

The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and Cultural Politics in Late Pahlavi Iran

Submitted by Robert Steele to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arab and Islamic Studies, April 2018.

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Abstract

This thesis presents a thorough investigation of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, held in Persepolis by the Shah of Iran in 1971. Since the time of the Celebrations they have been routinely demonised by historians and critics of the Pahlavi regime, who present them as evidence of the delusion and megalomania of an Oriental despot. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a more sober, balanced account of the events of 1971 and the preparations leading up to them, in order to understand more fully the aims and motivations of the Shah and his entourage in organising such a nationalist spectacle. It will argue that Iran benefitted greatly from the international exposure the event generated, politically, economically and culturally. Most accounts of the Celebrations have focussed primarily on the sumptuous Pahlavi hospitality, enjoyed by the world's elite over the course of a few days in purpose-built accommodation at Persepolis, the former ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid dynasty. In contrast, the premise of this thesis is that the ceremonies at Persepolis and Pasargadae were just a small, albeit highly visible, part of the programme for the Celebrations. From the time the Celebrations were conceived in the late 1950s, exhibitions were organised, publications commissioned and buildings constructed. All were intended to contribute to the development and modernisation of Iran, and all were conceived with the Anniversary Celebrations in mind. Internationally too, the Celebrations aroused great interest. Hundreds of books and articles were published in conjunction with the event, and museum exhibitions, academic conferences and other special cultural events were organised around the world, giving an important boost to the field of Persian studies worldwide. Meanwhile, the Shah's Iran was presented as a significant regional and global power. This thesis will contribute, therefore, to our understanding of the Celebrations, and more broadly the material effects of the politicisation of culture in the late Pahlavi period.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all who helped me complete this work. Firstly, to my supervisor Michael Axworthy for his advice and support over the past three years and to my secondary supervisor, Leonard Lewisohn, for his encouragement. To Claudine Shafa, who gave me access to the archives of her late husband Shojaeddin Shafa in Paris and who has given me both information and encouragement. Many thanks to Abdolreza Ansari, who was kind enough to meet with me in a Parisian cafe and share his experiences.

I am grateful to Maria van Veldhuizen for help with Dutch, Italian and German translations, and for her patience and support during my PhD studies. Thanks to David Hiles for help with French translations, and to he and Harry Steele for proofreading the thesis.

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Note on Transliteration

The transliteration follows a simplified version of the the system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (IJMES), with the exception that short vowels are given as o and e, rather than u and i. Where there is a common, simplified form of a name in English, that has been used instead of a more literal transliteration. For instance, Shojaeddin Shafa has been used throughout the thesis instead of Shojā‘eddin Shafā, except when cited as part of a Persian text. Likewise, Hoseyn ‘Alā is cited throughout as Hossein Ala, and Asadollāh ‘Alam is cited as Asadollah Alam. Translations from Persian, unless taken from an English language secondary source, are my own.

Introduction

In October 1971, heads of state from around the world came to Persepolis at the invitation of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran to celebrate the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. The event was designed as an elaborate and magnificent piece of political theatre and at centre stage was the Shah himself. He was presented to Iran and the world as a great king, at once traditional and modern; the heir and defender of a 2,500 year-old monarchical tradition and a modernising revolutionary. Kings and emperors, presidents and prime ministers came to Persepolis to pay tribute to the Shah and his vision for Iran. For a domestic audience the event bolstered the ideological underpinning of the Pahlavi regime by promoting the idea that the successes of the country had been, and always would be, dependent on the throne. To an international audience the event signalled the beginning of a new period of prosperity and global influence for Iran. No longer was Iran to be the plaything of imperial powers; Iran was now a significant player in the international arena.

The Celebrations were undoubtedly lavish, and they are often dismissed as over-elaborate and unnecessary; some even point to the aftermath of the event as the beginning of the widespread popular discontent that culminated in the revolution of 1979. The Celebrations have therefore come to be remembered as a costly mistake, the grandiosity of which, as Marvin Zonis noted, would 'characterize the remainder of the Shah's rule.'¹ Other historical accounts comment on the Shah's 'perilous arrogance'² or the event's 'squanderous indulgence',³ and a 2016 BBC documentary on the occasion entitled *Decadence and Downfall* illustrates the persistence of this narrative. Most sources agree, too, that the Celebrations, however tasteless, were nonetheless an important event in the latter part of the Pahlavi period.

¹ Marvin Zonis, *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 69.

² Fakhreddin Azimi, *Quest for Democracy in Iran: A Century of Struggle Against Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 290.

³ Martin Clark, 'The Party', in *Celebration at Persepolis*, ed. by Michael Stevenson (Bristol: Arnolfini, 2008), p. 28.

Given the monumentality of the Celebrations in the context of Pahlavi history, it is striking that there has been no comprehensive academic study on them. Writing shortly after returning from the Celebrations which he attended as part of the British scholarly delegation, Edinburgh University professor Laurence Elwell-Sutton argued that,

In view of the discourteous tone of the bulk of the reports sent home by some foreign journalists – rivalled only by their discourteous behaviour on the spot – it may perhaps be worth while to attempt an objective assessment of this imposing and undoubtedly expensive operation.⁴

Even during the immediate period following the Celebrations, long before hindsight would lead them to be linked to later events, Elwell-Sutton recognised the need for an objective analysis of their purpose and outcomes. This need has become increasingly urgent in the intervening 50 years: many historians and commentators have claimed that the Celebrations were one of the root causes of the revolution, and that they helped to cement the image of the Shah as a delusional, out-of-touch third world autocrat. Still, no thorough scholarly study of the Celebrations has hitherto been undertaken. This thesis aims to fill this gap.

The premise of this thesis is that in order to understand the rationale for the Celebrations, and analyse their success or failure in their own historical context, rather than employing the narrative of the 'doomed' shah, one should look at their origins, and explore the cultural aspects of the event, which were fundamentally important to its success and reveal more of the true nature of the undertaking. It proposes, therefore, a calmer and more balanced assessment of the Celebrations that takes into account the economic and cultural benefits they brought to Iran and the world. The purpose is not to exonerate the Shah, but to provide the type of 'objective assessment' that Elwell-Sutton called for.

Demonstrating how the discourse on the Celebrations has sorely lacked any 'objective assessment' thus far, many falsities have been reported on the event, both by the press and by scholars, some repeated again and again

⁴ Laurence Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations', *Bulletin of the British Association of Orientalists*, 6 (1973), p. 24.

without any apparent attempts at fact-checking. One claim, repeated in the documentary *Decadence and Downfall*, was that 50,000 European songbirds were imported to Persepolis for the occasion, most of which died within days as they were unaccustomed to the 'desert climate'.⁵ While numerous newspaper journalists and authors have accepted this claim at face value, upon closer inspection one realises how absurd it is. There are many birds indigenous to the region that the organisers could have used to beautify the site, so why import from Europe? How would the organisers even source and import 50,000 birds? Moreover, historical climate data for Persepolis shows that in October, temperatures tend to vary from a minimum of 10 °C at night to 27 °C during the day; not extreme temperatures by Iranian or even European standards. Aside from these problems of logic, there is simply no documentation to verify the claim. Facts matter, particularly when it comes to historical narratives that can be weaponised to serve a political agenda. Using a wide range of documentation, this thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature, proving a much overdue analysis of the Celebrations.

The thesis proposes a thorough study of the Anniversary Celebrations that puts them firmly in the context of the cultural policies of the Pahlavi regime. The Celebrations were planned as a cultural occasion, however the cultural aspects of the event are often overlooked in the current literature, with historians and commentators preferring to focus on the extravagance of the tented accommodation provided for heads of state, or the banquet served in their honour. The cultural politics of the late Pahlavi period have received little attention from historians of modern Iran. By investigating the formation of cultural policy and the regime's use of culture to achieve its political goals, this thesis will make a valuable contribution to the cultural history of Iran in the 1960s and 70s.

Many analyses conclude that the Celebrations were a mistake, which would set in motion widespread opposition to the Shah's rule that would

⁵ Bartin Beglinger, 'The Most Expensive Party Ever', *Tages-Anzeiger*, May 2014, available online at <<https://www.alimentarium.org/en/magazine/history/most-expensive-party-ever>> [accessed 30 January 2017]. The claim was repeated in an article by *The Washington Post*. See, Ishaan Tharoor, 'How Ancient Ruins are Perfect Propaganda in the Middle East', *The Washington Post*, 6 May 2016, available online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/06/how-ancient-ruins-are-perfect-propaganda-in-the-middle-east/?utm_term=.c323be89e167> [accessed 22 October 2018].

culminate in the revolution in 1979. This thesis removes the Celebrations from the revolution, putting them in the context of the Shah's rise, rather than his fall. It will question what the regime aimed to achieve by holding the event, in terms of ideological dissemination by promoting the Pahlavi historical narrative, as well as material gain by encouraging foreign investment and tourism. The success of the Celebrations will, in this thesis, be judged by the extent to which they achieved the objectives set out when they were conceived in 1958. One of the thesis' main contributions to the current literature is this challenging of a teleological view of the Celebrations, which supposes that they achieved little and merely set Iran on an inevitable march towards revolution.

