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Comprehensive Review of the Book "Political Archaeology of the Middle East"

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TITLE OF BOOK: *Political Archaeology of the Middle East.*

AUTHORS: Mehdi Mortazavi, Fariba Mosapour Negari and Goodarz Hadadi Nasab.

2024, 248 pages, 42 Figures, ISBN: 978-622-6858-40-3

Abstract

The book "Political Archaeology of the Middle East" by Mehdi Mortazavi (Corresponding Author), Fariba Mosapour Negari, and Goodarz Hadadi Nasab, as the first comprehensive attempt in Persian, examines the complex and intertwined relationship between archaeology and politics in the Middle East region. This work, published by a university press, critically analyses how states and regional and supra-regional powers exploit archaeology to advance their political and ideological.

Keywords: Middle East, Iran, Archaeology, Politics.

Article Type: Book Review

Introduction

The principal author of the book (Figures. 1and 2), Mehdi Mortazavi, is a resident of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, who has played a pivotal role in establishing the country's second archaeology department, creating new trends and disciplines in the archaeology department, founding the Archaeological Sciences Research Centre (ASRC), and publishing the first English-language archaeology journal in the country. Holding a doctoral degree from the University of Bradford, UK, he has gained a deep understanding of theories and the role of political and ideological currents in archaeology. His experience and expertise in the field of history have significantly contributed to the richness of the book's content and the exploration of various dimensions of political archaeology.

The second author of the book, Fariba Mosapour Negari, also became acquainted with the fundamentals of political archaeology while studying at the University of Bradford. In Iran, she worked on topics in the field of Craft specialization and cultural complexity as her doctoral thesis, which provided a suitable foundation for understanding differences in societies.

The third author of the book, Goodarz Hadadi Nasab, who was a master's student of the two aforementioned authors and is currently pursuing his doctoral studies under their supervision, has been influenced by their ideas and has played a significant role in research and studies.

Analysis of the Book's Chapters

Chapter One: Fundamentals of Political Archaeology:

In this introductory chapter, the authors aim to clarify the fundamental concepts of political archaeology, including nationalist, Marxist, and post-colo-

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nial perspectives. It provides a suitable foundation for a better understanding of the topics discussed in subsequent chapters. The most important topic in this chapter is the impact of Marxism and its theories on archaeology. This chapter also addresses various aspects of the effects of extremist ideologies and policies on Middle Eastern archaeology.

Chapters Two and Three: Iran and Political Archaeology (Before and After the Islamic Revolution):

In these chapters, the authors consider the role of governments in shaping archaeology in Iran and demonstrate how the prevailing ideologies have influenced education, research, and cultural heritage

