication, because *Nazi Billionaires* is not to be read as a study of business history that is scientifically and methodologically rigorous. Rather, the journalistic style aims at a broader audience, beyond the community of historians. The book focuses on five German entrepreneurial families (Quandt, Flick, von Finck, Porsch-Piëch, and Oetker) and their relationship to National Socialism. The descendants of these families have considerable fortunes today and, in some cases, still determine the fate of large German corporations.