While the heads of state and other dignitaries were enjoying Pahlavi hospitality by the ruins of Persepolis, a group of scholars were taking part in an academic conference in Shiraz. Given the glamour of the tent city, it is understandable that the conference received little media attention and, indeed, it has largely been written out of the narrative of the Celebrations. It was, however, a significant event in the programme for the Celebrations and stimulated much genuine scholarly activity. In addition to the hundreds of academics who attended the conference in October 1971, many more contributed with publications and by organising conferences, lectures and exhibitions around the world, dedicated to various aspects of Iranian culture and civilisation. The publications were so numerous that in 1983 the historian John Manuel Cook observed that in the previous decade, directly as a result of the Celebrations, literature on Ancient Persia had 'almost doubled.'⁶ The French scholar Jean Perrot further observed that the Celebrations initiated a resurgence in interest in the Achaemenid period internationally.⁷ In terms of expenditure and publicity the academic aspects of the event were outshone by the extravagance of the tent city, but in sheer volume and depth of international engagement they reveal more of the essential character of this monumental undertaking. Was this scholarship for the sake of scholarship, or was there an underlying political motive for the Shah's regime, and what motivated so many scholars to take part?

⁶ John Manuel Cook, *Ancient Persia* (London: Dent, 1983), p. iii.

⁷ Jean Perrot, *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. xii.

Despite the commonly held belief that the Celebrations were 'squanderous', there is a strong case to be made that a significant part of the spending associated with the occasion should be considered as investment in vital infrastructures. The year that the Celebrations took place was declared Cyrus the Great Year, and many infrastructure projects completed during this year, such as the expansion of airports, construction of hotels and schools, and the building of roads and railway lines, were connected directly to the Celebrations. Since so many projects completed during the Persian year 1350 (1971-1972) were attributed to the Celebrations, it is important to understand that the principal ceremonies that occurred in Shiraz in October 1971 were a part of a year-long commemoration. This becomes essential when discussing the costs associated with the Celebrations, for although many projects were completed in conjunction with the occasion, and the costs associated with them were included in estimates for the total cost, they were not funded by the organising committee for the event, but by other government agencies, such as the Plan Organisation. Moreover, most of these projects were not implemented for the enjoyment of the attendees of the Celebrations in October 1971, but were intended to provide widespread and lasting benefits to the Iranian nation.

In spite of the economic and cultural benefits the Celebrations as a whole generated, they were heavily criticised by large parts of the international press both before and afterwards. The criticisms ranged from condemnation of the high costs to concerns that international participation would be construed as condonement of the Shah's human rights record. A typical article appearing in *The Daily Telegraph* noted, for example, that

in a country where average income per head does not exceed £200 a year... the peasants, who form the vast majority of the population and who can neither read nor write, know little of what is going on.⁸

A report from the *Washington Daily News* called the Celebrations a 'vain, pompous, vulgar show of wealth' and mocked the imperial couple:

To be fair, Empress Farah hasn't said of starving Iranian peasants, "Let them eat caviar." But she is looking a bit peaked

⁸ Guy Rais, 'World's VIPs to see Shah's spectacular', *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1971.

and round-shouldered from carting around all those diamonds, and the tone of the party is very Marie Antoinette.⁹

Newsweek wrote that the event was 'a mixture of pomp and pomposity, of regal splendor and petty carping.'¹⁰ Jonathan Randal, the reporter for *The Washington Post*, claimed that his derogatory reporting on the occasion was his way of 'pissing on the Shah's party.'¹¹ According to Andrew Scott Cooper, Randal's reports 'presented a devastating portrait of conditions inside Iran and helped define the Shah as a corrupt, cruel dictator.'¹²

Echoing Elwell-Sutton, who commented on the rudeness of the media,¹³ the Dutch ambassador was scathing about the press in his account of the Celebrations:

The western press has reported extensively before and after these festivities, with just a few exceptions, in a way which seemed to me at the very least juvenile and definitely not hindered by any truthful or extensive knowledge of the country, its people, customs and development, profound objective analysis or even any thought whatsoever.¹⁴

The ambassador argued that the journalists who attended the festivities were expecting something to go wrong and describes them as, 'waiting for blood, for an attack or an accident. In anything else they are not interested.'¹⁵

Elwell-Sutton and Jonker missed part of the picture, though, since not all reports on the Celebrations were negative. Many were quite favourable and focused on the recent economic development in Iran. An article appeared in *Le Monde*, for instance, arguing that 'the spending on Persepolis has given the Iranian nation prestige, which will only continue to grow',¹⁶ while the reports of *The Guardian's* Walter Schwarz were noted in an American article as a

⁹ 'Fun in the Sand: 2500 year celebration', *Washington Daily News*, 16 October 1971.

¹⁰ Loren Jenkins, 'Iran's Birthday Party', *Newsweek*, 25 October 1971, p. 33.

¹¹ Andrew Scott Cooper, *The Fall of Heaven: The Pahlavis and the Final Days of Imperial Iran* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2016), p. 171.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

¹³ Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations' (1973), p. 24.

¹⁴ Hendrik Jonker, '2500 year celebration Persian Monarchy', 3 November 1971, MinBuZa (*Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) 2.05.191/554.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Joseph Santa-Croce, 'Les attardés du XIXe siècle et le roi moderne', *Le Monde*, 24 November 1971.

response to the accusations of repression and misery in Iran. According to the article, if *The Guardian*, 'a liberal-slanted English newspaper' which 'is not given to apologizing for dictators nor covering up their shortcomings', could commend Iran on its achievements, then this 'is saying a lot.'¹⁷ The response to the Celebrations from the press was generally neither overwhelmingly negative nor positive, but a number of journalists were openly hostile to the event, and their accounts are those most vividly remembered. Furthermore, the presence of so many heads of state in an exotic location and the resulting heightened media attention gave rise to sensationalism as journalists speculated wildly, particularly about the cost. They were essentially given *carte blanche* to suggest any figure, however unrealistic.

Given the hostility to the event from sections of the media on one side, and the blatant propaganda from the regime on the other, uncovering the facts is often an arduous and frustrating undertaking. As such, the first aim of this thesis is to explore why the regime decided to hold a celebration in the first place, and what they intended to gain from it. Secondly, given the lack of sober analysis on the occasion, another purpose is to provide a clear account of what actually happened in Iran and around the world in the years leading up to 1971. This will allow for an analysis of the Celebrations in the context of the ideology of the Pahlavi regime, and result in a better understanding of Iran's position in the world at this important moment of the Shah's reign. The thesis will question how the regime used culture and the participation of scholars to strengthen its ideology. Finally, the thesis will determine, as far as is possible, considering the regime's political, economic and cultural aims, whether the event can be considered to have been a success.

Literature Review

The body of literature on the Celebrations is relatively small. Scholarly analyses of the event are sparse, with most accounts appearing in general histories of Pahlavi Iran, or political memoirs. Although interpretations of the event vary considerably, what remains prevalent in many versions is the drama of the occasion. This drama and sense of importance was encouraged by the regime,

¹⁷ Document number A 6452-3211-1, 31 October 1971, Iranian Institute for Contemporary Historical Studies. Available online at <http://iichs.org/index_en.asp?id=2036&img_cat=126&img_type=1> [Accessed 28 October 2016].

and enthusiastically pursued by the local and international media at the time. Journalists were caught up in the romance of the occasion, which is reflected in their writings. The Shah's speech at Cyrus' tomb on 12 October inspired creative reports, such as this from *The Guardian*:

A whirlwind raced across the sand towards the Shah. He looked up as he spoke and it turned away, keeping a respectful distance. The appearance of three witches, prophesying fresh glories, would not have seemed wildly inappropriate.¹⁸

The use of pathetic fallacy here is striking; even the wind is respectful of the Shah, while the Shakespearean reference adds to the mysticism of the event. William Shawcross, in his 1988 publication, *The Shah's Last Ride*, also evokes this image, putting the scene in the context of the Shah's inevitable downfall, which was to occur less than eight years later. The prophetic wind, Shawcross writes, 'was widely thought to be a good omen. It was not.'¹⁹ Instead, the scene was set for a tragedy. The Shah, like Macbeth, would be unable to resist the temptations of power and the Celebrations would come to represent not the Shah's rise, but his downfall. Shawcross continues,

It was supposed to mark the 2500th Anniversary of the original empire founded by Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C. In retrospect it can be seen to mark the beginning of the end of the Pahlavi dynasty, which the Shah's father had founded just fifty years before.²⁰

The perception of the Celebrations as having contributed to the revolution, even constituting the beginning of widespread discontent, or as having revealed fatal flaws in the Shah's character, has become a convenient part of the narrative of the Shah's downfall.

The Celebrations were considered a failure in part because of the negative attention they received, which was stimulated by the idea that they were an irresponsible and expensive endeavour undertaken by a

¹⁸ Walter Schwarz, 'A kingdom remembered – 2,500 years on', *The Guardian*, 13 October 1971, p. 1.

¹⁹ William Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989), p. 47.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 38.

megalomaniac Shah. The excesses and extravagance of the Celebrations are, therefore, generally stressed in the literature. Nikki Keddie, for example, refers to them as 'vastly wasteful',²¹ while Martin Clark observes that 'the whole affair seemed to represent the most squanderous indulgence.'²² Roy Mottahedeh, in his *The Mantle of the Prophet*, wrote that the 'party at Persepolis was more or less a success', but that 'Many more Iranians were unimpressed. The whole thing had cost about three hundred million dollars'.²³ According to James Buchan, 'Persepolis introduced an element of the fantastical into the Pahlavi style, as if some toy principality had gained a half-million-man army.'²⁴ Farkherddin Azimi also refers to the Shah's 'perilous arrogance' in relation to the Celebrations, which was completely at odds with the desires and needs of his people.²⁵ Such accounts conform to the accepted idea of the event as a 'party', organised to entertain international VIPs and massage the Shah's already inflated ego.

