



Negotiating for the Past: Archaeology, Nationalism, and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919-1941

James F. Goode

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The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922 was a landmark event in Egyptology that was celebrated around the world. Had Howard Carter found his prize a few years earlier, however, the treasures of Tut might now be in the British Museum in London rather than the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. That's because the years between World War I and World War II were a transitional period in Middle Eastern archaeology, as nationalists in Egypt and elsewhere asserted their claims to antiquities discovered within their borders. These claims were motivated by politics as much as by scholarship, with nationalists seeking to unite citizens through pride in their ancient past as they challenged Western powers that still exercised considerable influence over local governments and economies. James Goode's analysis of archaeological affairs in Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq during this period offers fascinating new insight into the rise of nationalism in the Middle East, as well as archaeological and diplomatic history.

The first such work to compare archaeological-nationalistic developments in more than one country, *Negotiating for the Past* draws on published and archival sources in Arabic, English, French, German, Persian, and Turkish. Those sources reveal how nationalists in Iraq and Iran observed the success of their counterparts in Egypt and Turkey, and were able to hold onto discoveries at legendary sites such as Khorsabad and Persepolis. Retaining artifacts allowed nationalists to build museums and control cultural heritage. As Goode writes, "Going to the national museum became a ritual of citizenship." Western archaeologists became identified (in the eyes of many) as agents of imperialism, thus making their work more difficult, and often necessitating diplomatic intervention. The resulting "negotiations for the past" pulled patrons (such as John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and Lord Carnarvon), archaeologists (James Breasted and Howard Carter), nationalist leaders (Ataturk and Sa'd Zaghlul), and Western officials (Charles Evan Hughes and Lord Curzon) into intractable historical debates with international implications that still resonate today.

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