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A Review of "Persistent Pastoralism: Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar"

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TITLE OF BOOK: *Persistent Pastoralism: Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar*

AUTHOR: *Joy McCorriston*

2023, 143 pages, 126 Figures, 4 Tables, ISBN: 978-1-80327-454-6 (e-Pdf)

Article Type: Book Review

Introduction

Persistent Pastoralism: Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar" (Figure. 1-3) offers a compelling exploration of the long-standing pastoralist traditions and their enduring impact on the cultural landscape of Oman. Through meticulous archaeological research and insightful analysis, the book delves into the rich history of Dhofar, tracing the evolution of pastoralist practices, the construction of monumental structures, and the enduring connections between people and their environment.

Chapter Descriptions

This book is divided into nine chapters, each exploring a specific aspect of the archaeology of Dhofar and its pastoralist communities. The following outlines provide a brief overview of the content and key points of each chapter.

Chapter 1: A Story and its Meaning

This chapter provides an overview of the book and its research objectives. It introduces the concept of persistent pastoralism and highlights the significance of studying pastoralist societies in Dhofar. The chapter also discusses the challenges and opportunities associated with archaeological research in the region, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and the need to preserve cultural heritage.

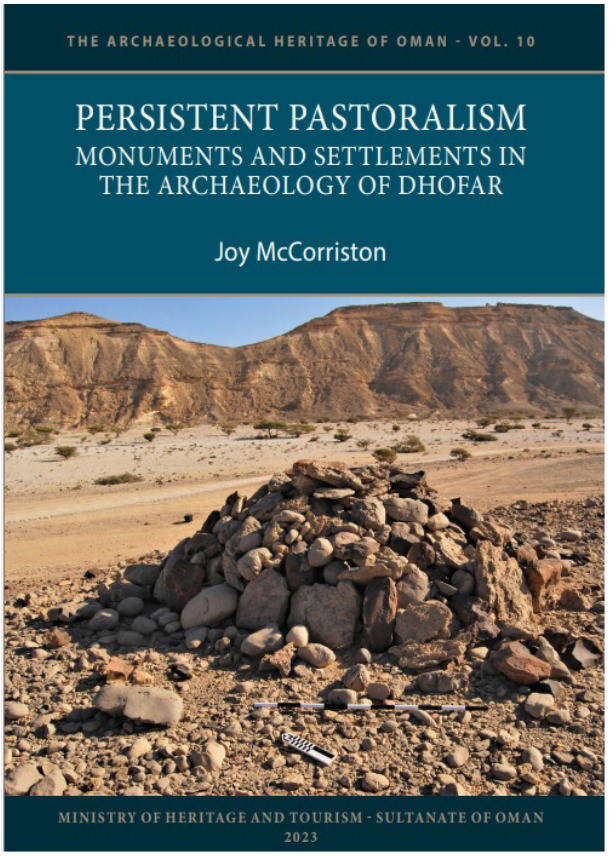
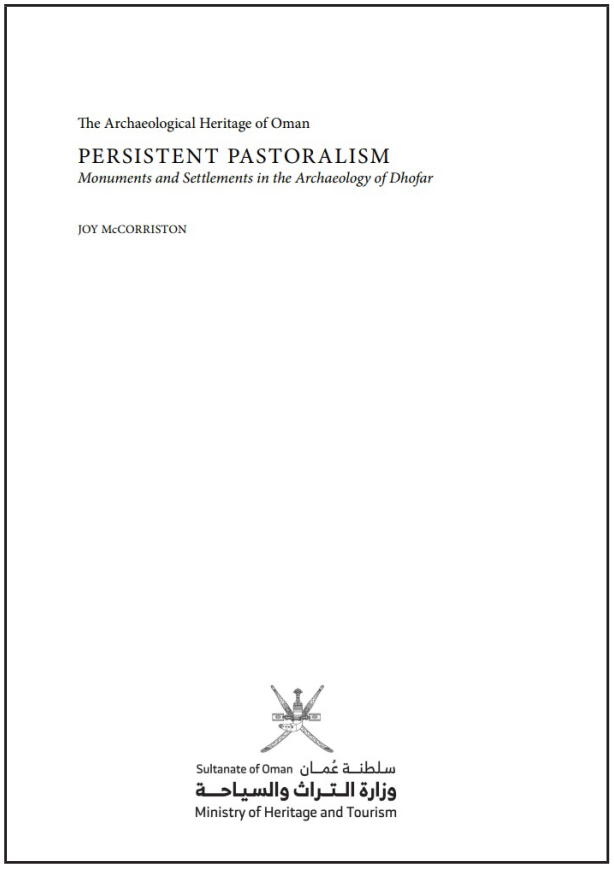