It is rare to find accounts of the Celebrations that mention any positive aspects, such as the cultural initiatives, which this study argues were a main focus of the organisers and essential to the success of the event. Rather, they use the Celebrations as evidence of the Shah's expensive tastes and an illustration of the fact that he was out of touch with his people. Shawcross, whose chapter on the Celebrations is incidentally titled 'The Party', writes that 'For the Shah himself it would bring a complete divorce from reality. He became more and more obsessed with his own kingship and the importance of his direct succession from Cyrus.'²⁶ Marvin Zonis, in his *Majestic Failure*, also focuses on the 'party' and gives further credence to the idea that the Celebrations represented a turning-point in the Shah's reign. He writes that the ceremonies were 'carried off with a tone of grandiosity which would characterize the remainder of the Shah's rule.'²⁷ Similarly, in his *The Eagle and the Lion*, James

²¹ Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 224.

²² Martin Clark, 'The Party', in *Celebration at Persepolis*, ed. by Michael Stevenson (Arnolfini: Bristol, 2008), p. 28.

²³ Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), pp. 326-327.

²⁴ James Buchan, *Days of God* (London: John Murray, 2012), p. 56.

²⁵ Azimi, *Quest for Democracy in Iran* (2008), p. 290.

²⁶ Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride* (1989), p. 47

²⁷ Zonis, *Majestic Failure* (1991), p. 69.

Bill argued that the Celebrations represented a new phase of the Shah's reign, 'one of increasing megalomania.'²⁸

The Celebrations have also been the subject of television documentaries, most recently the BBC's *Decadence and Downfall: The Shah of Iran's Ultimate Party*.²⁹ It repeats the same tired narrative which focuses heavily on the invitations of royal guests at the tent city, with no mention of the Congress of Iranology or the cultural achievements, and without offering any fresh analysis of the occasion. The title of the documentary would not be out of place in a headline of one of the newspapers of 1971, which suggests that our understanding of the occasion is still hampered by sensationalism and a general obsession with the supposed flamboyance of an oriental despot. The title also puts the Celebrations firmly in the context of the Shah's downfall. The documentary opens with a quote from a Swiss waiter, who states that the two-day event at Persepolis had cost the equivalent of the entire national budget of Switzerland for two years; an absurd claim. In response to the documentary, a report appeared in a British newspaper, titled 'Princess Anne and the £1 billion party that lit the fuse of Islamic terror 45 years ago', which argued that 'The great irony is that the Shah's feast was supposed to reinforce the throne it ultimately toppled.'³⁰

One of the problems with many accounts of the Celebrations is that there is very little analysis of documents and often historians make assumptions based on conjecture, or by using newspaper articles or accounts from opposition figures, which tend to exaggerate and are often misleading. In his *Crowned Cannibals* Reza Baraheni wrote an account of the Celebrations which is replete with factual inaccuracies. During the Shah's speech at Pasargadae, for example, according to Baraheni, the world leaders were present.³¹ He even comments on the mannerisms of Spiro Agnew and King Frederick IX of Denmark at this ceremony, despite the reality that world leaders were not actually present at Pasargadae and did not even arrive in Shiraz until after the

²⁸ James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 184.

²⁹ 'Decadence and Downfall: The Shah of Iran's Ultimate Party', *Storyville*, BBC Four (2016).

³⁰ Robert Hardman, 'Princess Anne and the £1 billion party that lit the fuse of Islamic terror 45 years ago', *The Daily Mail*, 13 February 2016. Available online at <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3445017/Princess-Anne-1billion-party-lit-fuse-Islamic-terror-45-years-ago.html>> [accessed on 07 February 2016].

³¹ Reza Baraheni, *Crowned Cannibals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 101-102.

ceremony had finished. There are many examples of such falsities, which will be recounted and challenged throughout this thesis. At this point, however, such accounts merely serve to illustrate the general acceptance of a negative interpretation of the Celebrations.

Despite the animosity of a portion of the media, early scholars of the revolution were generally reluctant to associate the Celebrations with the popular discontent that spread in the latter part of the 1970s. Amin Saikal's timely *The Rise and Fall of the Shah*, first published shortly after the revolution and reprinted most recently in 2009, contains not even a mention of the Celebrations.³² This is interesting, since Saikal's work is an analysis of the causes of the Shah's decline, not an assessment of his character, as could be said of other authors' works, for example those of Shawcross and Zonis. Fred Halliday's damning assessment of the Pahlavi regime, *Dictatorship and Development*, published in 1979, also fails to mention the Celebrations as a cause for public discontent.³³ Ervand Abrahamian's *Iran Between Two Revolutions* is another early analysis of the revolutionary period, in which the Celebrations are only briefly mentioned in the context of the planned disruptions by the Mojahedin.³⁴ Were the Celebrations simply not considered important enough for analysis at this stage, or had the regime managed to convince academics to adopt its version of events?

There is a case to be made that in light of the negative aura surrounding the Celebrations in the immediate period following the event, the regime tried to distance itself from them. Indeed, apart from a rather muted one-year anniversary of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations that took place in October 1972 and at which the Shah was not even present,³⁵ the occasion was rarely mentioned in public discourse, even by academics. Furthermore, a planned official publication on the Celebrations was abandoned following the event, seemingly due to a lack of appetite for such a project at the court.³⁶ One possible explanation for the lack of analysis from scholars of Iran in the 1970s,

³² Amin Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah: From Autocracy to Religious Rule* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).

³³ Fred Halliday, *Dictatorship and Development* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979).

³⁴ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 491.

³⁵ He was on a state visit to Russia instead.

³⁶ The money set aside for the proposed publication went instead to repairing a mosque in Qom. Conversation with Abdolreza Ansari, February 2016.

or at least a contributing factor, was the tendency during this period for scholars to accept the regime's interpretation of history, as well as what was deemed appropriate to study.³⁷

As a result, perhaps unsurprisingly, references to the Celebrations during the remainder of the 1970s, when they do appear, are generally positive. In an article contained in the edited volume *Persia: History and Heritage*, Elwell-Sutton wrote an assessment of the Shah's reign. In it he referred to the Cyrus Cylinder as the 'first declaration of the rights of man', argued that the switch to the Imperial calendar in 1976 was a 'fitting epilogue' to the Celebrations, and concluded with a quotation from the Shah's speech at Pasargadae.³⁸ Elwell-Sutton was an admirer of the Pahlavis, having previously written of Reza Shah that his greatest tragedy was being unable to finish the job,³⁹ and was preparing to write a comprehensive history of his reign before he fell seriously ill at the end of the 1970s.⁴⁰ Zonis, reviewing *Iran Under the Pahlavis* shortly after the revolution, asks how scholars allowed themselves to be 'bewitched by the Pahlavis as did Western journalists and most Western governments.'⁴¹ Richard Frye offered an explanation for this, when he observed in his role as head of the Asia Institute:

There was an unlimited supply of money, and so you just go on...
I mean, it was really chaos in the sense of everybody out, going wild, and trying to make influence, and so on.⁴²

It was not merely a case of making influence, but also safeguarding the influence that one had already acquired. The work *Persia: History and Heritage* was published by the British Institute of Persian Studies. Furthermore, it was compiled by John Andrew Boyle, who had attended the Celebrations along with

³⁷ For a discussion, see Stephanie Cronin, 'Writing the History of Modern Iran: A Comment on Approaches and Sources', *Iran*, 36 (1998), pp. 175-184.

³⁸ Laurence Elwell-Sutton, 'The Pahlavi Era', in *Persia: History and Heritage*, ed. by J.A. Boyle (London: Melland for the British Institute of Persian Studies, 1978), p. 64.

³⁹ Laurence Elwell-Sutton, 'Reza Shah the Great', in *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, ed. by George Lenczowski (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1978), p. 50.

⁴⁰ Edmund Bosworth, 'Elwell-Sutton, Laurence Paul', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VIII/4 (1998) pp. 372-373, available online at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elwell-sutton>> [accessed on 18 September 2016].

⁴¹ Marvin Zonis, 'Iran Under the Pahlavis by George Lenczowski', *The American Political Science Review*, 73:3 (1979), p. 911.

⁴² Richard Frye in an interview with Shahla Haeri, Cambridge, MA, 3, 10 and 24 October 1984, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 3, p. 34.

Elwell-Sutton as part of the Congress of Iranology, and was held in high regard by the regime. Indeed, even during the unfolding political crisis of 1978, the Shah sent a personal note of condolence to Boyle's family upon hearing of his death.⁴³ The regime worked very closely with academics, as we will see throughout this thesis, and these relationships influenced how academics undertook studies of contemporary Iran.

Another author who addressed the Celebrations in the 1970s was R.K. Karanjia, the Indian journalist who published a series of interviews with the Shah in *The Mind of a Monarch* in 1977.⁴⁴ Karanjia's work is interesting because it expresses the official line, a line which the author is careful not to challenge. A State Department document from July 1975, responding to reports in India, stated,

We have been puzzled for some time about the connection between the Shah and Karanjia and cannot help wondering whether some ill-advised Iranian consul general in the past urged the Shah to put Karanjia on the payroll... Whatever the explanation, it is generally assumed here that Karanjia is on the Shah's payroll.⁴⁵

Whether the allegations were accurate or not, it is clear from the flattering tone of the work that Karanjia was eager to please the Shah.⁴⁶ The work is, therefore, important because it reveals the Shah's thoughts about the Celebrations, but not for its interpretive framework. Another interesting contribution to the contemporary literature is the historian Russell Chamberlin's *Preserving the Past*, published in 1979, which dedicates ten pages to the Celebrations and concludes that they were 'over-egged and self-conscious', but stresses that on a deeper level the government successfully used the past 'as a potent means of encouraging a concept of unity, of statehood in a divergent people.'⁴⁷ Chamberlin was not an Iranologist, per se, so was not subject to the same pressures as were other academics engaged in Iran. He praises the

⁴³ Laurence Elwell-Sutton, 'John Andrew Boyle', *Folklore*, 90/1 (1979), pp. 105-106.

