



(De-)revolutionising the monuments of Iran

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Abstract

The 1978-1979 revolution in Iran saw the country move from a monarchy to an Islamic Republic. This not only gave rise to political, economic and social changes, but also a series of cultural shifts, most heavily effecting Iran's pre-Islamic and Pahlavi Era (1925-1979) inheritance. While some heritage sites seamlessly transferred from one cultural context to the next, others were ignored or even defaced. Even within the positive recasting of pre-Islamic heritage during the reformist movements of the late 1990s, the concept of Iranian identity has remained complicated, an unstable foundation upon which to construct a uniform heritage policy. Finding a way to reconcile the various political movements has become central to the successful management and preservation of Iran's heritage as a sustainable resource that can serve a complex nation with a long and rich history. This paper will examine three specific examples of heritage sites that were affected by the changes in Iranian identity politics: the Tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae, Sa'dabad Palace and Shahyad (now Azadi) Tower. An exploration of the similarities and differences between these sites before and after the revolution will then highlight the different ways with which such heritage has been treated since the 1978-1979 revolution that turned Iran into an Islamic Republic.

Introduction

The Islamic revolution of 1978-1979 constituted a fundamental shift in Iran's ruling ideology. Though the population of Iran itself did not change, the imagined community that they formed part of, and their relationship to their government, would be reformed from a secular *mellat* or nation under a monarchy, to a modern Islamic *ummah* guided by an Islamic Republic (Anderson 2006).¹ With this restructuring, the heritage of these communities, the chosen symbols within which their histories become focused, preserved and passed on, would also need to be re-politicised to fit the new rhetoric (Harrington 2004; Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012). Since the revolution, the concepts of Iranian heritage and identity have continued to be revisited, following the needs of the government vis-à-vis their population and their relations in the international sphere (Holliday 2007, 2011).

This article will examine three specific examples of heritage sites that were affected by the changes in Iranian nationalist culture: the Tomb of Cyrus the Great at the Achaemenid capital Pasargadae built in the 6th century BCE, Sa'dabad Palace in the north of Tehran which was first occupied by the last Qajari ruler Ahmad Shah in the 1910s and Shahyad Tower opened by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in the west of the city on the 16th of October 1971. These case studies were chosen for their ability to reference a deep chronology, and a variety of monument types: an Achaemenid tomb, a Qajar summer palace and a Pahlavi museum. Though very

different, all three were problematised by their Pahlavi connections: the Tomb of Cyrus due to its use by the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi as a symbol of continuity from the greatness of pre-Islamic Iran to his own regime, Sa'dabad Palace due to its position as a central monarchic residence during the Pahlavi dynasty and Shahyad Tower due to its construction as a literal monument to monarchy. An exploration of the similarities and differences between these sites before and after the revolution will highlight how the Islamic Republic's strategies of re-focusing, re-functioning and re-naming sites have both helped and hurt the sustainability of these sites as local cultural resources.

Heritage in transition

Throughout Iran's modern history, the country's depth and resilience of culture has been called upon as one of its greatest strengths. Both the *mellat* of the monarchy and the revised *ummah* of the Islamic Republic were rhetorically based in a pride in Iran's rich and distinct heritage (Pahlavi 1980; Khamene'i 2000). However, as scholar Trinidad Rico states, heritage is always:

A product of a selective appreciation and safeguarding of meanings and values, associated with a certain perception of the past and informed by identity politics, nation-building agendas, and other factors. (Rico 2015, p. 148)

This shows the fabricated nature of heritage as a pre-existing foundation for a community's shared identity. The distinct heritage of Iran as an ancient imperial force and a bastion of Islam must in fact be shaped through the formation of the community itself with the aim to support it politically, socially and economically. If we are to allow this heritage to remain a sustainable cultural resource, one that can persist through the inevitable changes in identity politics, it must be dynamic and adaptable, inclusive and open to new members as they appear, but also cohesive enough to allow the community to draw unity from it.

Under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979), the heritage discourse took an Iranian form, under a framework of 'positive nationalism' based on *Iranicity* (Pahlavi 1961; Holliday 2011). The Pahlavi dynasty constructed and co-opted numerous sites across the country, embedding its essentialist self-aggrandising narrative of Persian ethnic and cultural superiority into historical memory (Zia-Ebrahimi 2014). With the turn to a framework of *Islamicity*, a large-scale creative reworking of existing narratives was required. However, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's increasingly authoritarian approach to government meant that destroying everything associated with his reign would leave very little of the country's existing monumental fabric untouched (Amuzegar 2014). This meant that in the early years of the revolution the new regime had to find strategies that allowed them to dismantle the pre-Islamic and monarchical meanings attributed to the sites in the previous regime, without having to dismantle too many of the physical monuments themselves (Abrahamian 1982; Axworthy 2013).

