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The Parthians: The Forgotten Empire

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Abstract

The Parthian Empire was a major Iranian political and cultural power in ancient times and reigned in Iran for almost 500 years. There have been many books or articles written on Parthians over the past years; however, in recent years, research on this empire has intensified. *The Parthians: The Forgotten Empire* by Uwe Ellerbrook, was published in 2021. In this book, Ellerbrook has investigated all aspects of the Parthian kingdom and goes beyond the political history of the Parthians to familiarize the readership with the archaeology, history, culture, religion, art, and society of the Parthians.

Keywords: Parthian Empire; Persia; Parthian kingdom.

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Introduction

The Parthian Empire was a major Iranian political and cultural power in ancient times and reigned in Iran for almost 500 years. There have been many books or articles written on Parthians over the past years; however, in recent years, research on this empire has intensified. Marek Jan Olbrycht (2021) recently released a book on the same subject. Also, some articles by Rahbar (Rahbar, 2023) and Nourallahi (2022 and 2023) have addressed this period of Iran's history.

The Parthians: The Forgotten Empire by Uwe Ellerbrook, a German researcher, was published in 2021, which is an extended version of *Die Parther: Die vergessene Großmacht*, previously jointly released by Sylvia Winkelmann and Uwe Ellerbrook in Germany in 2015. In this book, Ellerbrook has investigated all aspects of the Parthian kingdom and goes beyond the political history of the Parthians to familiarize the readership with the archaeology, history, culture, religion, art, and society of the Parthians.

As noted in the book's introduction, it is difficult to gain a clear picture of the Parthians because there is no sufficient archaeological evidence of their territories. The vision portrayed of this kingdom is also influenced by an inadequate number of Greek and Roman documents. Moreover, since Western authors lacked political viewpoints about this era, a distorted image of the Parthian Empire appeared. As a result, Parthians were thought of as uncultured and barbarian for as long as according to the Western perspectives. This attitude has already disappeared. The goal of Ellerbrook, as he stated, was to highlight the Parthian Empire and its significance in the ancient world. The Parthians were not only the rivals of the Romans but also a major trading link between the Romans and the Chinese. This highlighted the role of the Parthians in the cultural exchange between the East and the West.

In Chapter One, the author discusses the rise of the Parthians. In this era, the Parthian Empire was composed of several kingdoms affiliated with the Parthian Empire, where no Parthians or Iranians were living. In the onset of conquests, local kings and rulers remained on the throne, while only a handful of the Parthian state officials could run state affairs, with Parthian forces encumbering the control of military sections.

Chapter Two deals with the history of great empires in Iran, beginning with the Elamites and then extending to the Sasanian era while elaborating briefly on any of Iran's historical eras.

Chapter Three investigates the history of the Parthian Empire. The author divides the history of the Parthians into four eras, each being briefly discussed while discussing the works of the Parthian kings.

Chapter Four discusses the structure of the Parthian Empire. Chapter Five investigates the central government and subordinate governments under the Parthian rule, while discussing the lands of the Medes and Ecbatana, ruling under the central government.

Chapter Six discusses the Parthian Empire and the Eurasian people. In this chapter, the author investigates the people dwelling in the east of Iran and their communications with the Parthians.

Chapter Seven, a major chapter of the book, discusses the cities during the Parthian era. Here, the author investigates the architecture and urbanization of the empire. For this, the author begins from the Parthian's origin and reviews the cities of Nisa and Herat.

In Chapter Eight, the author also discusses trade and commercial exchanges in the Parthian era, while investigating economic relations between the government and others, in addition to reviewing political history and architecture.

Chapter Nine deals with the social life of the Parthians. In this chapter, the author investigates the social history of the people.

Chapter Ten discusses art in the Parthian era and is illustrated by valuable images. However, the author uses new sources, published in this in subsequent editions, and makes this chapter richer.

Chapter Eleven investigates religion in the Parthian Empire. Here, the author talks about religion and lands under their control.

In sum, this book broadly offers an approach to the historical, political, religious, and historical dimensions of the Parthian government in the Iranian history of that era.

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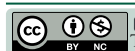
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