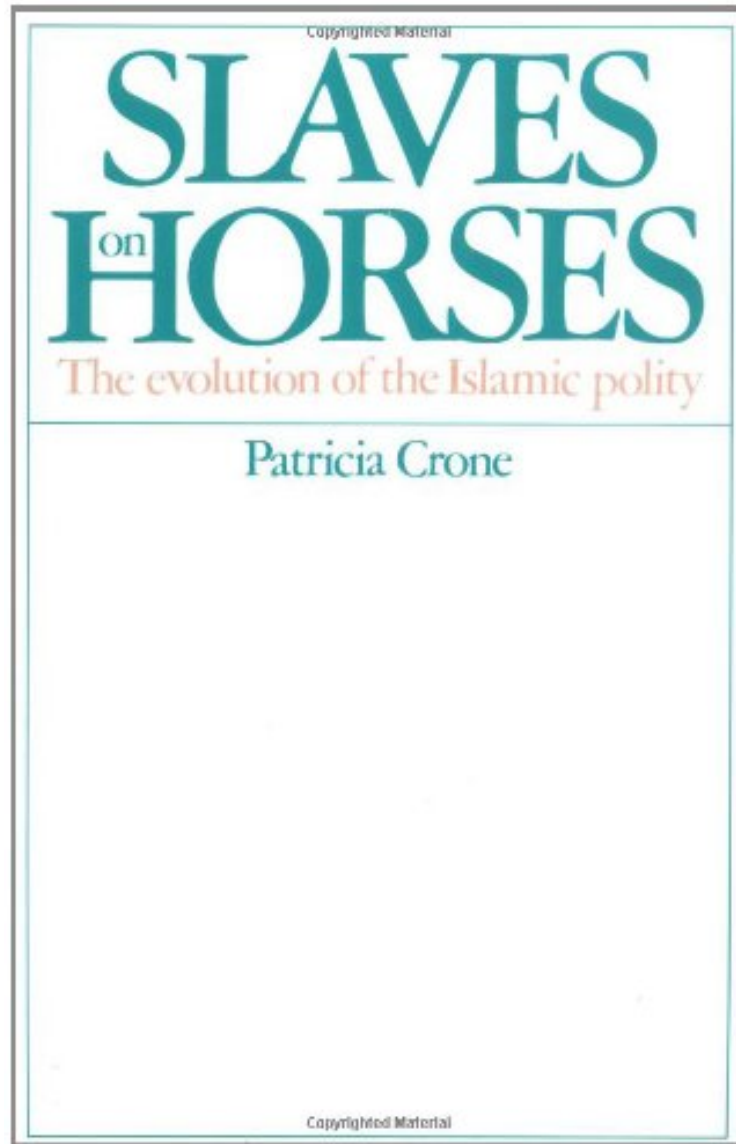


[Download pdf] Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity

Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity

Patricia Crone

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Patricia Crone : Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. don't forget the appendixBy David Reid RossPatricia Crone wrote this in 1980, adapting it from the first part of her PhD thesis. (Another part became the book "Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law" - as of 1997, this has been challenged and as far as I know, Crone has abandoned it.) Anyway "Slaves on Horses" is the first work of Crone's which I can recommend.Her earlier work relied on "Islam as others saw it", to

borrow a phrase. This work assumes the barest skeleton of the "Hagarism" narrative, and fleshes out that skeleton from the historical Muslim accounts mainly from hadith and administrative records. The book seeks to explain how and why the Caliphate ended up reliant upon "slaves on horses" to defend it. After all, the phrase "slaves on horses" is a phrase of horror in Jewish and Christian literature; and Islamic apocalyptic complains about it too. As such this is best termed a military and caste history, from the 650s on. Crone finds the evolution of the Caliphal armies to be explicable by practical concerns, not religious. As a result she has little of Islam-as-religion in here, excepting the propaganda from this or that rebel. It is less a "book" than an 80-something-page monograph, with extensive appendices. The appendices are the important part: they tell you who was stationed where and when, and of what family and tribe... in Syria and Iraq. (Egypt and North Africa and Spain do not feature.) These appendices are still of value for those who are fact-checking hadiths of the Fertile Crescent. They are in this book to show how Sufyani administration differed from Marwani administration which, in turn, differed from `Abbasi administration. The writing style is breathless and endnote-reliant - typical of Crone's earlier work - and you can be lulled into reading quickly past many pages before realising that you have not followed the argument. The best critical review I have found so far is that by Daniel Pipes in *Slavery Abolition* (September 1985). Pipes agrees that there was a wide gulf between Islamic ideals and the political realities of those peoples who found themselves under an Islamic state; this amounts to a crisis in political "legitim(iz)ation". Pipes asks why slave-soldiers did *not* appear in *other* nations with similar problems (like Christian nations). He doubts that this book has answered its own question and so argues that its title misleads. I have to agree and so I have docked the book a star for that. This book should be approached as a collection of scholarship and as an index of important personages, arranged by period and according to affiliation, and all introduced with an historical summary. If you do this, you will learn a lot from the subsequent content.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Joint Review of Crone and Pipes