The choice of how a site was treated over time depended greatly on its age, its religious affiliations, its connections to the Western world, the extent to which it was incorporated into Pahlavi propaganda and its role as a site of the revolution. Many sites, like the tomb of poet Ferdowsi (940-1019), who is thought to have saved the Persian language in a time of Arab rule, seemed to transition smoothly from one cultural context to the next, allowing them to continue as sites of tourism and subaltern identity, outside the official rhetoric of the *ummah* (Grigor 2002, 2014b). Few full sites were actually destroyed, despite the rhetoric of 'cleansing' used to describe the post-revolutionary break from Pahlavi culture (Grigor 2014a).² The regime of the new Islamic Republic adopted a tactic of maintaining pre-existing governmental and cultural infrastructure, but burying it beneath a rhetoric that condemned its previous use as decadent and corrupt. This rhetoric has led to the myth of Iran's 'split personality', a binary opposition between Persianist and Islamist identities that cannot be reconciled (Hundley 1997; Taheri 2016). However, the adaptation of the previous regime's structures refutes such a stark divide. The sites and monuments of Iran were thus 'edited', through strategies of renaming, refocusing or repurposing, creating a blend of sanctioned and unsanctioned heritage that was defiled by both the *Iranicity* and *Islamicity* (Grigor 2002; Holliday 2011; Manoukian 2012). This acknowledgement of the *ummah's* diversity as an Iranian community that extended beyond its

Shi'a core, albeit often a tacit one, was significant in the Iranian state's ability to weather the revolution, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) that followed it and the various sanctions that have significantly hampered the nation's economic growth.

The maintenance, though not necessarily promotion, of familiar symbols of national wealth and prowess, including the Tomb of Cyrus, Shahyad Tower and Sa'dabad Palace, allowed some notion of continuity and unity for the diverse population that made up part of the Iranian *ummah*. This conceptual restructuring, serving the new regime's political goals by communicating a new cultural outlook to people through a familiar form, created an uncomfortable yet committed ideological marriage of royalist monuments and Islamic republican state (Ansari 2012).

Refocusing public memory: The Tomb of Cyrus the Great

Iran's pre-Islamic monuments became sites of contradiction. Extremists both within and outside the government strongly advocated for the removal of this period of history from Iran's physical fabric. However, no actions to this end were carried out and the sites continued to serve as popular public areas (Grigor 2014b). A clear example of this is the Tomb of Cyrus the Great, part of the ruins of the Achaemenid capital of Pasargadae (Figure 1). A monument thought to have housed the remains of the presumed founder of the pre-Islamic Achaemenid dynasty (550-330 BCE), the limestone tomb quickly became the focus of anti-imperial fervour. After the revolution, court leader and radical cleric Sadegh Khalkhali is said to have rode out to Pasargadae on a bulldozer with the intention of demolishing the abhorrent monument to monarchy (Abdi 2001; Molavi 2005; Marashi 2008; Mozaffari 2014a). However, in this case, local intervention is said to have thwarted his attempts (Mozaffari 2014a), highlighting the disconnect between the new regime's rhetoric of *Islamiyat* above all else and the reality of the Iranian *ummah's* continued self-identification with a pre-Islamic past (Grigor 2002).

According to Pasargadae authority Ali Mozaffari (2014b), the site of Cyrus' Tomb was entangled in politics from its conception, as a memorial to Cyrus who ruled the Persian Empire during its golden age of political might and cultural prominence. The construction of monumental tombs is in itself an act of propaganda; consigning one's own life (or the life of one's perceived forebears) to the memory of those who would one day visit it. This political aspect was immediately reflected in the actions of the succeeding kings who further embellished Cyrus' Tomb with inscriptions linking him to their own Achaemenid dynasty and added structures to



Figure 1: The Tomb of Cyrus (1968) (Licenced from Mellink Archive (Bryn Mawr College) through the Images for Academic Publishing collaboration at ArtStor)

the paradisiac ground that made up their imperial capital at the site (Stronach 1978; 1990). Even Alexander the Great is supposed to have paid the site a visit out of reverence for the great ruler whose tomb it housed. The accounts of his companions already lament the deplorable state of the monument, robbed of its riches and left to the elements (Arrian 1884).

