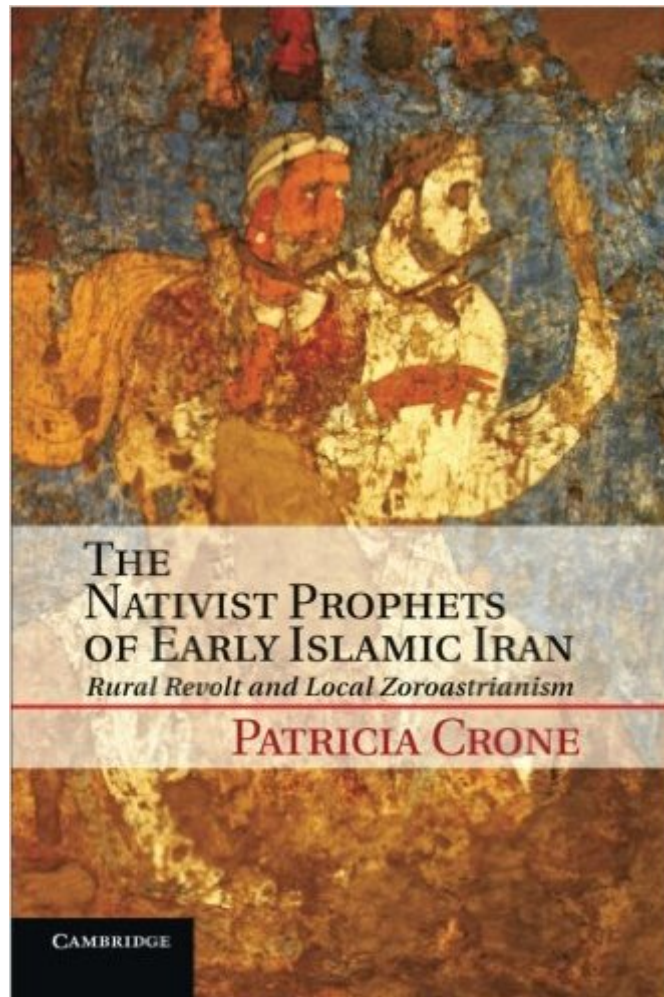


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The Nativist Prophets Of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt And Local Zoroastrianism



Synopsis

Patricia Crone's latest book is about the Iranian response to the Muslim penetration of the Iranian countryside, the revolts subsequently triggered there, and the religious communities that these revolts revealed. The book also describes a complex of religious ideas that, however varied in space and unstable over time, has demonstrated a remarkable persistence in Iran across a period of two millennia. The central thesis is that this complex of ideas has been endemic to the mountain population of Iran and occasionally become epidemic with major consequences for the country, most strikingly in the revolts examined here, and in the rise of the Safavids who imposed Shi'ism on Iran. This learned and engaging book by one of the most influential scholars of early Islamic history casts entirely new light on the nature of religion in pre-Islamic Iran, and on the persistence of Iranian religious beliefs both outside and inside Islam after the Arab conquest.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Up to the so-called Sunni Revival long after the conquest of much of the Islamic World, and foremost Iran, by the Seljuqs in the first half of the 11th century, the religious denomination of Iranians has never been so clear. After the Arabs under caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab had brought the Sasanian empire and its last shah Yazdegerd III to their knees in the battles at al-Qadisiyyah (near the capital Ctesiphon) in 637 and Nahavand (near Hamadan) in 642, Iran's state religion, Zoroastrianism, had not just vanished. Albeit victory of Islam was inevitable at first sight. The rapid Arab conquests after their Prophet Muhammad's sudden demise in 632 took indeed place before the Muslims' holy book, the Qur'an, had been compiled into an official, standardized, version by

Uthman ibn Affan in about 650 (as legend tells). So, the conquests of Palestine and Syria in 634-6, Jerusalem and Ctesiphon in 637, and Egypt in 639 had probably little to do with a compelling new religion. One main factor for the rapid success of the Arab conquest of Iran was, of course, the peripheral location of its capital, Ctesiphon, and its early fall and that simple fact is stressed early in Patricia Crone's new book on the "nativist prophets" of the first two centuries after the conquest in Greater Iran. How did the Iranians respond to forcible imposition of yet immature Islamic ideas, which, by definition, blend those of the older religions Judaism and Christianity? Well, they rebelled. But not so fast. The Revolts Much commenced with the Persian general Abu Muslim Khorasani (d. 755) and Islam's third civil war (749/50) when members of the Hashimiyya in Khorasan revolted against the ruling Umayyads. Abu Muslim's origin, whose original Persian name was Behzadan, remains obscure, though.

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