Figure. 1: *Showing the cover page of the book.*

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The Archaeological Heritage of Oman

PERSISTENT PASTORALISM

Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar

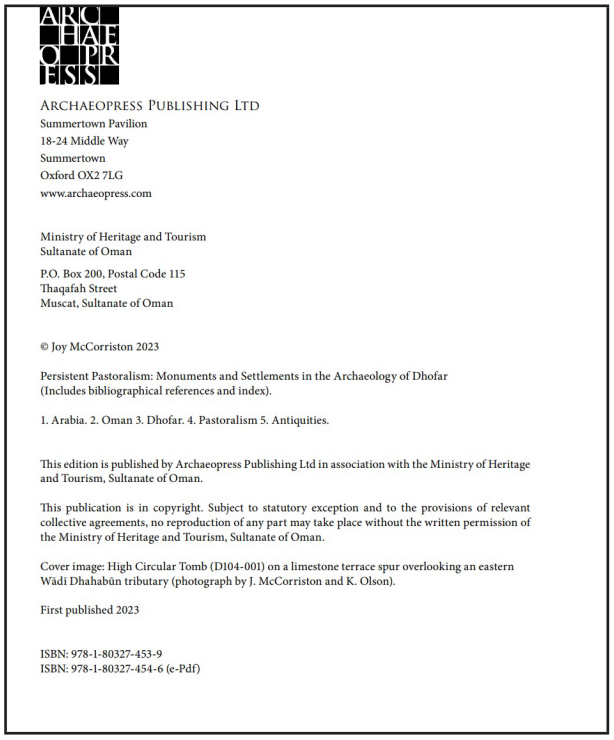
JOY McCORRISTON

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***Figure. 2**: Showing the title page of the book.*


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Persistent Pastoralism: Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar
(Includes bibliographical references and index).

1. Arabia. 2. Oman 3. Dhofar. 4. Pastoralism 5. Antiquities.

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Cover image: High Circular Tomb (D104-001) on a limestone terrace spur overlooking an eastern Wādī Dhahabūn tributary (photograph by J. McCorriston and K. Olson).

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***Figure. 3:** Showing the copyright page of the book.*

Chapter 2: Dhofar's Pastoral Landscape

This Chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the archaeological landscape of Dhofar, including its geographical features, environmental conditions, and historical context. It discusses the unique characteristics of the region, such as its diverse ecosystems, arid climate, and strategic location along ancient trade routes.

Chapter 3: Archaeology in Dhofar: The Arabian Human Social Dynamics (AHSD) Project

Chapter 3 details the methodologies and techniques used in the Archaeological Survey of Dhofar (AHSD) project. It describes the process of conducting surveys, including the use of satellite imagery, ground trothing, and archaeological excavation. The chapter also discusses the challenges and limitations of archaeological research in Dhofar, such as the difficult terrain, limited accessibility, and the need to balance conservation with research.

Chapter 4: Cultural Inheritance of the Dhofar Pastoralists

Chapter 4 focuses on the earliest evidence of human activity in Dhofar, dating back to the Early Holocene period. It discusses the archaeological evidence for pastoralism during this time, including the presence of livestock, hunting practices, and the use of stone tools. The chapter also explores the environmental conditions and resource availability that influenced the development of pastoralist lifeways.

Chapter 5: Building Pastoral Communities in the Neolithic (5000–4500 BCE)

Chapter 5 delves into the Neolithic period in Dhofar, exploring the construction and use of monumental structures and the development of early settlements. It discusses the types of monuments found, such as platforms and tombs, and analyzes their construction techniques, purposes, and cultural significance.

Chapter 6: Tribes in the Bronze Age (3200–1500 BCE)

Chapter 6 focuses on the Bronze Age period in Dhofar, examining the construction and use of monumental structures during this time. It discusses the types of tombs and other monuments found, analyzes their construction techniques, and explores their cultural significance. The chapter

also examines the social and community dynamics associated with these monuments.

Chapter 7: Cultivating Pastoralism in the Late Iron Age (400 BCE–400 CE)

Chapter 7 explores the Late Iron Age period in Dhofar, focusing on the emergence of settlements and the cultivation of pastoralism. It discusses the archaeological evidence for settlements, including the construction of houses, corrals, and other structures. The chapter also examines the relationship between pastoralists and their environment, as well as the impact of external influences on the region's development.