During the Islamic period, the tomb's connection to Cyrus had been lost in translation and it became known as the Tomb of King Solomon's Mother, making it a site of religious pilgrimage (Boucharlat 2014). It was even turned into a mosque in the mid-13th century, complete with a newly carved *mihrab*, Koranic inscriptions and a *madrasa* built from spoliated stone (Whitcomb 1985; Sami 1971).³

By the 19th century, the site had become re-associated with Cyrus the Great and extensive archaeological works were undertaken to analyse its structures (Porter 1821; Herzfeld 1908; Herzfeld 1930; Stein 1936; Schmidt 1940; Sami 1971; Stronach 1978). In 1971 this pre-Islamic link was further solidified by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi who desired to use the site as a stage for his self-congratulatory celebration of 2,500 years of Persian monarchy (Mousavi 2011). Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's planned festival was meant to opulently expose his own regime as a direct successor of Cyrus' great empire. To this end he decided to demolish the Islamic inclusions to the Achaemenid site. While, to him this act seemed like a restoration to the monument's original appearance, it was not met with praise by those of his people who perceived it as an expensive erasure of Iran's rich and diverse history rather than its celebration.

Though the Tomb of Cyrus was never physically harmed in the new regime's attempts at heritage 'cleansing', and it remained a popular recreational space, the government often invested few resources into maintaining this era of history, allowing its monuments to slowly wear away. Even after the tomb was inscribed on the World Heritage List (UNESCO 2004), under the presidency of conservative politician Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), it remained under threat. One instance of this is the government approved Sivand Dam Project. The dam, part of a new irrigation system to boost agriculture in the region, received a great deal of criticism from archaeologists when the government announced in 2003 that it would be built near the treasured archaeological site of Pasargadae (Suren-Pahlav 2006). Despite their protests and the possible long-term damage to the site, the project continued and the dam was opened in 2007. With a shortage of resources, urban development and agricultural production largely continue to take precedence over cultural sustainability, particularly for sites that are only seen by the government to serve the peripheries of the Iranian *ummah*. This has long hindered any attempts at creating a site museum or narrative, for fear of exasperating existing tensions (Harris 2012; Mozaffari 2012; Mozaffari & Westbrook 2016).

Despite the prioritising of a Shi'a heritage, the government has recognised the importance of pre-Islamic sites for sustaining its diverse population. This was particularly evident around the time of the Iran-Iraq War, when they required a sense of national pride beyond that of Islamic martyrdom that could bring together the various religious and ethnic groups that comprise the Iranian people into the national war efforts (Saleh 2013). Even under the more religiously conservative rule of Ahmadinejad, pre-Islamic heritage was co-opted to the benefit of the government. One particular case of this is Ahmadinejad's adoption of Cyrus the Great as a predecessor of the great enlightened Islamic leaders of Iran during the Cyrus Cylinder's visit to Iran (Ansari 2012). Senior cabinet member under Ahmadinejad's presidency, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, even compared Cyrus to the prophets, bringing together the *Islamiyat* and *Iraniyat* heritage frameworks that existed within the Iranian *ummah* (Slavin 2013).

By re-focusing Cyrus as a monumental figure in the history of Iran as an Islamic nation, another gem in Iran's crown of grand cultural contributions, the government can promote a narrative that allows for a more sustainable and open interpretation of heritage. However, at present this re-focusing remains unsteady as large-scale celebrations of pre-Islamic traditions like *Nowruz* (Iranian New Year) or Cyrus' Birthday continue to challenge the government's proposed status quo (Taheri 2016). Such public festivities held at the site of Cyrus' Tomb, are easily transformed into anti-governmental protests as those on the fringes of the *ummah* reject the abduction of their subaltern sites into an authoritarian narrative (Sinclair 2016).



Figure 2: White Palace, Sa'dabad, Tehran (2012) devotees
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Re-functioning significant structures: Sa'dabad Palace

Some imperial symbols were less inclined to co-option and the regime did carry out selective removals. The *Shir-o-Khorshid*, an image of a royal lion holding a sword standing in front of the sun, a symbol of the Persian monarchy from the time of Buyid rule (934–1062), was banned after the revolution for its monarchic associations (Babayan 2002). Similarly, images of the Pahlavis were removed from circulation and their names were removed from all public areas.⁴ Fragments of statues dedicated to the Pahlavis dotted around Iran attest to the period of destruction immediately following the revolution. This is particularly evident at Sa'dabad Palace where the disembodied legs of Reza Shah stand before the White Palace that he founded (as seen in the left of Figure 2). The cleansing at this site even extended to images beyond the royal family, as statues representing Achaemenid-era guards were also removed, as there was no desire to preserve the protectors of the empire (Sadigh 2006).⁵