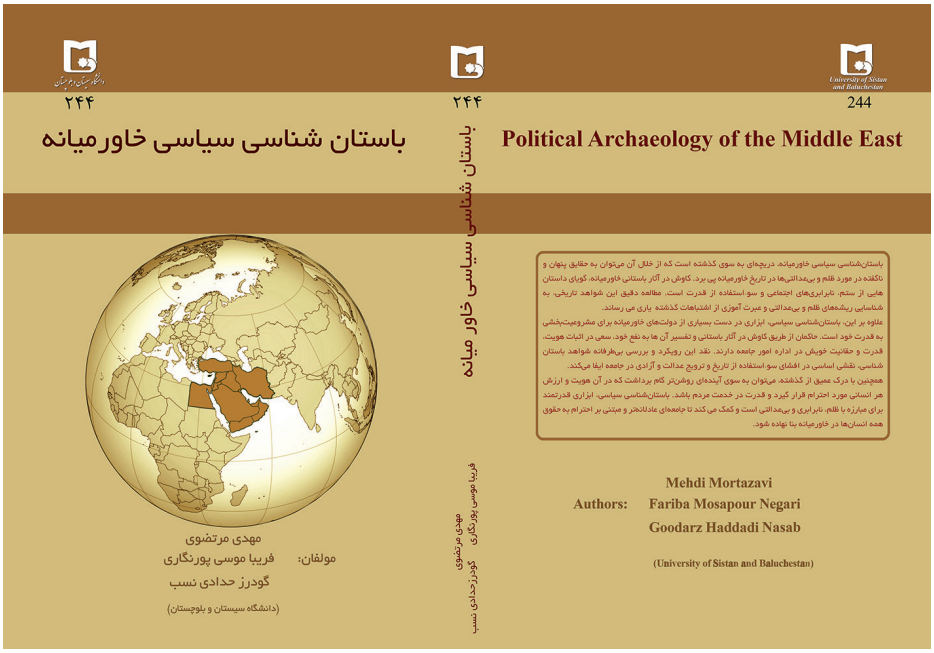


Figure. 1: *Showing the cover page of the book.*

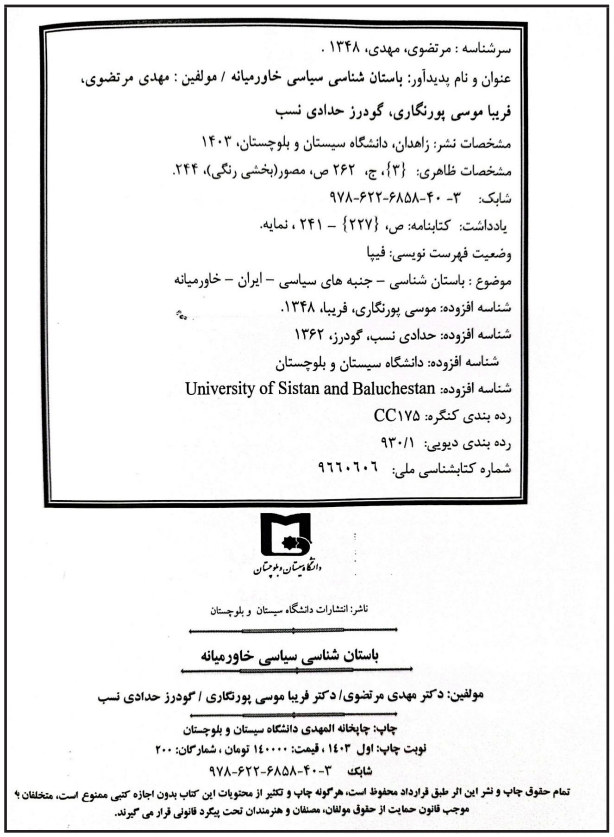

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تمام حقوق چاپ و نشر این اثر طبق قرارداد محفوظ است، هرگونه چاپ و تکثیر از محتویات این کتاب بدون اجازه کتبی ممنوع است، متخلفان به موجب قانون حمایت از حقوق مولفان، مصنفان و هنرمندان تحت پیگرد قانونی قرار می گیرند.

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

management. Political archaeology in Iran before the Islamic Revolution was aimed at strengthening national identity and the country's historical grandeur. Archaeology after the revolution initially declined due to chaos and the start of the war, but then, with the correction of perceptions, it moved towards growth and development.

Chapter Four: The Persian Gulf and Political Archaeology:

This chapter explores the role of archaeology in the political disputes related to the name of the Persian Gulf and demonstrates how states use archaeology to strengthen their national and ethnic identity. The existence of some extra-regional and global tendencies and goals, as well as some political and economic interests, in these disputes has been demonstrated.

Chapter Five: The Lands of Iraq and the Levant and Political Archaeology:

This chapter discusses the impact of wars and military conflicts on the region's cultural heritage and investigates the role of archaeology in protecting this heritage. Examining nationalist and ethnocentric policies, as well as investigating ISIS's hostility towards cultural heritage, are other topics in this chapter.

Chapter Six: Anatolia and Political Archaeology:

This chapter investigates the role of archaeology in shaping Turkey's national identity and demonstrates how states use archaeology to legitimize their power. This legitimization is unique and distinct; in it, states portray themselves as heirs to the grandeur and achievements of previous civilizations and do not deny the pre-Turkish migration artefacts in Anatolia. This policy is in line with tourism development.

