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Jeffrey T. Kenney

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Jeffrey T. Kenney : Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt:

The Kharijites were the first sectarian movement in Islamic history, a rebellious splinter group that separated itself from mainstream Muslim society and set about creating, through violence, an ideal community of the saved. Their influence in the political and theological life of the nascent faith has ensured their place in both critical and religious accounts of early Islamic history. Based on the image of sect fostered by the Islamic tradition, the name Kharijite defines a Muslim as an overly-pious zealot whose ideas and actions lie beyond the pale of normative Islam. After a brief look at Kharijite origins and the traditional image of these early rebels, this book focuses on references to the

Kharijites in Egypt from the 1950s to the 1990s. Jeffrey T. Kenney shows how the traditional image of the Kharijites was reawakened to address the problem of radical Islamist opposition movements. The Kharijites came to play a central role in the rhetoric of both religious authorities, whose official role it is to interpret Islam for the masses, and the secular state, which cynically turns to Islamic ideas and symbols to defend its legitimacy. Even those Islamists who defend militant tactics, and who are themselves tainted by the Kharijite label, become participants in the discourse surrounding Kharijism. Although all Egyptians agree that modern Kharijites represent a dangerous threat to society, serious debates have arisen about the underlying social, political and economic problems that lead Muslims down this destructive path. Kenney examines these debates and what they reveal about Egyptian attitudes toward Islamist violence and its impact on their nation. Long before 9/11, Egyptians have been dealing with the problem of Islamist violence, frequently evoking the Kharijites. This book represents an important contribution to Islamic studies and Middle East studies, adding to our understanding of how the Islamic past shapes the present discourse surrounding Islamist violence in one Muslim society.

"Sophisticated analysis presented in an accessible language makes this book layered and interesting to a range of readers. ...The book provides insight into the importance of discourse in politics, along with the political history of Egypt and the challenges posed by the Society of Muslim Brothers. ...Highly recommended." --hoice "Muslim Rebels provides a unique window on Islamic radicalism. In the first full treatment of the subject, Jeffrey Kenney shows how the Kharijites, seventh-century dissenters, were invoked in late twentieth-century Egypt both to delegitimize radicals and to undermine the authorities opposed to them. In persuasively documenting the ways in which a symbol acquires weight and meaning, this book speaks to the pressing concerns of contemporary Muslim politics as well as to the uses of historical memory." --James Piscatori, Fellow, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies "Much of Middle Eastern politics in recent years has been shaped by the ascendance of militant Islamists, whose intellectual roots can be traced to the Kharijites of fourteen centuries ago. With *Muslim Rebels*, Kenney has skillfully captured the metamorphosis of contemporary strands of militant Islam, one of which struck America and the world on 9-11. It is rare to find a complex phenomenon handled with such lucidity and nuance. Required reading for those of us attempting to understand the intersection of Islam and activism today." --Saad Eddin Ibrahim, author of *Egypt Islam and Democracy: Critical Essays* About the Author Jeffrey T. Kenney is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at DePauw University