The defacing of the Reza Shah statue and his protectors is a clear example of the act of *damnatio memoriae* or memory purge, removing traces of the fallen ruler from the spaces of Iranian life. These acts often occur when the leader is absent, making the statue a proxy, imbued with the Shah's own person, that the population can act their resentment out on (Freedberg 2003). In the context of the Iranian Revolution the destruction of royalist images is also a form of iconoclasm in its most traditional sense as the Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was seen as a false idol after proclaiming that he was led to his position by Allah (Pahlavi 1966). Breaking his image then breaks his hold and power over the people. A similar occurrence can be recognised in post-Saddam Iraq—though here the effort to physically dismantle the Shah's personality cult by removing his image from public view was part of the coalition led military operation to depose his rule (Isakhan 2011).

In both the Iraqi and Iranian case, the new government eventually recognised the power of symbols of negative heritage as vehicles of social cohesion with the potential to thwart the growth of factionism within the population (Isakhan 2011). The revolution was a collaborative act by a variety of interest groups, not just the Shi'a clerical elite. Thus, the ornate constructions of the Shah, as examples of his depravity and self-indulgence, could provide a rallying point for a wider audience, all of whom opposed the Shah's rule.

According to the Sa'dabad Palace website the complex consists of 'eighteen large and small palaces' (Sa'dabad Complex 2016). These included palaces for Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's

mother *Tadj ol-Molouk*, his two sisters, Shams Pahlavi and Ashraf Pahlavi, his brothers, Gholam Reza, Ahmad Reza and Abdol Reza, Farideh Ghotbi, and his children, Reza Pahlavi, Leila Pahlavi, Farahnaz Reza and Ali Reza. There were also several buildings associated with the business of state and security. The palaces, especially the White House, were famous for their modern luxuries and opulence, decked out in European furniture, royal gifts and intricate room sized Persian carpets. This was also the location of the Shah court, his audiences and press conferences, making it a key monument of state. For most of the year, when the Pahlavis stayed at their primary residence Niavaran Palace, located in the north of Tehran, a mere 6 kilometres to the east of Sa'dabad, the White House served as an appropriate location to house eminent foreign visitors. In times of crisis, the heavily guarded complex with its high walls could serve as an inner-city sanctuary for the Shah and his family, as was the case in the protests of 1963 (Cooper 2016).

After his deposition however, the Shah's sanctuary was 'symbolically destroyed' by being re-deployed within the revolutionary narrative of the Shah's excessive and damaging use of public funds. Its propagandistic connection to the previous regime was neutralised through its new role in condemning it, transforming the site as per the needs of the new regime (Isakhan 2011, p. 16). Early on there was a plan to use these palaces to house charities (Thurgood 1979), but soon they were rehabilitated as museums that could continue to showcase the decadence of Pahlavi dynasty expenditure (Sa'dabad Complex 2016). Those that are not open to the public currently host official cultural and civic institutions, many of them ironically housing the modern Islamic Republican government (Zarrabi-Kashani 2014). Their ability to uphold the claim that they are using the Shah's facilities, but not being corrupted by his life of luxury seems contradictory when they are literally using the places of power that he created as bases for their own rule.

The use of the Shah's palaces reveals a level of admiration for something that the Shah constructed which goes against their ideology, an action that mirrors Reza Shah's own narrative of reluctant adoption of Qajari palaces after his coup. The Qajari summer palace that was originally located within the complex was operational from the late 19th century to the fall of the dynasty in 1925 (Sa'dabad Complex 2016). The only remnant of this period still visible in its name is the house of Ahmad Shah, the last ruler of the Qajar dynasty (r. 1789-1925). Reza Shah's own summer house, the Green House, also had its origins in the indulgences of the preceding Qajar period. According to local lore Reza Shah felt he had to sleep on the floor as the Qajari beds were too luxurious (Burke, Maxwell & Shearer 2012). However, this did not stop him from retaining their luxurious palaces for him and his family.

Rather than admitting to a partial adaptation to the lifestyle of their abject predecessors, in both cases the narrative was one of active and militant occupation. Within the Islamic Republic the publicly announced re-functioning, and in this case musealisation, of the Shah's previous home justified the continued use of these spaces without having to dismantle the structures. They could then remain available as a political resource, while also gaining a new economic and social value as places of popular leisure and tourism. This way the palaces became a more inclusive space that highlighted the magnanimity of the new Islamic regime rendering services to its people as opposed to its tyrannical predecessors who were only interested in their own comfort.