Chapter Seven: The Holy Land and Political Archaeology:

This chapter explores the role of archaeology in the political disputes related to the Holy Land and demonstrates how states use archaeology to strengthen their territorial claims.

Chapter Eight: Egypt and Political Archaeology:

In this chapter, the authors explain the role of archaeology in shaping Egypt's national identity and demonstrates how states use archaeology to promote tourism and strengthen their economy.

Chapter Nine: Archaeological Thought and Politics:

This chapter provides the reader with a better understanding of various archaeological approaches and their relationship to politics, and demonstrates how theoretical perspectives influence archaeological research.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion:

The final chapter offers a comprehensive summary of the topics discussed in previous chapters and examines the similarities and differences in political archaeology across various Middle Eastern countries.

Significance of the Book

This book is considered a valuable beginning in the field of political archaeology in Iran and a commendable effort to highlight the exploitation of archaeology by colonialism in the region during the post-colonial period. Despite the need for future revisions, the values of this book are undeniable, and it can be said that this work provides an initial model and outline of the state of political archaeology in Iran and the region for the next decade. The author and his team of authors have rendered a great service in the post-colonial era by revealing the damages inflicted in the region.

Strengths of the Book

-Comprehensiveness and Breadth of Subject Matter: By covering a wide range of countries and regions in the Middle East, from Iran and the Persian Gulf to Iraq, the Levant, Anatolia, the Holy Land, and Egypt, the book provides a relatively comprehensive picture of political archaeology in this region.

-Critical Approach: The authors adopt a critical approach, examining the challenges and political abuses of archaeology in the Middle East and exposing the distortion of history and biased identity construction.

-Examination of Various Dimensions of Political Archaeology: The book examines various dimensions of political archaeology, including the role of states, nationalism, ideology, colonialism, war, terrorism, and tourism in shaping this field.

-Diversity of Perspectives: By examining various archaeological perspectives, including nationalist, Marxist, post-colonial, and feminist archaeology, the authors help readers gain a deeper understanding of this field.

-Attention to Contemporary Issues: By addressing issues such as the destruction of ancient artefacts by ISIS and the role of the media in archaeology, the book addresses contemporary issues and challenges facing this field.

-Reference to the Effects of Colonialism: The book effectively highlights the effects of colonialism and the Western view of the Middle East region and its impact on the region's archaeology.

-Appropriate Structure: Despite the complexity and difficulty of the subject matter, the book has a logical structure and appropriate chapter divisions, which help readers follow the content easily.

Areas for Improvement

-Further explanation of some concepts, simplification of content, and changes in chapter arrangement.
-Examining the influence and interaction of archaeology and politics throughout history.
-Further research on the quantitative and qualitative evolution of archaeology education in Iran.
-Deeper analysis of the role of Muslims in the Renaissance and the emergence of archaeology.
-Deeper analysis of the role of colonial states and Western archaeologists in the deviation of Islamic Jihad.

-Examining the role of Western archaeologists in the interpretation of religious scriptures.
-Providing solutions or suggestions after the conclusion in each chapter.

Conclusion

Considering the analysis of the chapters, the author's background in teaching, and the significance of the book, it can be said that "Political Archaeology of the Middle East" is a valuable and influential work in the field of political archaeology. With a critical and comprehensive approach, this book examines the challenges and political abuses of archaeology in the Middle East and helps readers gain a deeper understanding of this field. To maximize its impact, this book should be translated into key languages, particularly Arabic and Russian. This will enable countries in the Persian Gulf region and Central Asia to understand the historical exploitation of archaeology and artefacts by colonial powers, empowering them to make informed decisions for their future. This type of use of archaeology is informative and liberating (Mortazavi 2024). It reduces conflicts in the region and, according to the nature of archaeology, unites different ethnic groups and prevents the creation of artificial lands and the weakening of the Middle East.

References

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