



WEBINAR SERIES: TRANS-LOCAL PERSPECTIVES IN IRANIAN WORLDS

MEDIEVAL BARDHA'A: BRIDGING IRAN AND THE CAUCASUS?

PAUL WORDSWORTH

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Abstract The historical assessment of the city of Bardha'a/Partaw (Azerbaijan) stresses its changing role as a provincial capital, with the focus heavily on late antiquity and the early Islamic period as its heyday. Recent excavations in the city, conducted by the University of Oxford (2015–2019), however, have chiefly uncovered remains of a later era, from beginning of the second millennium CE, after the city's supposed demise. This paper sketches the relevance of these findings, both in terms of rethinking the narrative of the city itself and what the artefacts excavated reveal about the integration of Bardha'a within and between the "Iranian" and "Caucasus" cultural spheres. The picture which emerges is one of strong regional identities, in contrast with the historical accounts of the extensive political fragmentation at the time. Likewise the trade links of the city attest its continued use as a major urban hub, and beg the question if and when the city was ever abandoned.

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