Re-naming contested spaces: the Shahyad/Azadi Tower

Another self-aggrandising structure ripe for cleansing by the new regime was the Shahyad Tower, literally translated as 'the king's memorial tower' (Figure 3). It was commissioned in 1966 by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi as part of his preparations for his great celebrations of 2,500 years of Persian monarchy to be held in 1971 (Amanat 2016). The intention was that this new monument would be an opulent space highlighting the treasures of Iran's past, and its contributions towards the present. The Shah organised the construction of the monument as a national competition, which was won by Hossein Amanat, a well-known Baha'i architect who at the time had only just graduated from the University of Tehran (Amanat 2016). The vision for the monument was one of Persian pluralism and synergy based on the monuments



Figure 3: Azadi/ Shahyad Tower (1979)

of ancient and modern Iran: from the Ctesiphon Arch of the Parthian period, to the Islamic arch (Golshanpazhooch & Mirrazavi 2010). Beyond its museum function, the monument is set into a manicured plaza that occupies an area of 50,000 square metres, built to accommodate picnicking visitors and the swirl of traffic around them (Lang & Marshall 2016).

The Shahyad Tower was meant to be, not only as a symbol of Iran's long history through its integration of historical architectural motifs, but also a monumental tribute to the idea of a unified people moving towards a bright future (Hemmati 2013). Combining the monument's two temporalities, Abbas Milani (2011, p. 353) lauded it as 'a gateway to the future and a celebration of the past'. However, during the revolution the arch became a site associated with the dream of a different future, one without the rule of the Shah. On the 19th January 1979, it was the terminus of a two million strong march to promote the new government (Morris 1979).

Despite its monarchic associations, the Shahyad Tower site was spared from any post-revolutionary iconoclasm. An engineer on the project, Sir Michael Duncan, showed his own surprise at the monument's continuation after the revolution when he said:

Because it was the Shah's icon, his motif, I rather expected it to be ritually destroyed in front of the cameras. But in fact, it turned out like all revolutions, they are national, and the people's will is a factor. The people loved it. The leaders were not going to spit in the eye of the people, so they've rebranded it (Douglass-Jaimes 2015).

Allowing the monument to retain its function as a museum, the regime chose re-naming as its approach to rebranding the structure as a revolutionary monument, dubbing it 'Azadi' or 'Freedom Tower' to honour its role as a site of revolution. Now the tower remains a key site of celebration, hosting the annual festivities honouring the anniversary of the revolution, along with many other cultural events, like light shows and Nowruz picnics (Grigor 2002).

However, the revolution did not only reveal its role as a site of the Islamic Republic, but also as one of protest. This second facet was revisited in 2009 when newspapers reported hundreds of thousands of Iranians flocking to the Tower to demonstrate against the seeming fraudulence of Ahmadinejad's re-election (Dabashi 2011). The protest was an expression of sentiments that had gone relatively unpronounced since the student protests of 1999 against government censorship of the media and particularly the closure of reformist newspaper *Salam Daily* for being too critical of the government (Black & Dehghan 2009). While the protests were quickly deconstructed by the government and its organisers jailed, the events called to question what form this new Iranian 'freedom' would take in the future (Amanat 2012).

The future of Azadi Tower is fraught with uncertainty, not only due to its contested symbolic function, but also due to its structural integrity as water damage has generated ever-growing

cracks in the structure's surface. While there have been attempts at repairs, these have been of low quality, ignoring the original materials of construction. Thus, rather than preserving the tower, the ill-planned and poorly executed repairs have caused further damage to the fabric of the monument over the years. The structure's architect Hossein Amanat describes the slow deterioration of the monument as a reflection of Iran's current identity struggle. In his words, the monument is 'still standing, but it's not as it should be' (Torbaty 2013).

The transformation of Shahyad/Azadi Tower demonstrates how language is referential. It does not create a one-on-one connection between thing and word, but rather a whole web of interrelated memories and connotations. Therefore, the active alteration of the name by which something is called, implies a change to its web of associations to one that you feel more in control of, allowing a space to change from a celebration of monarchy, to one of religious zeal and revolution (Leeds-Hurwitz 1996; Turner 2014). This act can be seen as one of narrative displacement. Through the act of renaming you can completely alter someone's experience of a space, laying claim to it, without having to physically change the landscape (Mozaffari 2014a). Beyond this, an existing name can also be reinterpreted to serve a new purpose, as was the case in the marches of the Green Movement—a series of protests that emerged out of the contested re-election of conservative politician Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency in 2009 (Dabashi 2011). While these changes were necessarily gradual, slowly permeating through the local population and international outlets, they form a clearly identifiable break in history.