⁴⁴ R.K. Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1977).

⁴⁵ Telegram US Embassy New Delhi, to US Embassy Tehran, 21 July 1975, Wikileaks no. 1975NEWDE09747_b.

⁴⁶ It is perhaps worth noting that Karanjia was invited to the Celebrations as a private guest of the Shah. See Appendix A.

⁴⁷ E.R. Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1979), p. 25.

authorities for creating the Council for the Preservation of Antiquities, which sought to 'acquaint the ordinary people of the neighbourhood with the value and importance of archaeological remains, as the most eloquent documentation of our national history.'⁴⁸ In this way Chamberlin puts the Celebrations primarily in the context of the cultural policies of the Pahlavis, a rare perspective in the early literature on the event.

In a publication by Houchang Nahavandi, a regime insider, titled *The Last Shah of Iran: Fatal Countdown of a Great Patriot Betrayed by the Free World, a Great Country Whose Fault Was Success*, the Celebrations are presented as a thoroughly well-organised and executed spectacle.⁴⁹ His chapter on the occasion is titled after the Shah's speech at Pasargadae, 'Rest in peace, Cyrus, for we keep watch!' Nahavandi, who was Chancellor of the Pahlavi University in Shiraz during the Celebrations, provides details on some of the cultural initiatives that had not been mentioned in previous accounts. He gives precise details on events that took place during the year of the Celebrations, such as the opening of a sports complex at the Pahlavi University.⁵⁰ Nahavandi writes,

These were just some of the projects, among hundreds of others, which made the Year of Celebration a "great leap forward" for Iran, demonstrating its economic vitality and dynamism and showing its will to draw upon new sources of collective imagination and creativity, while renewing its millennial traditions.⁵¹

Despite his argument that these projects were part of Iran's policies of 'modernisation and development', he admits that the reliance on foreign companies and catering was 'a political error.'⁵² As in earlier accounts of the Celebrations, the event occurs at the beginning of the book, as the high point of a story that would end with the downfall of the Shah.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 26.

⁴⁹ Houchang Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran: Fatal Countdown of a Great Patriot Betrayed by the Free World, a Great Country Whose Fault Was Success*, trans. by Steeve Reed (Slough: Aquillon Ltd., 2005).

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 39-44.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 44.

⁵² Ibid, p. 48.

More considered investigation of the Celebrations has been carried out by Gholam Reza Afkhami, in his *Life and Times of the Shah*.⁵³ Afkhami, though a regime insider who could therefore possibly be accused of not being entirely objective, provides the most detailed account of the Celebrations available, using a wide range of source material including unpublished interviews with people such as Abdolreza Ansari, as well as documents published by the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies in Tehran. Afkhami ultimately concludes that the Celebrations were ‘too foreign dominated, both politically and culturally’, and thus argues that they were ‘ill conceived’.⁵⁴ His account is noteworthy for its description of the cultural aspects of the event. He states that the Congress of Iranology was one of the ‘major events’ of the Celebrations, and makes reference to some of the main cultural initiatives, including the publication of hundreds of books and the establishment of the Pahlavi Library.⁵⁵ Abbas Milani’s biography *The Shah* also makes reference to the cultural aspects of the event, however he concludes that these ‘were overshadowed by the rumour and reality of corruption and the embarrassment of nouveau riche extravaganza’.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that neither account connects the Celebrations to the revolution, and in some respects these works represent the first attempts really to understand the Celebrations instead of dismissing them offhand as evidence of a megalomaniac and out of touch third-world monarch.

Pahlavi history in general has experienced a surge in scholarly interest in recent years, as a new generation of historians has emerged with access to newly released documents and a fresh view on the era unimpeded by experiences of the *ancien régime*. This new understanding of Pahlavi history is not without its critics. Reviewing Michael Axworthy’s *Revolutionary Iran*, published in 2013, the renowned historian of modern Iran Ervand Abrahamian wrote that Axworthy’s work tended to ‘exaggerate the independence of the Shah’ and that ‘Such a depiction runs counter to the facts.’⁵⁷ Abrahamian

⁵³ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *Life and times of the Shah* (Monterey: University of California Press, 2008), pp. 404-422.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 412.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 472.

⁵⁶ Abbas Milani, *The Shah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 323.

⁵⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, ‘Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic by Michael Axworthy’, *The Times Higher Education*, 4 April 2013, available online at

disagrees with the perception that the Shah was a 'partner', preferring the typical presentation of him as a 'military monarch dependent on the West'. Such long-held beliefs have, however, been further challenged in more recent works, notably Roham Alvandi's *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*, which, through extensive use of documents from archives in the United States, shows that the Shah was an important player in the politics of the Cold War.⁵⁸ In Alvandi's account, the relationship between Iran and the United States was very much a partnership which benefitted both parties.

In his *The Fall of Heaven*, Andrew Scott Cooper explains the problems inherent in researching the revolutionary period in Iran:

Historians often talk about the "uses and abuses" of history, and researching the Iranian revolution can be compared to entering a dark tunnel without a flashlight. The tunnel is filled with caverns, dead ends, and missed turns and lit only by the occasional flare of rumor, conspiracy theory, and outright lie.⁵⁹

As time passes and prejudices subside, a clearer picture of the Pahlavi period is emerging. The Islamic Republic's narrative of a decadent, megalomaniac, corrupt and tyrannical Mohammad Reza Pahlavi is becoming more difficult to sustain as new information about the Pahlavi regime comes to light. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations have been demonised by the leadership of the Islamic Republic, which refers to them as *bazm-e ahriman*, the devil's feast, and have been subjected over the years to the same flares of 'rumor, conspiracy theory, and outright lie'. This thesis will, therefore, provide a contribution not only to the literature on the Celebrations, but also to our general understanding of this important period of the Shah's rule, when he was reaching the zenith of his political authority and when his international standing was firmly on the rise.

Research Methodology

This thesis draws on a wide range of primary source material in a number of languages, primarily Persian and English, but also French, Dutch, German and Italian. There is an abundance of primary source material available on the

<<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/books/revolutionary-iran-a-history-of-the-islamic-republic-by-michael-axworthy/2002873.article>> [accessed on 23 October 2016].

⁵⁸ Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵⁹ Cooper, *The Fall of Heaven* (2016), p. 12.

Anniversary Celebrations, including academic publications, newspapers and official documents, so a major challenge in the research for this thesis was gathering hundreds of sources from a large number of libraries and archives. An important resource was the uncatalogued archive of Shojaeddin Shafa held at the Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations in Paris. The papers contained within this archive cover the period of Shafa's role as the Shah's cultural advisor from 1958 until the revolution, and include a number of important files relevant to this thesis, including ones on the Anniversary Celebrations and the various cultural organisations with which Shafa was involved. Other useful Persian language sources were documents on the Anniversary Celebrations published by the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies in their journal *Tārikh-e Mo'āser-e Irān* (Iranian Contemporary History) and a collection of documents from the SAVAK and court archives published by the centre for historical documents at the Ministry of Information in four volumes, titled *Bazm-e Ahriman*. Although the documents contained within these volumes are official documents, they have been selected from a wider range of documentation. According to Kamran Scot Aghaie collections such as these published by the Islamic Republic 'constitute a strategy to use primary documents to put forth an ideologically motivated view of specific incidents in history.'⁶⁰ In the case of *Bazm-e Ahriman* the purpose was to select the documents for publication that would 'demonstrate the moral depravity of the Pahlavis by showing the affluence, squandering of scarce natural resources, and moral decadence (according to Islam) of those in attendance.'⁶¹ It is important to be aware, therefore, that these sources do not present a complete account and should be used with caution.

Research was conducted at the British National Archives, the British Museum and the British Library in London, the Dutch National Archives in The Hague and the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. Further archival material was accessed online, through the websites of UNESCO and the US State Department. According to official figures around 2,000 books and articles were published on the occasion of the Anniversary Celebrations, including

⁶⁰ Kamran Scot Aghaie, 'Islamist Historiography in Post-Revolutionary Iran', in Touraj Atabaki ed., *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 260.

⁶¹ Ibid.

exhibition brochures, official programmes and academic studies. Attempts to uncover them led to research trips to libraries and collections around the United Kingdom, notably the British Museum and the National Art Museum in London, the Bill Bryson Library at Durham University, Manchester University Library and the University of Exeter's Arab World Documentation Unit.

Oral histories and memoirs have been used from a number of figures who were involved in the Celebrations, including those published by the Foundation for Iranian Studies and the Harvard Oral History Project. Additionally, written communications were exchanged with academics and former ministers who were involved in the Celebrations and an interview was conducted with Abdolreza Ansari in Paris. There are obvious pitfalls associated with using oral accounts constructed from memory nearly half a century after the event, since memories fade over the years. They also represent specific perspectives on the events recorded in this thesis, so are not entirely objective. However, such accounts have been carefully scrutinised and have enriched the narrative, providing details that would, in many cases, have been impossible to obtain elsewhere.

