Critical Reviews
No. 7
July 2026
4

Evaluating the Tripartite Relationship of Epistemological Sources in Reconstructing Historical Truth: The Quran, Archaeology, and History

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Extended Abstract

This study examines the profound tripartite relationship among the Quran, archaeology, and history in the pursuit of discovering and reconstructing historical truth. A pivotal aspect of this research is the elucidation of the concept of "critique" (naqd) as a fundamental methodology for distinguishing truth from assertion and authenticity from falsehood a concept etymologically rooted in the assaying of ancient coins. In the post-medieval era, the proliferation of critical perspectives precipitated fundamental paradigm shifts across various disciplines, notably historiography. Prior to this shift, historical writing was predominantly anchored in historians' personal beliefs, conjectures, and oral traditions, demonstrating minimal correspondence with objective realities.

The emergence of archaeology introduced a profound transformation to this domain. Functioning as a rigorous, empirically grounded discipline of critical inquiry, archaeology enabled the evaluation and reassessment of written historical narratives against objective evidence and the material remains of past civilizations. Transcending reliance on oral traditions, this scientific discipline unearthed the histories of major ancient civilizations, such as Mesopotamia and Egypt, thereby revealing obscured or distorted historical details. Within this epistemological framework, the Holy Quran approaches history not merely as a narrative text, but rather as an evidence-based, documentary source. The Quranic methodology in recounting the histories of ancient peoples aligns seamlessly with the ethos of archaeological science. The fourteen-fold recurrence of the imperative verb Sīrū ("travel through the earth and observe") in the divine verses constitutes a systematic and persistent call to investigate archaeological remains and derive lessons from the trajectories

DOI: 10.22034/2.7.69
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[DOI: 10.22034/2.7.69]

What is the interrelationship among the Quran, written history, and archaeology in confronting the historical reality of ancient Egypt? Can these three epistemological sources be integrated into a coherent methodological framework for the reconstruction of historical truth?

of past civilizations. This Quranic approach serves as a direct critique of purely descriptive historiography, underscoring the vital significance of material evidence in comprehending historical truths.

To substantiate the epistemological precision of these three sources, the study invokes prominent case studies from ancient Egyptian history. The first example highlights a subtle lexical distinction within the Quran concerning Egyptian rulers. In the narrative of Joseph (Yusuf), which synchronizes with the dominion of the Asiatic Hyksos (circa 1600 BCE), the Quran employs the term Malik (King). Conversely, it designates the ruler during the epoch of Moses (Musa) (circa 1200 BCE) by the dynastic title Pharaoh (Fir'awn). This unparalleled terminological accuracy, articulated centuries prior to the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs, possesses profound archaeological significance.

A second illustrative case concerns the drowning of the Pharaoh and the subsequent preservation of his corpse. Whereas the Torah solely records his destruction and certain Christian exegetes historically contested the circumstances of his demise the Quran, in Surah Yunus (Verse 92), explicitly references the salvation and preservation of the Pharaoh's body as an admonitory sign for posterity. Subsequent modern investigations conducted by Professor Maurice Bucaille confirmed that the mummy of Ramesses II exhibited physical evidence of having been submerged in the highly saline waters of the Red Sea. This finding established a remarkable concordance between empirical bioarchaeological data and the Quranic narrative.

In its final section, the article critically evaluates the historiography of Herodotus through the lens of archaeological discoveries. In chronicling the Achaemenid conquest of Egypt by Cambyses, Herodotus eschewed documentary evidence in favor of the oral and ostensibly hostile traditions of Egyptian priests, thereby depicting Cambyses as an irrational, temple-destroying monarch. However, subsequent archaeological excavations at the Serapeum of Memphis, along with recovered epigraphic evidence, construct a diametrically opposed narrative, definitively substantiating Cambyses's reverence for Egyptian religious sanctities.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that historiography predicated primarily on oral traditions remains perpetually vulnerable to distortion. Within this epistemological triad, archaeology anchored in definitive material evidence functions as an objective and rigorous critic. Concurrently, the Holy Quran, serving as an infallible epistemological source, delineates the most precise methodological paradigms for discerning historical truth through the empirical observation and critical examination of the material remnants of antiquity.

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