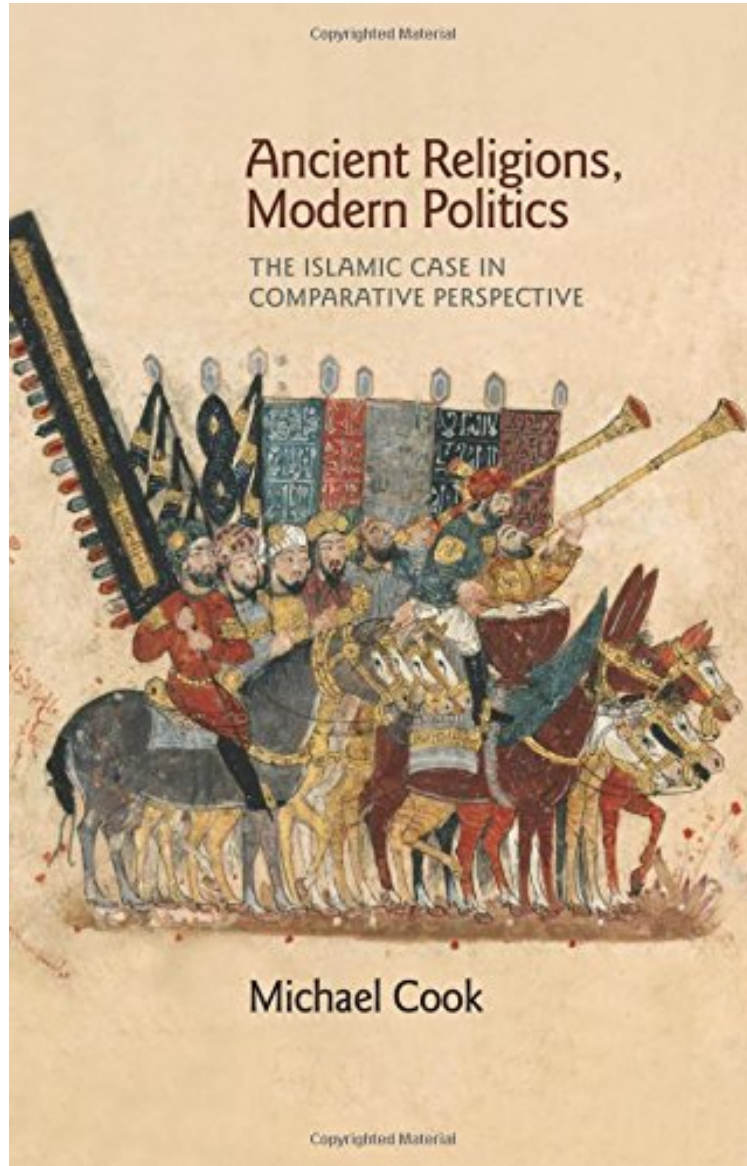


Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective

Michael Cook

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#810649 in Books Cook Michael 2016-12-06 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.20 x 1.10 x 6.001, .0 #File Name: 0691173346568 pages Ancient Religions Modern Politics The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective | File size: 16.Mb

Michael Cook : Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ancient Religions, Modern Politics: The Islamic Case in Comparative Perspective:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An important and compelling work
 By Mario Fusco
 Given our times, and with so much of the rhetoric concerning our relations with Islam reeking of ignorance, dogmatism and fear, this is an absolutely compelling and fascinating book. It should be required reading for anyone trying to make sense of today's headlines, particularly for those who are in a position to influence policy towards the Islamic world. In places the reading does get a little laborious for those who are not specialists in the field (such as myself), but the rewards of perseverance are considerable. No doubt a scholar would find any number of technical minutiae to challenge, but the overall import of this work is undeniable. At the risk of sounding presumptuous, and supposing that Prof. Cook reads these reviews, I am going to make a suggestion: lose the comparative focus and concentrate on Islam, perhaps with an abridged version of this work. I say this because, against the background of today's headlines, the sections on Hinduism and Catholicism, though fascinating, are really peripheral. A slimmer volume with somewhat less of an academic edge would be less taxing, would result in a wider readership, and would constitute a valuable contribution to the ongoing Islam vs. West dialogue/conflict. And happily the present work is so organized that an abridgment would not be unduly taxing.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A powerful exploration of Islam's special advantages in current third-world political mobilization
 By Stephen Roop
 A fascinating comparative study seeking to explain why and how Islam provides a more coherent and actively used framework for political action in developing Muslim countries than Roman Catholicism in Latin America or Hinduism in India. Cook is a well-known expert in Islam and not afraid to stake out new territory--witness some work from earlier years from which he has since backed away. His book's weight comes from skillfully deployed comparative theorizing and dazzling sourcing. And it could not be more timely. But it is a dense read and not for the faint of heart. Those who persist, though, will be challenged and illuminated by every chapter because of Cook's rigor and imaginative posing of questions. Mainly his work is limited to the Sunni religious revival. (One shortcoming: there is far too little about the timing of the Islamic revival: third-world development has been underway for more than a century, so why is Islam only recently so to the fore?) Cook is abundantly careful to reject the Islamic revival = violent jihad equation so beloved of American neo-cons. Islam has a complex history and there are many possible strands for activists and ideologists to tap. For those Westerners smugly convinced the obvious solution is that Islam must have its Reformation, Cook convincingly counters with the reminder that the western Reformation brought on centuries of fanaticism, intolerance and wholesale slaughter. There are some odd omissions--Indonesia, for example, which would have helped Cook elucidate his "many strands" argument. Cook explores nearly at all the grapplings of a few Islamic scholars with questions like feminism and religious pluralism; perhaps feminism is not a vigorous strand in the complex Muslim tradition but respect in Muslim theology for people of the Book, and respect among more hard-headed and practical men for adherents of other religions, are parts of Muslim history even most well-read non-specialists know about. But these grapplings have no widespread following outside of academe and often deracinated intellectual circles and it's what's on the ground that is Cook's concern.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars
 By John Donohue
 An engaging reflection on a current problem.