Chapter Overview

In order to examine thoroughly the Celebrations and firmly establish them in the context of the cultural politics of the late Pahlavi period, the thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 evaluates the relevant theories relating to nationalism and nationalist celebrations. It evaluates the use of political spectacle in Iranian history and considers other case studies of national celebrations in order to provide a wider theoretical and historical context to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. Chapter 2 charts the development of Iranian nationalism from the middle of the 19th century and the interest in Cyrus the Great, which began in antiquity and became an important part of the Pahlavi nationalist discourse in the 20th century, ultimately culminating in the Celebrations in 1971. It questions and begins to explain the motives of the Pahlavi ideologues in organising the Anniversary Celebrations.

Chapter 3 gives an account of the development of the Celebrations, from their initial conception in 1958 up to the actual event in October 1971. It shows that the Celebrations were conceived as a relatively modest cultural

commemoration, yet as more actors became involved in the planning and it became clear that foreign dignitaries would be attending, they took on a greater significance, internationally and domestically. Despite this, the chapter shows that the Celebrations retained their *raison d'être* of raising awareness of Iranian cultural heritage in Iran and around the world.

Chapter 4 argues that the Celebrations were not only important in developing industries and promoting culture in Iran, but they also had great international appeal as leaders from around the world came to Iran to take part in the festivities. The chapter analyses why these leaders chose to participate. It puts the Celebrations in the context of an important period of the Shah's reign when his political capital was on the rise, and shows that as the Shah emerged as a serious player on the international scene, states from around the world were eager to pay tribute to him, securing lucrative contracts and regional influence in the process. Iran presented itself as a land of opportunity and many states were keen to take advantage of the Shah's position.

Chapters 5 and 6 look in some detail at the cultural aspects of the event. Chapter 5 puts the event's cultural focus in the context of the cultural politics of Pahlavi Iran, exploring different initiatives launched throughout the 1960s which were directly linked to the development of the Anniversary Celebrations. It shall become clear that the Celebrations were part of a cultural movement that began in earnest in the early 1960s and expired on the eve of the revolution in 1979. It discusses the events of October 1971, particularly the Congress of Iranology held at the Pahlavi University in Shiraz, as well as the many books and articles that were published for the occasion. Chapter 6 discusses these cultural aspects in an international context. It looks at the events that took place around the world, as well as the participation of individual academics and institutions, in order to show the extent of the international cultural operation.

Following on from the account of the main events that took place in October 1971, Chapter 7 provides a discussion of the principal criticisms of the Celebrations. It will put the criticisms in a historical context, arguing that they were not aimed at the Celebrations *per se*, but were criticisms of the Shah and the system he represented. The media circus surrounding the Celebrations gave greater exposure to the critics of the Shah, while the supposed high

expenditure confirmed commonly held beliefs about waste and corruption in the Pahlavi court.

Chapter 8 discusses the benefits of the event to the Iranian economy. It is often assumed that the money spent on the Celebrations was squandered, but this chapter will show that a large portion of the spending on the event could be considered as investment, and a number of industries benefitted from the occasion. Of particular interest here is the tourism sector, which saw direct investment and exposure that resulted in significant revenue growth.

Chapter 1: Nationalism, Celebration and the Political Spectacle

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss relevant theories of nationalism and nationalist celebrations, before applying them to an Iranian context. National celebrations are defined here as spectacles organised by a state. Elie Podeh has proposed a number of hypotheses to explain why states hold such events, namely to exhibit power or legitimacy and to articulate an aspect of state ideology.⁶² These motivations are often complementary, and celebrations can be held to achieve all three purposes simultaneously. This chapter will discuss each of these points, providing relevant examples to show why and how different states have organised national spectacles. The chapter essentially aims to provide a theoretical and historical framework which will be applied to the Pahlavi context in the following chapter.

Public spectacles, including rituals and national celebrations, are important ways in which those in power communicate with their subjects, and often these activities are akin to theatrical performance, with each aspect meticulously choreographed to project an image or deliver a message.⁶³ By using drama, political leaders are able to, according to David E. Apter, 'transform incipient alternatives into preferred modes of action, using political theatre to round up and collectivize individuals and groups by converting otherwise random or singular views into a more common understanding.'⁶⁴ The political spectacle, which can be a sombre occasion, such as a funeral or response to a terrorist attack, or a joyous occasion, such as a coronation or inauguration ceremony, gives life to a narrative.⁶⁵ The funeral of George VI of England, for instance, had profound symbolic significance in shaping attitudes towards the monarchy, and in its grandiosity it sought to incite strong national appreciation of a man who was not born to be king, nor wanted to be, but took

⁶² Elie Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 19-23. Podeh puts forward another explanation, which focuses on the role of the individual citizen in participating, rather than the state in organising, emphasising the individual need for collective identity.

⁶³ For discussion, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Cultural pragmatics: social performance between ritual and strategy', in *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen and Jason L. Mast (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 29-90; and Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

⁶⁴ David E. Apter, 'Politics as theatre: an alternative view of the rationalities of power', in *Social Performance*, ed. by Alexander, Giesen and Mast (2006), p. 225.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 230.

the throne out of an overwhelming sense of duty.⁶⁶ A strong narrative is important, but as in theatre, a good production relies also on capable performers, a skilled director and a rousing setting. As Apter observes, 'the sound of language is as important as the meaning of its words'.⁶⁷

Iranian history provides us with many examples of the theatre of politics, including for example the state patronage of the Muharram rituals in the Safavid and Qajar periods. The rituals held during the holy month of Muharram are fundamentally religious, but they acquired a political flavour during the Safavid period as the state played an increasingly central role in the festivities. In a nation where lines have historically been drawn between different classes, religions or ethnicities, these events could help to subvert hostility and bind communities together under a common banner. This chapter will present a conceptual framework and help us better to understand the motivations of the Shah's regime in building his national ideology around pre-Islamic Iranian civilisation and ultimately expressing this ideology through the 1971 commemoration of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great.

Nationalism and History

Although nationalism as a scholarly discipline is relatively modern, for centuries political theorists have been discussing the idea of nation and nationalism. Rousseau observed in his *Constitutional Project for Corsica* in 1765, for example, that, 'The first rule to be followed is the principle of national character; for each people has, or ought to have, a national character; if it did not, we should have to start by giving it one.'⁶⁸ In his understanding, endowing the population with a binding identity is imperative for citizens to be able to understand their place in the community to which they belong. When Rousseau talks of 'giving' a national character, this suggests that national identities as we know them today did not appear entirely organically. Shared language, culture and territory can provide a foundation for a shared identity, but 'for that consciousness to become *nationalist* in any true sense', as Eley and Suny note,

⁶⁶ David Cannadine, 'Splendour out at Court', in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics Since the Middle Ages*, ed. by Seal Wilentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 230-231.

⁶⁷ Apter, 'Politics as theatre' (2006), p. 236.

⁶⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Constitutional Project for Corsica* (1765), online at <<http://www.constitution.org/jjr/corsica.htm>> [accessed 06 March 2017].

‘something else normally has to happen in the form of political intervention.’⁶⁹ In Italy in 1861, for instance, only 2.5 percent of the total Italian population could speak what would become standard Italian, while the rest spoke various dialects. It was up to national ideologues to choose a version of the language that would constitute the official state language. Eley and Suny conclude that language, therefore, ‘is less a prior determinant of nationality than part of a complex process of cultural innovation, involving hard ideological labor, careful propaganda, and a creative imagination.’⁷⁰

Elie Kedourie has claimed that nationalism contends that ‘humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.’⁷¹ This ‘primordialist’ argument, as Anthony Smith terms it, contends that national sentiment is not a political construct, but rather it is something natural.⁷² This analysis is undermined by the realisation that these characteristics cannot be commonly ascertained. For instance, while it may be possible to argue that in England, the English language provides a strong sense of identity, the same could not be said of India, in which 22 languages are recognised by the state. John Breuilly argues that nationalism ‘is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments.’⁷³ This thesis leans towards Breuilly’s functionalist interpretation of nationalism, which proposes that nationalism is not natural per se, but is something chosen, constructed and ultimately politically motivated.

Gaining knowledge and formulating interpretations of one’s heritage are fundamental aspects of forming national character. According to Ernest Renan, in a lecture in 1882,

The nation, like the individual, is the outcome of a long past of efforts, sacrifices, and devotions. Of all cults, that of the ancestors

⁶⁹ Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, ‘Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation’, in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. by Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 7.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Anthony Smith, ‘The Origins of Nations’, in *Becoming National*, ed. by Eley and Suny (1996), p. 107.

⁷³ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 2.

is the most legitimate: our ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past with great men and glory (I mean true glory) is the social capital upon which the national idea rests. These are the essential conditions of being a people: having common glories in the past and a will to continue them in the present; having made great things together and wishing to make them again.⁷⁴

In Renan's understanding, it is history that provides the strongest binding force for members of a nation. Nations, however, tend to be selective in which parts of their history they choose to celebrate. How are these celebrated periods chosen and reconstructed? Rodney Harrison argued that heritage can be considered to be 'the creation of a past in the present.'⁷⁵ Heritage is not an objective reality, but rather something flexible and creative, in his words, 'a form of mediation in the process of creating the past in the contemporary world.'⁷⁶ The past is, therefore, intrinsically linked to the present and is vulnerable to change and manipulation. Smith argues that, 'The present creates the past in its own image. So modern nationalist intellectuals will freely select, invent and mix traditions in their quest for the imagined political community.'⁷⁷ A nation's ideologues are thus able to choose from the vast resource of historical events the ones that suit their political aspirations.