The act of renaming was not a new strategy, nor was it isolated during the revolution to the Shahyad/Azadi Tower. Numerous streets, squares, schools, universities, government buildings and organisations were renamed after the revolution to hearken the dawn of a new national framework. Those with Westernised names like 'Eisenhower Street' became 'Freedom Street', references to the Shah were neutralised so that 'Shah Street' became 'Islamic Republic Street', even references to the Achaemenid kind of old were removed as 'Cyrus the Great Street' became 'Dr. Shariati Street'. This erasure of the past through a strategy of renaming, allowed the city's longstanding infrastructure and spaces to be binded to the revolutionised state, implanting its associated ideology into the material mapping of the country (Basmenji 2005, 131). A similar process can be identified in the construction of the nation of Israel where Arabic names were replaced by Hebrew ones. What in Iran was seen as a purification of the country from *gharbzadegi* or west-oxification, was seen in Israel as a purification of the territory's culture and landscape to reflect the emergence of an 'authentic' and unified Jewish nation (Azaryahu & Golan 2001, p. 180). In both the case of Israel and Iran, their newly inked maps concealed a continuously contested landscape.

Ali Mozaffari (2014a, p. 17) fittingly describes this renaming or re-imaging strategy as a 'state-enforced process of social engineering and identity construction' leading to 'new sets of collective imaginations and their related inscriptions'. I believe this can be applied to all three of the strategies of spatial adaptation described in this article. The heritage sites here are a form of 'symbolic capital' (Alderman 2008, p. 199-200), not given but forged as 'a temporary result of a multiplicity of ... strategies' (Baldissone 2014, p. 121), deployed to strengthen and sustain a particular ideology.

Conclusion

In recent years, it has become commonplace to link Islamic dogmatism with the destruction of non-conformist heritage (Rico 2016).⁶ The Islamic Republic of Iran is often judged for its antagonism towards the nation's pre-Islamic history. However, as the cases of the Tomb of Cyrus, Sa'dabad Palace and Shahyad/Azadi Tower prove, destruction is not the only course of action that can be taken to neutralise strong symbols of a fallen regime during a national and ideological revolution. In Iran, more sustainable strategies are continuously deployed to ensure the continued availability of these sites as cultural resources. This adaptability reveals the ambiguity of Iranian nationalism, as it extends beyond a purely Shi'a identity, to something more complex and changing than a traditional *ummah*. As the population of Iran contains

numerous sub-categories, groupings and loyalties beyond that to the Islamic Republic of Iran, so too can each individual monument consist of innumerable collective and personally defined places, each anchored through the associations formed by a particular set of needs and beliefs. These monuments can be either a manifestation of Persianism or Islamism, or a manifestation of resistance to the Iranian government or of national celebration of *Iranianity* or *Islamicity*.

The case studies in this paper show that Iran's 'split personality' may not be as binary as initially imagined (Hundley 1997; Taheri 2016). The struggle that the binarists identify is the one between the government's Islamic conservatism and the secular progressive desires of the people. However, this post-revolutionary dichotomy implies a novelty and simplicity that goes against the nation's long and complex history. Looking back to before the Islamic revolution, the Pahlavi Shahs had already adapted a strategy of redrafting the 'national map' of Iran. They strategically replaced and adapted several Qajari and Islamic sites according to their own needs, ensuring their dynasty would be remembered through its architectural memorialisation (Grigor 2004, 2009, 2014b; Dezhnamkhooy, Yazdi & Garazhian 2014).

The discussion has illustrated that definitions are not temporally bound and multiple narratives can exist alongside one another even after radical changes in the surrounding context of a heritage site. The constant reframing of Iran's heritage is hardly ever monolithic; rather it changes through time along with the needs of the government, but also those of the people, both secularist and conservative, who regularly challenge the government's top-down approach. Often the paths chosen represent a balancing act between the various stakeholders and power groups in an attempt to form a socially and economically sustainable heritage management plan. Though not always equally successful, the great variety of these combined conservation and re-configuration strategies show the creativity with which the Iranian government and people have approached these situations throughout time, creating unexpected results through adaptive means.

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