

ANCIENT IRANIAN STUDIES

پژوهشنامه ایرانی پس ساسان

Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture

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Source: Ancient Iranian Studies, January 2024, VOL. 3, NO. 8: 95-99.

Published by: Tissaphernes Archaeological Research Group

Stable URL:

<https://doi.org/10.22034/AIS.2023.415066.1058>



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Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture

Manuchar Gugushvili¹ 

Abstract

The Sasanian Empire was one of the ancient superpowers, and for four centuries ruled over a vast region stretching from Syria and the Caucasus to Transoxiana (Central Asia) and the Persian Gulf. *Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture*, is a new book that also includes articles in this regard, edited by St. John Simpson and published by Archaeopress.

Keywords: Sasanian Archaeology; Archaeological Findings; Persian Gulf.

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Article info: Received: 05 September 2023 | Accepted: 17 October 2023 | Published: 1 January 2024

Citation: Gugushvili, Manuchar. (2024). "Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture", *Ancient Iranian Studies*, Vol. 3 (8): 95-99.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/AIS.2023.415066.1058>

Introduction

The Sasanian Empire was one of the ancient superpowers, and for four centuries ruled the vast region stretching from Syria and the Caucasus to Transoxiana (Central Asia). Many scholars related archeology, history, and linguistics have written many books and articles on this subject (see Rostami & Aryamanesh, 2020; Rahbar, 2023; Nourallahi, 2022; Panjehbashi & Mohazzab Torabi, 2022; Roustae Farsi, *et al*, 2022; Maksymiuk, 2021; Matloubkari, & Shaikh Baikloo Islam, 2022; Skupniewicz, 2022; Khanmoradi, *et al*, 2023; Mowlaiey Kordsholi & Jafarizand, 2023; Sedaghati, & Ahamadzai, 2023; Rostami, & Ghasemian, 2023). Also, a book entitled *Persia, Between Rome and the Steppes of Eurasia* edited by Eberhard W. Sauer and published by the University of Edinburgh Press (Sauer, 2017).

This important historical period is still an important research topic for researchers, as the recently published study entitled *Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture* by Simson examines this period from an archeological point of view.

St. John Simpson is an archaeologist in the Department of the Middle East at the British Museum. He specializes in the archaeological evidence and material culture of the Sasanian Empire, and has excavated Sasanian sites in Iraq and Central Asia, and analyzed Sasanian finds from the Persian Gulf to the Caucasus.

This collection of essays focuses on culture, economy, and other aspects and offers an approach based entirely on archaeological and scientific research. *Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture* is divided into three parts, which in turn, examine evidence for Sasanian sites, settlements and landscape, their crafts, and industries.

The book begins and ends with a general introduction and conclusion setting out by St John Simpson. The book consists of three parts and ends with a bibliography and index.

Part One: Sites, Settlements, and Landscapes, includes nine articles. The first is an introduction by St. John Simpson. This begins with a quote from Richard Nelson Frye: "Our knowledge of the pre-Islamic past of Iran can be advanced only by new discoveries, and archaeology is far more important in this land with few written sources than in more favored regions of the Mediterranean". This shows the important view of the editor of the book on archaeological findings. In the following, he gives a general overview of the archaeological findings from the Sasanian period.

The second article "Parthian and Sasanian Site and Settlement Patterns on the Deh Luran Plain, Khuzistan Province, South-West Iran", is written by J.A. Neely, who has investigated Parthian and Sasanian sites and settlements in Khuzistan.

The third article "The Sasanian Colonisation of the Mughan Steppe, Ardebil Province, North-West Iran" is jointly written by Jason Ur and Karim Alizadeh.

The fourth article is "The Army and Urbanism at the Sasanian Empire's Northern Frontiers: Fieldwork on the Linear Barriers, Fortresses, and Cities at the Margins of the Gorgan Plain (Results of a joint project between the Iranian Cultural Heritage,