The types of histories selected by these ideologues are dependent on the goals they seek to achieve, though they often, as Renan proposed, focus on 'great men' and 'great deeds'. The Pahlavi regime ultimately adopted a historical narrative based on a glorification of Iran's ancient history. Zhand Shakibi terms this 'fashioned historiography', which empowers a regime by 'rooting it in the past or presenting it as the final inevitable result of historical forces.'⁷⁸ By providing tangible links between his regime and Cyrus the Great, expressed most unequivocally at the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae during the Anniversary Celebrations, the Shah sought to legitimise his position as the rightful leader of the country, attempting to become, in a sense, a 20th century

⁷⁴ Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', paper delivered at the Sorbonne 11 March 1882, available online at <http://www.ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/what_is_a_nation.pdf> [accessed 06 March 2017].

⁷⁵ Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 37.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁷⁷ Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (1999), p. 180.

⁷⁸ Zhand Shakibi, 'Pahlavism: The Ideologization of Monarchy in Iran', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 14:1 (2013), p. 118

Cyrus. Why Cyrus was chosen as the figure for the Shah link his rule to, will be explored in the next chapter.

The National Spectacle

Pierre Nora has argued that there is no such thing as spontaneous memory; therefore, once a common past has been devised and described, a country's leaders are faced with the need to continuously stimulate awareness of this past among the population. Leaders do this by creating archives, marking anniversaries, eulogising, authenticating documents and organising celebrations.⁷⁹ Such national spectacles, Smith observes, are 'the most potent and durable aspects of nationalism.'⁸⁰ Holidays, festivals and commemorations, according to Podeh, 'help to establish an annual cycle of remembrance designed to ensure that several times a year members [of a society] will recall certain "sacred" moments from their collective past.'⁸¹ These types of commemorative activities allow the ruling power to cultivate the population's understanding of and feelings towards the nation, and in each occasion the state plays a central role.

In his work *The Politics of National Celebration in the Arab Middle East*, Podeh outlines a number of common interpretations of nationalist celebrations put forward by scholars, three of which are relevant to this study. The purposes of celebrations are: to create or enforce a national identity; to legitimise one's rule or defend the established order; and/or to trumpet the leader's power and authority.⁸² The first point contends that through celebrations leaders aim to immerse the citizen in the ideological fabric of the state in order to bolster solidarity within communities, and create a common bond of nationalism. Smith writes that through such ceremonies 'every member of a community participates in the life, emotions and virtues of that community.'⁸³ The German Nazi party, for example, manipulated popular festivals in order to advance its vision of building a racially and culturally pure society, notably with their hijacking of the celebration of Christmas, which had historically been a most German holiday. In

⁷⁹ Pierre Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History', in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 1, ed. by Pierre Nora, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 7.

⁸⁰ Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993), p. 77.

⁸¹ Elie Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 16.

⁸² Elie Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebration in the Arab Middle East* (2011), pp. 19-24.

⁸³ Smith, *National Identity* (1991), p. 78.

1934, People's Christmas (*Volksweihnachten*) was celebrated in the streets as state-orchestrated festivities swept across the nation. The merging of a traditional festive holiday with Nationalist Socialist ideology 'provided an ideological myth and a moment of communal solidarity that shaped the identity of individual members.'⁸⁴ In a sense, Germans became Nazis through participation and immersion in official festivities such as these.⁸⁵ In Iran, the Safavids, four centuries earlier, had achieved the same by appropriating the Muharram rituals.

The second point relates to the desire of the ruling power to strengthen, acquire or maintain legitimacy. A regime which has attained power under dubious circumstances can use national occasions, such as celebrations, festivals, or holidays to help strengthen its nationalist narrative and legitimise its authority. This is typical for authoritarian regimes, or revolutionary ones (or both), which are generally in a position to manipulate ideology to their advantage but at the same time are likely to have their legitimacy questioned. Wood argues that this strategic use of national celebration can reach the level of 'commemorative obsession' when the legitimacy of the regime, or ruler, is in jeopardy, thus creating a clear link between celebration and legitimisation.⁸⁶ Such 'commemorative obsession' can be observed in the calendar of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which holds frequent annual holidays such as Revolution Day, Islamic Republic Day and the Revolt of 15 Khordad,⁸⁷ and observes yearly commemorations of events such as the Black Friday massacre. Such events serve to present the Islamic Republic as sacrosanct, essential to the character of the nation.⁸⁸ This has been explained by David Kertzer, who wrote, 'In rendering their political system sacred through the use of ritual, people end up legitimizing the power held by political leaders.'⁸⁹ Similarly, in the

⁸⁴ Joe Perry, *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p. 185.

⁸⁵ Joe Perry, 'Nazifying Christmas: Political Culture and Popular Celebration in the Third Reich', *Central European History*, 38:4 (2005), p. 572.

⁸⁶ Nancy Wood, 'Memory's Remains: Les Lieux de mémoire', *History and Memory*, 6:1 (1994), p. 143.

⁸⁷ To commemorate the revolt on 5 June 1963, which followed the arrest of Khomeini by the Shah's regime.

⁸⁸ Of the French Revolution, Nora wrote that the revolutionary calendar was supposed to 'stop the clock of history at the moment of the Revolution: the future's days, months, years, and centuries would forever call to mind images of the revolutionary epic.' See Nora, 'Between Memory and History' (1996), p. 15.

⁸⁹ David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 37-38.

Soviet Union mass celebrations were used by the political elites 'in their efforts to perpetuate the political *status quo*.'⁹⁰

The third point asserts that through national celebrations, a regime can express its overarching power and authority. Machiavelli noted the importance of celebrations for the ruler, who, he wrote:

Ought to entertain the people with festivals and spectacles at convenient seasons of the year... and show himself an example of courtesy and liberality; nevertheless, always maintaining the majesty of his rank, for he must never consent to abate in anything.⁹¹

The celebration is, therefore, an exhibition of power and authority, where by demonstrating these attributes, the ruling authority seeks to gain the admiration and passivity of its citizens. This strategy was commonplace in Ancient Rome, where the emperor would offer 'bread and circuses' in the shape of military parades and games, and build impressive monuments, in order to impress upon the people his supremacy. Such spectacles allowed the citizens to be stirred and to feel a stronger bond with their ruler, while simultaneously being placated.⁹²

Cultural politics is essentially the shaping of politics and society through the use of culture. It is the stage upon which politics assumes style, form and meaning. Because shaping nationalism and a national identity is a process that requires a degree of creative imagination, a degree of artistry too is involved in the articulation of the resulting narrative to the population. Murray Edelman observes of regimes and proponents of political causes, that they 'know that it takes much coercion, propaganda, and the portrayal of issues in terms that entertain, distort, and shock to extract a public response of any kind.'⁹³ The purpose is not merely to project a narrative, but project it in a way that stirs emotions and incites enthusiasm in the population. Thus, each aspect of a celebration, festival or ritual is choreographed to elicit an emotional reaction.

⁹⁰ Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 16.

⁹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. by W.K. Marriott (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2008), p. 108.

⁹² Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011), p. 21.

⁹³ Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1987), p. 7.

Throughout the modern history of Iran, leaders have recognised the potential benefits of utilising the country's rich cultural heritage to create a sense of national pride while legitimising their political missions, as can be seen from the Safavid period onwards.

Celebration and Strategies of Legitimation from the Safavid to Qajar Period

Jeffrey Alexander has written that the purpose of secular performance, on the political or theatrical stage, is fundamentally the same as sacred ritual.

They stand or fall on their ability to produce psychological identification and cultural extension. The aim is to create via skilful and affecting performance, the emotional connection of audience with actor and text and thereby to create the conditions for projecting cultural meaning from performance to the audience.⁹⁴

Political performance, then, is the most vivid expression of cultural politics. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations reflected historic Iranian cultural political strategies meant to increase legitimacy, which were particularly pertinent from the Safavid period onwards. During this time the state successfully challenged various competing historical narratives and religious traditions and replaced these with an official Safavid state ideology.

The Safavids ultimately based their legitimacy on their role as defenders of Twelver Shiism and as descendants of the Seventh Imam.⁹⁵ The first Safavid monarch, Shah Ismail (r. 1488-1524), presented himself as a messianic figure, 'come to the world as a Master', akin to Fereydun, Khosrow, Jamshid, Zohak, Rostam and Alexander.⁹⁶ The powerful Qizilbash tribe venerated Ismail as a god on earth and allegedly on occasion even entered the field of battle unarmed, in the belief that their celestial shah would protect them.⁹⁷ The term shah itself had a dualistic meaning under Ismail, denoting a political and

⁹⁴ Alexander, 'Cultural Pragmatics' (2006), pp. 55-56.

⁹⁵ Keddie, *Modern Iran* (2003), p. 14.

⁹⁶ Andrew J Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of an Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 13.

⁹⁷ Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 296.

religious guide, and under his rule in particular the spheres of the temporal and the spiritual were joined.⁹⁸

The conversion of Ismail's domain to Shiism was a legitimising act and instituted a break with the past and the establishment of a new order. One work by al-Karaki written in 1511, entitled 'Breath of Divinity in Cursing Magic and Idolatry', according to Rula Abisaab sought to 'supply Safavid officials with an ideological defense against the Ottomans and embellish the superiority and religious 'authenticity' of Shi'ism for Safavid subjects.'⁹⁹ The early Safavids sought to establish political legitimacy too by marrying members of the Safavid family not only to the Qizilbash elite, but also to notable Persian families.¹⁰⁰ The constant power struggle between the powerful Qizilbash and the Safavid elite would ultimately be resolved under Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629).

