

Reading + summary



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Melani McAlister wrote an interesting piece “ King Tut, Commodity Nationalism, and the Politics of Oil”. She asserts that the King Tut exhibit’s tour in six US cities created several culture phenomena. Obviously the cultures of the West (US) and Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel) were the cultures creating the phenomenon. McAlister theorized that the King Tut exhibit was more than an exhibit, but a bridge between the US and the Middle East. This bridge allowed the US to not only further their oil interests, but show superiority in the art world, and interest the American masses, poor and middle class, in art.

McAlister wrote that the Western curators and art collectors were arrogant enough to hold the belief that the Tut pieces should belong in a Western museum. McAlister also writes that Nixon convinced Sadat to allow the Tut pieces to come to America in the first place; implying that Nixon made the Tut visit possible, while portraying Sadat as a pushover. McAlister also proposes that the media’s advertising of the Tut exhibit by mentioning all of the gold, that the media was comparing the Tut exhibit to the current oil crisis. This was done by pointing out how rich the Middle East was.

The author also shows that the Yom Kippur war with Israel, the cause of the oil crisis, was not as one sided, since Egypt made a show of force. The Yom Kippur war was also shown to have ended through US and the Soviet Union negotiated UN ceasefire. McAlister shows that the US is only interested in Egypt and the Middle East for their own interests.

This author is offensive in several aspects of her points. First poor and middle class Americans in the seventies were not all art illiterate. Just because a person does not have money does not mean that the gold shown in the Tut exhibit was what drew the American masses. The media campaign

is what drew the masses.

Secondly the whole Middle East was and is not run by the US and the Soviet Union. Both Egypt and Israel were armed by the US and the Soviet Union, but by no means was the fight between anyone, but Egypt and Israel. It is arrogant to believe that the US interest is what the world revolves around.

Thirdly McAlister obviously has not studied the Yom Kippur war in depth.

Israel's losses at the beginning were due as much to the lack of judgement of an Israeli general, General Bar On, and his creation of the Bar On line. The Bar On line was the line on the Suez Canal that other Israeli generals, General Ariel Sharon and others, warned would be disastrous.

The last wrong assumption this author made was about Sadat. Sadat was a moderate, who wanted to accept Israel as a state, and eventually did. The Egyptian President was the one who wanted to open dialogue with the West. While Nixon wanted to further US interest in the Middle East, Sadat was the one that made it happen.

This author is clearly American. She sees the world as American dominating other countries. It is a classical colonial ideology, which is not politically correct..

Reference

McAlister, Melani. "King Tut, Commodity Nationalism, and the Politics of Oil, 1973-1979,"

Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U. S. Interests in the Middle East 1945-2000. California: University of California Press, 2001: pp. 125-154