Chapter 8: Mobility and Community in the Late Iron Age (300 BCE–500 CE)

Chapter 8 continues to explore the Late Iron Age in Dhofar, focusing on the mobility of pastoralists and the formation of communities. It discusses the role of monuments, such as triliths, in marking important locations and facilitating social interactions. The chapter also examines the relationship between pastoralists and other groups, including traders and settlers, and the impact of external influences on the region's development.

Chapter 9: Patterns of Monuments and Settlement Shaped Dhofar

Chapter 9 provides a concluding overview of the book's findings, summarizing the key themes and arguments presented in the previous chapters. It highlights the enduring nature of pastoralism in Dhofar, the significance of monumental structures, and the complex interplay between people and the environment. The chapter also discusses the implications of the research for understanding the region's history, culture, and landscape.

Key Themes and Arguments

The book presents several key themes and arguments that illuminate the complex dynamics of pastoralism in Dhofar. One of the central themes is the persistence of pastoralist lifeways throughout the region's history. Despite significant changes in climate, environmental conditions, and socio-political landscapes, pastoralism has remained a defining characteristic of Dhofar's cultural heritage.

Another important theme is the interplay between people and the environment. The book highlights how pastoralists have adapted to the challenges posed by the arid climate, limited resources, and changing ecological conditions. The construction of monuments, such triliths and tombs, often reflects strategic choices made in response to environmental factors and the availability of resources.

Furthermore, the book explores the social and cultural dimensions of pastoralism. It examines the role of monuments in shaping social identities, commemorating communal gatherings, and preserving cultural heritage. The study also sheds light on the complex relationships between pastoralists and other groups, such as Hadrami colonists and coastal traders.

Evidence and Analysis

The author's analysis is grounded in a wealth of archaeological evidence, including the excavation of numerous sites, the study of monumental structures, and the analysis of artifacts and human remains. The book provides a detailed chronology of monument construction and use, from the Neolithic period to the Late Iron Age.

The analysis also draws on insights from other disciplines, such as anthropology, linguistics, and environmental studies, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the pastoralist way of life. By examining the connections between archaeological data, historical records, and ethnographic observations, the book offers a nuanced perspective on the enduring impact of pastoralism on Dhofar.

Figures and Tables

The book appears to be richly illustrated, featuring a total of 126 figures and 4 tables. These visuals likely complement the textual content by providing visual representations of archaeological sites, artifacts, maps, diagrams, and historical reconstructions. This extensive use of illustrations suggests that the book aims to offer a comprehensive and engaging exploration of the region's history and cultural heritage, making the complex concepts and findings more accessible to readers.

Strengths

Comprehensive Coverage: The book appears to offer a comprehensive overview of the archaeology of Dhofar, covering a wide range of topics from the Neolithic period to the Late Iron Age.

In-Depth Analysis: The author seems to have conducted thorough research and analysis, drawing on a variety of sources and methodologies.

Interdisciplinary Approach: The book integrates insights from archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, and environmental studies, providing a well-rounded perspective on the region's history.

Cultural Significance: The book highlights the cultural significance of pastoralism in Dhofar and explores the role of monuments in shaping social identities and preserving heritage.

Environmental Focus: The book emphasizes the interplay between people and the environment, demonstrating how pastoralists have adapted to the challenges posed by the arid climate and limited resources.

Potential Weaknesses

Data Limitations: While the book appears to draw on a significant amount of archaeological data, It is possible that there may be limitations in the availability or quality of data for certain periods or regions within Dhofar.

Interpretative Challenges: Archaeological interpretations can be subjective, and there may be alternative perspectives or explanations for some of the findings presented in the book.

Regional Focus: The book is primarily focused on Dhofar, and it may be difficult to generalize the findings to other regions or historical contexts.

Conclusion

"Persistent Pastoralism: Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar" is a valuable contribution to the field of archaeology and the study of pastoralist societies. The book offers a rich and detailed exploration of the region's history, shedding light on the enduring nature of pastoralist practices, the significance of monumental structures, and the complex interplay between people and the environment.

By examining the past, the book provides insights into the present and future of Dhofar. The enduring legacy of pastoralism continues to shape the cultural landscape and inform the identities of the region's inhabitants. Understanding this historical context is essential for appreciating the unique character of Dhofar and its people.

Acknowledgment

I am deeply grateful to the reviewers for their careful reading of the manuscript and their insightful comments.

References

McCorriston, J. 2023. *Persistent Pastoralism Monuments and Settlements in the Archaeology of Dhofar.* Oxford: Archaeo press Publishing LTD.