By the end of the reign of the fourth Safavid monarch Khodabanda (r. 1578-1587), despite civil war and foreign incursion, the Safavid elite continued to reinforce their official commitment to Shiism within their domain in order to differentiate their faith and political mission from those of internal and foreign alternatives.¹⁰¹ The Safavid patronage of a 'cult of imams' sought to initiate, to borrow Pierre Nora's term, *lieux de mémoire*, places where the past could be remembered and venerated. The methodical implementation of rituals which had been given a Safavid flavour, particularly those held in the holy month of Muharram based around the Ashura, paved the way for the centralisation of Safavid authority to the detriment of the Qizilbash. This can particularly be observed during the reign of Shah Abbas, when political ceremonies initiated the creation of what Babak Rahimi refers to as a 'theater state'.¹⁰² Performance and ceremony became part of the fabric of Safavid rule. Babayan observes of this period:

Notions of holiness that had come to sanctify some holy men in the past no longer applied in the new age of Shah Abbas as he

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. xxviii.

⁹⁹ Rula Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe and Massumeh Farhad, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p. 26.

¹⁰¹ Newman, *Safavid Iran* (2012), p. 49.

¹⁰² Babak Rahimi, 'The Rebound Theater State: The Politics of the Safavid Camel Sacrifice Rituals, 1598-1695 C.E.', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3 (2004), p. 452.

consolidated one particular Alid lineage, and one genealogy of beliefs.¹⁰³

The purpose was to establish official sites of commemoration, limiting human contact to defined sacred structures. Shiite ceremonies and rituals were refined and dramatised during Shah Abbas' reign and became, as Abisaab observes, 'emblems of his domain.'¹⁰⁴

The city of Isfahan and its magnificent Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan served as the centre for Safavid power under Shah Abbas and it was here where the most elaborate Muharram rituals in the Safavid domain took place.¹⁰⁵ As has been observed already, celebrations can play a key role in minimising class hostility, binding members of a society together in acts of communal merriment. Calmard observes that the very principle of Shia commemorations such as the Muharram ceremonies is to minimise or temporarily abolish social rank through ritual participation.¹⁰⁶ The rituals themselves, which included elaborate processions, ritual fights, theatrical re-enactments of the battle of Karbala, self-flagellation, sermons and ritual dancing,¹⁰⁷ were used to both fulfil political aims and 'as a means to propagate the official creed.'¹⁰⁸

Under Shah Abbas, the Muharram rituals became the centre of socio-political life in Persia. By the mid-17th century provincial governors throughout the Safavid realm took on the role of patron and director of the procession, a role that had previously been the prerogative of the local *futuvvat* circles.¹⁰⁹ The centralisation of religious authority that occurred under Shah Abbas and subsequent shahs institutionalised, in Babayan's words, 'a systemic functioning of the Ashura rituals.'¹¹⁰ The initiation of newly invented ceremonies such as the

¹⁰³ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs* (2002), p. 106.

¹⁰⁴ Abisaab, *Converting Persia* (2015), p. 68.

¹⁰⁵ See Babak Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran: Studies on Safavid Muharram Rituals, 1590-1641 CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 188-191. He writes that the 'construction of the royal maydan served as the ceremonial staging arena for the Safavid political order, wherein the promise of a future utopia was architecturally performed in an open field.'

¹⁰⁶ Jean Calmard, 'Shi'i Rituals and Power II. The Consolidation of Safavid Shi'ism: Folklore and Popular Religion', in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. by Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 168.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 178-181.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁹ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs* (2002), p. 220. *Futuvvat* essentially denoted chivalric and religious brotherhoods.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 226.

camel sacrifice ritual as part of the Muharram programme in Isfahan is representative of the simultaneous establishment of absolute sovereignty, which allowed for changes in state-society relations.¹¹¹ Shah Abbas removed some components of the rituals and created new 'performative elements', gradually changing the programme better to suit his political aims.¹¹² Rahimi's study on the Safavid Muharram rituals focuses on the theatrical aspect of politics during this period. The territorial state, he argues, relies on 'the theatrical projection of power through ceremonial techniques that render power absolute and boundaries of legitimate authority impermeable.'¹¹³ The expansion and dramatization of the ceremonies beginning in the rule of Shah Abbas is indicative of the Safavid Empire operating 'as a "Theater State" based on pomp and pageantry.'¹¹⁴

Although elaborate passion plays appear to have been observed under Nader Shah too, he prohibited the anti-Sunni aspects of Shia rituals.¹¹⁵ Nader's introduction of the Ja'fari Madhhab and his execution of the chief cleric in Persia, Mirza Abdol-Hasan, represented a clear break with the Safavid religious standard and the establishment of a new order.¹¹⁶ Ernest Tucker considers Nader's challenge to Iran's Twelver Shia identity to be a political act, intended to legitimise his reign after over 200 years of Safavid rule.¹¹⁷ While the Muharram rituals helped to legitimise the Safavids, Nader Shah sought alternative strategies to establish his authority. The pomp and ceremony of the Safavid shahs was a thing of the past; even Nader's coronation was described by Michael Axworthy as being 'businesslike rather than sumptuous.'¹¹⁸

During the Qajar period the *ta'ziyeh*, a theatrical performance centred around the battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, became an

¹¹¹ Rahimi, 'The Rebound Theater State' (2004), p. 463.

¹¹² Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran* (2012), p. 222.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 179.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 233.

¹¹⁵ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs* (2002) p. 160. One of the Persian chroniclers of the period, Muhammad Kazim Marvi, stated that Nader forbade the open performance of *ta'ziyah*, but that some of his subjects continued to observe the practice in private. See Ernest Tucker, 'Nadir Shah and the Ja'fari Madhhab Reconsidered', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1994), p. 164.

¹¹⁶ Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 165-166.

¹¹⁷ See Tucker, 'Nadir Shah and the Ja'fari Madhhab Reconsidered', pp. 163-179.

¹¹⁸ Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia* (2006), p. 165.

elaborate occasion, comprising a huge cast of professional and amateur actors, and bankrolled by the elite. It was built upon a traditional ritual recounting of the battle of Karbala, called *rawda khani*, which was a feature of the Ashura programme during the Safavid period. Under the patronage of Naser al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), *ta'ziyeh* was at its most splendid.¹¹⁹ Like in the Safavid period, the Qajar shahs used their patronage of rituals to strengthen their ties to the masses and to legitimise their rule politically and religiously.¹²⁰ The *ta'ziyeh* performances could also serve as magnificent displays of wealth and power.

The Naser al-Din Shah period in particular saw an increase in public celebrations, rituals and pageants, in which the Shah was presented to the public as the head of the nation. Naser al-Din Shah understood that, in the words of Afshin Marashi, 'cultivating a public image was a prerequisite for effective rule.'¹²¹ Grand spectacles and displays of pomp were meant to elevate 'the ceremonial status of these weak modernizing states, adorning them with the trappings of the advanced states of Europe while cultivating the loyalty of their masses.'¹²² *Ta'ziyeh* performances in particular allowed for the Shah and the state to circumvent the ulama and project their commitment to Shiism to the population.¹²³ In this context, as Jennifer Scarce observes, the Shah used the performance as a 'powerful, highly visible instrument of propaganda which he could use to demonstrate pious devotion to Shi'ism in public.'¹²⁴

Much like in the Safavid period, the state patronage of the Muharram rituals spread across the whole of Persia. Governors and local dignitaries were patrons of *ta'ziyeh* and their residences even served as venues for performances.¹²⁵ Special theatres were also constructed for state-orchestrated

¹¹⁹ Peter J. Chelkowski, 'Ta'ziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran', *Performing Arts Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1977), p. 36.

¹²⁰ Kamran Aghaie, 'Religious rituals, social identities and political relationships in Tehran under Qajar rule, 1850s-1920s', in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. by Robert Gleave (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p. 376.

¹²¹ Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), p. 16.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹²³ Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 435.

¹²⁴ Jennifer Scarce, 'Some Interpretations of Religious and Popular Culture in Qajar Tilework', in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. by Robert Gleave (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p. 441.

¹²⁵ Aghaie, 'Religious rituals, social identities and political relationships in Tehran under Qajar rule, 1850s-1920s' (2005), p. 385.

performances, which shifted *ta'ziyeh* from the social space and it essentially became monopolised by the state, becoming a state celebration.¹²⁶ In 1868 Naser al-Din Shah ordered the construction of a 20,000 seat amphitheatre in Tehran, called Takya Dawlat, to host the official state-sponsored *ta'ziyeh* performances. It was designed in the style of European opera houses, symbolising the dramatic metamorphosis of a traditional modest ritual, observed in towns and villages across the country, into a state sponsored ceremony, in which the monarch played a central role.¹²⁷

The staging of *ta'ziyeh* declined in the early Pahlavi period as Reza Shah sought new strategies of legitimacy, moving away from the traditional forms of ritual and the veneration of imams. Within the first decades of his coronation, Reza Shah's regime had initiated new *lieux de mémoire*, including the tombs of Hafez in Shiraz and Ferdowsi in Mashhad. The initiation of the latter shrine coincided with the celebrations of the 1000th anniversary of the birth of Ferdowsi, which will be discussed in the following chapter. During the Pahlavi period, state sponsorship of traditional ceremonies associated with the holy month of Muharram became a thing of the past, but state sponsored celebrations continued, albeit with a different ideological thrust. Breaking with the Qajar past, the Pahlavi's organised secular spectacles similar in type, programme and purpose as those organised elsewhere in Europe in the 20th century, so it is appropriate to examine a number of them here. Of interest is the way in which regimes used culture and celebration to legitimise their political mission in the face of modernisation and competing national ideologies, at home and abroad.