Why does Islam play a larger role in contemporary politics than other religions? Is there something about the Islamic heritage that makes Muslims more likely than adherents of other faiths to invoke it in their political life? If so, what is it? *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics* seeks to answer these questions by examining the roles of Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity in modern political life, placing special emphasis on the relevance or irrelevance of their heritages to today's social and political concerns. Michael Cook takes an in-depth, comparative look at political identity, social values, attitudes to warfare, views about the role of religion in various cultural domains, and conceptions of the polity. In all these fields he finds that the Islamic heritage offers richer resources for those engaged in current politics than either the Hindu or the Christian heritages. He uses this finding to explain the fact that, despite the existence of Hindu and Christian counterparts to some aspects of Islamism, the phenomenon as a whole is unique in the world today. The book also shows that fundamentalism in the sense of a determination to return to the original sources of the religion is politically more adaptive for Muslims than it is for Hindus or Christians. A sweeping comparative analysis by one of the world's leading scholars of premodern Islam, *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics* sheds important light on the relationship between the foundational texts of these three great religious traditions and the politics of their followers today.

Michael Cook, Winner of the 2014 Holberg Prize "*Ancient Religions, Modern Politics* . . . addresses a vital present-day issue on which many have offered opinions, all unsupported by the historical scholarship that he has been able to apply . . . impregnable scholarship . . . towering work."--Jonathan Benthall, *Times Literary Supplement* "[Cook] presents a panoramic and nuanced overview of political Islam with regard to identity, social values and culture over time."--Sundeep Khanna, *Mint* "In many ways, this work is a culmination of a life dedicated to scholarly research and writing. *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics* has depth that is uncommon, is presented in a readable format that makes it accessible to non-experts and is recognised for its academic rigor by specialists. . . . Cook presents a text that is accessible for the undergraduate level while at the same time challenging and a useful resource for the graduate

level."--Taylor Francis Online"A scholarly tour de force by one of the world's pre-eminent historians of Islam."--William McCants, WallStreetJournal.com"Certainly, rich in its use of sources and convincing in its arguments, this book should be widely read and would be very influential."--Maurice Borrmans, Islamochristiana"This is an impressive work that asks difficult questions and is not afraid to answer them. Cook's sources are extensive and delve deeply into each religious tradition. . . . He skillfully weaves together thinkers from the earliest form of the faith to contemporary schools of thought. Readers will be . . . challenged to think critically about the important questions he raises."--Theodore A. Nitz, Fides et Historia"Enlightening."--Islamic Quarterly"Profoundly erudite, written with exceptional clarity, and laced with mordant wit."--Ellis Goldberg, Journal of Church and State"This impressive book offers a new approach to answering an old question: why did Islam develop a political profile which paved the way to a 'pull of Islamism,' even turning into militant sectarian conflicts? . . . Cook's highly stimulating and knowledgeable reading of Muslims' use of tradition and his answer to the old question will certainly prompt a new discussion about the genealogy of political Islam."--Reinhard Schulze, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies"Cook's insight into Islamic history is evident in his latest tome. . . . The expansiveness of the exploration, which considers the long histories of national identity and ethnicity, widens our inquiry and causes us to integrate a broader range of factors to assess the differences and similarities of the role of religion in modern politics in different places. . . . Cook shows how we need a more global framework and long view of the function of history and religion to gain critical understanding of how our world functions today."--Julia McClure, HistoryFrom the Back Cover"This is a work of enormous erudition and considerable subtlety. Cook's learning is vast, his insight profound, his treatment of sources fair. Ancient Religions, Modern Politics is a most impressive achievement."--Martin E. Marty, author of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Letters and Papers from Prison""Michael Cook's book is truly a tour de force. Cook covers an impressive range of material and deals meticulously with key issues. Ancient Religions, Modern Politics is destined to be a landmark in the comparison of religions."--Christophe Jaffrelot, author of The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India"Ancient Religions, Modern Politics is at once painstaking and panoramic. It draws on a lifetime of learning and erudition, yet is audacious in its willingness to pose--and answer--bold questions. Rich in its use of sources and convincing in its arguments, this book will be widely read and very influential."--Andrew F. March, author of Islam and Liberal Citizenship

About the Author Michael Cook is professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton University. He is the author of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought and A Brief History of the Human Race, among other books.