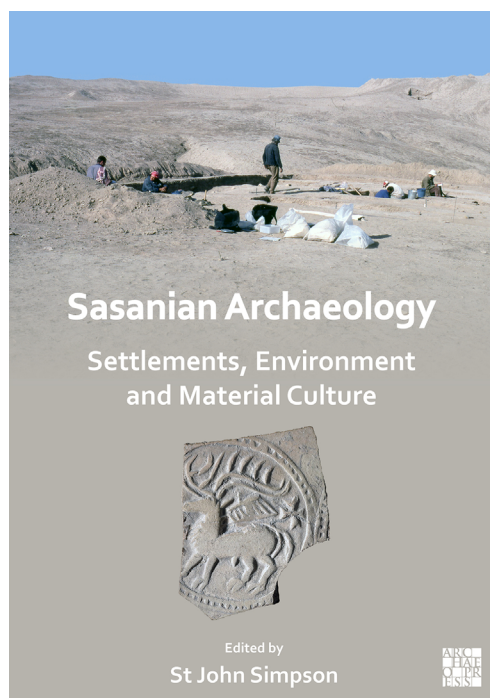
Handicraft and Tourism Organisation and the Universities of Edinburgh and Durham)” co-authored by Hamid Omrani Rekavandi, Eberhard W. Sauer, Tony J. Wilkinson, Ghorban Ali Abbasi, Roger Ainslie, Francesco Caputo, Mohammad Ershadi, Morteza Fattahi, Nikolaus Galiatsatos, Kristen Hopper, Julian Jansen Van Rensburg, Eve Macdonald, Majid Mahmoudi, Amin Nazifi, Jebrael Nokandeh, Chris Oatley, Seth Priestman, James Ratcliffe, Kouros Roustaei, Esmail Safari Tamak, Bardia Shabani and Lucian Steven Usher-Wilson.

Another article by Barbara Kaim is “A Temple Among the Fields: Preliminary Reconstruction of an Agricultural Landscape in the Serakhs Oasis, Southern Turkmenistan”. “Excavations at Kirpichli Tepe in Dehistan” is yet another article by A. E. Atagarryev, who investigated the Dehistan archeological enclosure.

The seventh article “The First Season of Excavations at the Sasanian Site of Tole Qaleh Seyfabad (TQS), South-west Iran: Preliminary Report” by Parsa Ghasemi, Reza Noruzi and Azizallah Rezaei. Another article by Ahmadali Asadi, Seyed Mehdi Mousavi Kouhpar, Javad Neyestani, and Alireza Hojabri Nobari is “Sasanian and Early Islamic Settlement Patterns North of the Persian Gulf.” “Bushehr, Dashtestan, and Siraf: The Transformation of the Maritime Trade Network in the Middle Persian Gulf” is yet another article by Seth M. N. Priestman.

Part Two: Environment and Resources, includes four articles. The first entitled “Charcoal and Wood in Fuel Residues in Sasanian and Early Islamic Merv: Wood Resources and Environmental Implications”, is written by Rowena Gale. The second article is “Exploitation of Wood at Kush (Ras Al-Khaimah, UAE) in Sasanian Times: Results of the Charcoal Analysis”, written by Margareta Tengberg, who had investigated Sasanian sites and settlements in the UAE.

Another article by F.G. Fedele is “Two Sasanian Archaeofaunas from the Hamrin Basin, Eastern Iraq”. “Fracture Patterns Amongst Sasanian Bones at Merv” is another article by Ian Smith, who investigated Central Asia.



St John Simpson (ed.), Sasanian Archaeology: Settlements, Environment and Material Culture. Oxford: Archaeopress, Pp. 532, 2020, ISBN: 978-1-80327-418-8

Part Three: Material Culture, includes eight articles. The first entitled "Material Culture - Introduction", is by St. John Simpson. Also, the second article is "Sasanian Pottery: Archaeological Evidence for Production, Circulation and Diachronic Change", written by St. John Simpson.

The third article "Imitations and Innovations in Kushano-Sasanian Pottery" is written by V.A. Zavyalov, who has investigated Kushano-Sasanian pottery in Central Asia.

Another article by David V. Hill is "Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic Pottery and Occupation of the Deh Luran Plain, South-west Iran". The fifth article entitled "Magic and Inter-Communal Relations in Sasanian Iraq: The Case of the Incantation Bowls", is written by Ali G. Scotten.

"The Dating of Sasanian Glass in the Light of Excavated Finds from Bahrain" is yet another article by S.F. Andersen, who investigated the Sasanian glass in the Persian Gulf region.

Another article by Tami Ishida is "Reconstruction of the Process of Cutting of Two Sasanian Glass Bowls in the Okayama Orient Museum and the British Museum".

The last article of this book "Sasanian Swords and Scabbards in the British Museum: A Scientific Analysis" is by J. Lang and St J. Simpson. At the end, the book contains St. John Simpson's conclusion.

This book is a comprehensive one which has thoroughly studied the Sasanian-era archaeology and presents valuable information about the ancient superpower.

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