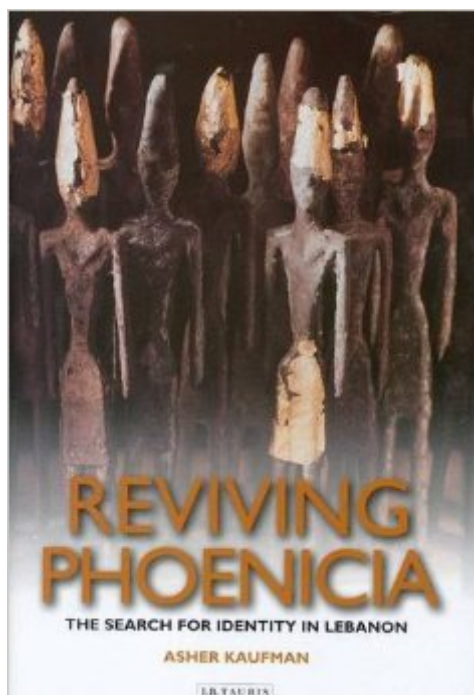


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Reviving Phoenicia: The Search For Identity In Lebanon



Synopsis

Reviving Phoenicia follows the social, intellectual and political development of the Phoenician myth of origin in Lebanon from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth. Asher Kaufman demonstrates the role played by the lay, liberal Syrian-Lebanese who resided in Beirut, Alexandria and America towards the end of the nineteenth century in the birth and dissemination of this myth. Kaufman investigates the crucial place Phoenicianism occupied in the formation of Greater Lebanon in 1920. He also explores the way the Jesuit Order and the French authorities propagated this myth during the mandate years. The book also analyzes literary writings of different Lebanese who advocated this myth, and of others who opposed it. Finally, Reviving Phoenicia provides an overview of Phoenicianism from independence in 1943 to the present, demonstrating that despite the general objection to this myth, some aspects of it entered mainstream Lebanese national narratives. Kaufman's work will be vital reading for anyone interested in the birth of modern Lebanon as we know it today.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: I.B.Tauris; Revised ed. edition (March 27, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 178076779X

ISBN-13: 978-1780767796

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.9 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,711,308 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #137 in Â Books > History > Middle East > Lebanon #1617 in Â Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Middle East #3224 in Â Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Middle Eastern

Customer Reviews

Kaufman has done a serious effort at gathering information from the Nantes French archives (and other sources). So, at the unitary/atomic level, this is a good book. But Kaufman's logic is often very strange indeed and his conclusions are often bizarre. The relevance of certain sections (like his long analysis of Corm's poetry) has left me perplexed...As all lebanese know, Phoenicianism per se has always been mostly irrelevant in Lebanon (Said 'Aql's ideas have not had any lasting influence).

Fundamentally, it has existed and exists only in opposition to "arab nationalism" (i.e. "No, we're not arabs, we're phoenicians": remove the first part, then there is nothing left). When a phalangist militiaman says "We're phoenicians", what he means is "We're not arabs". He would be hard pressed to explain what "being a phoenician " means..... :-)Kaufman, like other israeli historians, does not "understand" Lebanon. He knows Lebanon from what he read in Nantes. That's insufficient. Too bad. Kaufman had enough material to produce an interesting book, But he seems to see Lebanon through the ideological prism he grew up with (zionism). This is understandable but certainly not the best way to analyze Lebanon. Zionism and phoenicianism do share the -ism- but not much more.

Very interesting

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