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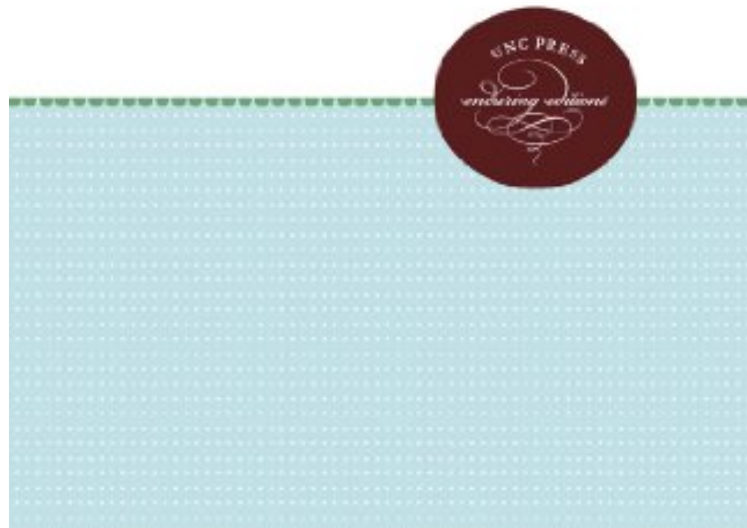
Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order (Studies in Comparative World History)

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Michael Adas : Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order (Studies in Comparative World History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order

(Studies in Comparative World History):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A good alternative reading on peasant rebellions by Mills. In these rebellions, the nemesis was "infidel" rule, but despite the apparent religious undertones of these rebellions, they were not fought in defense of religion, but were restorationist in sentiment (i.e. restoring the communities back to a former pre-colonial golden age by ushering in a "new age" of harmony, prosperity and fair self-rule). Adas is clearly sympathetic to their belief systems. Adas warns readers from perceiving the "methods" used by the rebels (incantations, rituals, talisman, tattoos, forms of "magic") as "irrational", "superstitious" and foolish. He also strongly rejects labeling them with indiscriminate terms like "witch-doctors", "quacks" "child-like" mentalities, "nave", etc. He insists that one cannot simply apply western scientific criteria of "rational" onto non-western and prescientific societies whose world-views are unfamiliar. Even the fact that these rebellions were crushed cannot be used to justify "irrationality" because the gap between goal and outcome should not be used as a means of measurement without first understanding the framework of their beliefs. Despite his sympathetic treatment of the rebellions, he still maintains objectivity by not veering towards strong sentiments that can be found in some post-colonial literature that revered these "prophets" or other early "anti-imperialist" work that too strongly antagonized the colonial governments. Adas also makes it clear that the colonials weren't the only "provokers" of rebellion and highlights to readers, the existence of "secondary" triggers of revolt. Much of his arguments in fact, mirror some of the most reliable and well-loved books on peasant resistance with two examples being *Weapons of the weak* (Scott, 1985) and *Moral economy of the peasant* (Scott, 1976) amongst others. He however, does not use them to support or influence his arguments. Instead, Adas seemingly uses his case studies to shape his own opinions. In doing so, he provides a richer account of peasant experiences and mentalities, where *Moral economy of the peasant* had treated them too superficially. His cross-analysis of the five case studies also helps to illustrate how multi-faceted these rebellions really were, and difficult to generalize despite the few parallels he has shown in this book. When I first read this book, I was excited to learn about "relative depravity" at its beginning and was looking forward to further understand this theory through him and see how he would apply it onto his case studies. However, I was disappointed that its "presence" through the book was quite "weak". I was left with a sketchy understanding of it. However, many years down, I read this book again, and with a stronger prior knowledge and comprehension of "relative depravity", I could see how he had actually "unpacked" its concepts and used it more critically than I thought it did. It just needed more "careful" reading, and perhaps, if Adas had made this aspect more obvious by dedicating a more specialized section on it, it would have been an easier read. Even so, he provides readers with alternate case studies from the ones that are too commonly used in much literature on peasant revolts (for example, the Saya San rebellion). Looking at his references, sources (conventional, i.e. archival and unconventional, i.e. interviews and local folklore) that helped him build his case studies are more dominant. He expressed in the beginning of his book, how difficult it is to find "official" and "academic" sources for "lesser-known" rebellion, but his sheer effort and determination to have kept doing so is commendable. This book is a nice mix of uniqueness and generality, provides new case studies for analyzing peasant rebellions and presents new ways of thinking about religiously-themed rebellions. I enjoyed it very much despite my initial struggles with it.

Adas explores the relationship between millenarianism and violent protest by focusing on five case studies representing a wide range of social, political, and economic systems. The rebellions examined are: Netherlands East Indies (1825-30), New Zealand (c. 1864-67), Central India (1895-1900), German East Africa (1903-6), and Burma (1930-32). Arranged topically to emphasize comparative patterns, the study analyzes causes, leaders, organization, failure, and the impact on the individual society. Originally published in 1979. A UNC Press Enduring Edition -- UNC Press Enduring Editions use the latest in digital technology to make available again books from our distinguished backlist that were previously out of print. These editions are published unaltered from the original, and are presented in affordable paperback formats, bringing readers both historical and cultural value.