By R. Albin

These are 2 interesting books on the distinctive institution of military slavery. Many readers are probably familiar with this phenomenon, whose best known examples are the Ottoman Janissaries and the Egyptian Mamluks. As the authors point out, this institution is almost unique to the Islamic world and appeared in a wide range of Muslim societies over several centuries. Both Crone and Pipes address how this institution developed and why it was so strongly associated with the Muslim world. Of these 2 books, Pipes' is definitely the most readable. Crone's book, which is really a long essay as much of the book is reprinting of primary documents and an impressively long bibliography/footnotes, was clearly written for subspecialists and is hard going for general readers. To be fair to Crone, her book is also a reconstruction of the early political history of Islamic states and considered an important interpretation of early Islamic history. I think that Crone's and Pipes' analyses of military slavery are essentially identical. Pipes has a nice discussion of what constitutes military slavery. This is not the plantation chattel slavery familiar to most readers. Islamic military slaves were often powerful individuals with significant rights. Some important Ottoman Viziers were slaves. They were the personal dependents of the rulers of states investing in military slavery. The prototype military slaves were very much like the Janissaries, men obtained via capture, purchase, or other means, usually at young ages, and trained specifically to be soldiers. They usually originated from the peripheries or outside the borders of the states using military slaves, and usually underwent involuntary conversion to and indoctrination in Islam. Why was military slavery a common feature of so many Islamic states? Crone and Pipes point to at least one major feature of Islam and a series of contingent events. Both Crone and Pipes suggest that the evolution of Islam and Sharia law resulted in a situation in which essential features of life were independent of the state and all governments lacked fundamental legitimacy. This made it relatively difficult for Islamic rulers to develop armies based on legitimate claims of service from subjects, particularly when warfare involved conflicts with other Muslim states. In somewhat complementary narratives, Crone and Pipes trace the evolution of military slavery from early events in Islamic history. Key features include the fact that Islam prevented the conquering Arabians from adopting governing methods of the societies they came to dominate, that the tribal organization of early Islamic societies that also prevented governments from dominating early Islamic armies, and the use of large numbers of personal dependents in early Islamic armies. Early leaders of the Abbasid Caliphate crystalized the institution of military slavery and set a pattern that persisted for centuries.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A great book by a brilliant author

By M. Kline

Dr. Crone has acquired more knowledge than any human being should rightfully possess, and this becomes immediately apparent when one reads her book. Although *Slaves on Horses* is a 'scholarly' work, it is nevertheless accessible to any lay reader interested in early Islam. Her writing is smooth, succinct, and even passionate. My only grievance is that the work is rather short; appendices and endnotes take up nearly two thirds of the book. I sometimes wish she had elaborated on some of her more controversial statements within the text itself, rather than burying her justifications in the endnotes. Nonetheless, *Slaves On Horses* is still an exceptional book and well worth the read.

Slave soldiers are a distinctively Muslim phenomenon. Though virtually unknown in the non-Muslim world, they have been a constant and pervasive feature of the Muslim Middle East from the ninth century AD into modern times. Why did Muslim rulers choose to place military and political power in the hands of imported slaves? It is this question which Dr Crone seeks to answer. Concentrating on the period from the rise of the Umayyads to the dissolution of the

'Abbasid empire (roughly AD 650-850), she documents the consequences of the fusion between religion and politics in Islam, which she sees as an essential forging characteristic of the Muslim social structure and state. Primarily addressed to specialists and advanced students of Arabic and Islamic history, the book will also appeal to comparative historians and social anthropologists.