Cultural Politics and National Spectacle

In the years following the French Revolution, new festivals were devised in France, which revived the festive commemorative traditions of the past, but with a new nationalist sentiment that was divergent from tradition. During the monarchy, public fêtes had been designed to benefit both the population and the ruler, in order to 'tighten the people's ties to their princes and make them forget, for a brief time, the misfortunes and cares inherent in their weak

¹²⁶ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 44.

¹²⁷ Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), pp. 290-292.

humanity.¹²⁸ Festivals and celebrations continued after the revolution for similar purposes, but with a different focus. The revolution constructed a new historical narrative, which bolstered the revolutionary memory and attempted to erase any favourable recollections of the monarchy. Celebrations became an important tool through which to articulate this change.¹²⁹ This commemorative activity became a sort of 'civil religion' incorporating holidays, anniversaries, festivals and a new calendar, in order to stress the discontinuation of the old and the emergence of the new.¹³⁰ One example of this was the abolition of Catholic feast days and their replacement with revolutionary ones.¹³¹ Other new holidays emerged, glorifying the new order, such as the *Fête de la Fédération*, which evolved from spontaneous acts of celebration amongst peasants. Mona Ozouf describes this process as an evolution from 'impoverished ritual of unity', into state-level ritual.¹³² The *Fête de la Fédération* became a major event in the revolutionary calendar, combining official and non-official activities, including military parades, fireworks, torchlight processions and concerts.¹³³ Similarly, the *Festa della Repubblica*, held every year on 2 June in Italy, with the first one observed in 1948, celebrates the referendum that decided to abolish the Italian monarchy in 1946 and establish a republic.¹³⁴ Persuading the population that the very emergence of the new political order is cause for commemoration and celebration is a highly effective way of legitimising that new political order.

Commemorative events have been a frequent occurrence in the West and, since the era of colonialism, in the Middle East. The French were so wary of the power of national celebrations to arouse both national fervour and anti-colonial attitudes, that they banned them in Syria during the French mandate (1920-1946).¹³⁵ When the French withdrew from Syria, new celebrations such as Martyrs' Day and the Battle of Maysalun were incorporated into the calendar and encouraged the population to reflect on Syria's newly minted historical

¹²⁸ Claude Ruggieri (1830) quoted in Charles Rearick, 'Festivals in Modern France: The Experience of the Third Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12:3 (1977), p. 436.

¹²⁹ Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011), p. 7.

¹³⁰ Elie Podeh, 'Celebrating Continuity: The Role of State Holidays in Syria (1918-2010)', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40:4 (2013), p. 430.

¹³¹ Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. xi.

¹³² *Ibid*, pp. 36-39.

¹³³ Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011), p. 17.

¹³⁴ See Norman Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 397-401.

¹³⁵ Podeh, 'Celebrating Continuity' (2013), p. 435.

narrative, which glorified past struggles against the Ottoman and French rulers.¹³⁶ Similarly, following the Qassem coup in Iraq in 1958, the new regime sought to delegitimise the British-backed Hashemite era and create a new Iraqi identity. All celebrations associated with the Hashemites were annulled, except for Army Day, and a new festive calendar was inaugurated which revolved around Revolution Day.¹³⁷ The reaction to colonialism in each case was to seek to obliterate it from the national psyche, creating new holidays in the process that would strengthen the emerging powers' claims of legitimacy.

In February 1913, Tsar Nicholas II and his subjects celebrated the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Romanov dynasty. The Russian revolution of 1905, rapid industrialisation and urbanisation had brought into question the role of the Romanov monarchy in a changing social and political landscape. The revolution of 1905 had brought about significant curtailments of the powers of the throne and transferred some of those powers to the State Duma. By embracing the cult of 17th century Muskovy, the Tsar was reinventing the Romanov dynasty in order to make it relevant in a post-revolution, 20th century Russian context. The purpose was, in the words of Orlando Figes, to 'reinvent the past, to recount the epic of the 'popular Tsar', so as to invest the monarchy with a mythical historical legitimacy and an image of enduring permanence'.¹³⁸ Comparisons can be made here with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's appropriation and elaboration of the myth of Cyrus the Great.

During the early 20th century, politicians in Italy harked back to the glories of the Roman Empire to stir up nationalist sentiment. This idea, termed Romanità, was not particularly new, as Italians had generally identified themselves as the natural heirs of Ancient Rome, and in a sense this affected how they interpreted their present and future circumstances.¹³⁹ In an attempt to use these existing sentiments the Fascist regime called itself the *Olimpiadi della Civiltà*; Olympiad of Civilisation.¹⁴⁰ The Fascists, and to a lesser extent the governments of unified Italy before them (1870-1922), utilised Romanità to

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 436.

¹³⁷ Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011), p. 123.

¹³⁸ Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891-1924* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 3.

¹³⁹ Peter Aicher, 'Mussolini's Forum and the Myth of Augustan Rome', *The Classical Bulletin*, 76:2 (2000), p. 118.

¹⁴⁰ Aristotile Kallis, 'Framing Romanità: The Celebrations for the Bimillenario Augusteo and the Augusteo-Ara Pacis Project', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46:809 (2011), p. 810.

create a myth that presented the Rome of antiquity as the ideal state; a state that produced a selfless and gracious population that put the unified state's interest before regional or local concerns.¹⁴¹ The bimillennial celebration of the birth of Emperor Augustus that took place in 1937-38 was a magnificent and concrete expression of *Romanità*. It included a series of publications on Roman history, the restoration of Augustus' mausoleum and the reconstruction of the *Ara Pacis*,¹⁴² a series of excavations across the country, academic conferences and museum exhibitions, including the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*.¹⁴³

Although in its origins the celebration was primarily a cultural commemoration, focusing on archaeological investigation, scholarship and education, it was soon appropriated by the Fascists, after which it 'spiralled into a gargantuan technical, aesthetic and indeed political tour de force of a regime enthralled by its own universalist illusions.'¹⁴⁴ Commemorative stamps were printed with imagery of Augustus and quotations from the *Res Gestae*, and Augustus was represented as the embodiment of the perpetual values of the *Romanità*, stressing the virtues of robust, centralized leadership.¹⁴⁵ By uniting the country under the banner of *Romanità*, which stressed obedience to the state and Rome's inevitable return to prominence, Mussolini sought to legitimise his position, creating a link between what he was attempting to achieve in the 20th century and the triumphs of the ancient emperor 2,000 years earlier. At the entrance to the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* exhibition a banner was erected which read, 'Italians, you must ensure that the glories of the past are surpassed by the glories of the future.'¹⁴⁶

Celebrations, festivals and commemorations are vehicles through which to promote narratives. In these staged productions in which cultural politics acquires significance, politicians are the actors, and cultural symbols form the mise-en-scene. During the 2,600th anniversary of the Japanese empire in 1940,

¹⁴¹ Susan L. Fugate Brangers, 'Political Propaganda and Archaeology: The Mausoleum of Augustus in the Fascist Era', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3:16 (2013), p. 125.

¹⁴² Meaning 'Altar of Peace'. An altar commissioned to honour Augustus' triumphal return to Rome after three years of military campaigning.

¹⁴³ Kallis, 'Framing Romanità' (2011), p. 813.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 830.

¹⁴⁵ Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27:1 (1992), p. 16.

¹⁴⁶ Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 93.

for instance, 'almost every imaginable means of shaping memoirs of the past was employed to transmit the historical significance of the 2,600th anniversary.'¹⁴⁷ During the tercentenary of Romanov rule in 1913, the principal events were held in traditional and religious venues and a number of theatrical performances and parades took place.¹⁴⁸ While a good performance relies on a strong narrative, it also needs a good backdrop and strong actors, and these are the vehicles that really carry the message to the population. During the Safavid period, as has been discussed, the renovation and reconstruction of architectural structures reinforced the shah's legitimacy and 'staged state power in symbols and elaborate memorials of celestial kingship.'¹⁴⁹ They served as *lieux de mémoire*.

Conclusion

This chapter began by introducing theories of nationalism and national celebrations before discussing state orchestrated commemorations in the Safavid and Qajar periods. It was stated that the forming of a nationalist narrative is not a natural process and that it relies on political impetus to both conceptualise and project a specific understanding of the nation onto the population. During the Pahlavi period a number of grand celebrations took place that were designed to achieve this, the most magnificent of which was the Anniversary Celebrations in 1971. As this chapter has shown, in Iran and elsewhere, leaders throughout modern history have employed celebrations to meet political goals. The most pertinent explanations for national celebrations relate to them as displays of power and authority held to encourage the passivity and admiration of the population; as means through which to project a political narrative onto the population, in order to legitimise the state by rooting its successes in a historical context; and to immerse the population in the ideological fabric of the state for the purpose of strengthening solidarity within communities and essentially bridging socio-political divides. Often, as this chapter has shown, celebrations attempt to achieve all three of these objectives.

¹⁴⁷ Kenneth James Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2600th Anniversary* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 3; p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ Lindsey Hughes, *The Romanovs: Ruling Russia, 1613-1917* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 218.

¹⁴⁹ Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran* (2012), pp. 175-76.

The promotion and elaboration of traditional rites and rituals have been discussed in the Iranian context, however the creation of new commemorations during the Pahlavi period reflect the continuous modification of the meaning of the sovereign and state in relation to the nation. New narratives were constructed to complement the new regime's drive for legitimacy and the past was used to bring meaning and justification to the Shah's modernising policies. David Lowenthal explains the motivation of reconstructing the past when he wrote, 'Beleaguered by loss and change we keep our bearings only by clinging to remnants of stability.'¹⁵⁰ In the next chapters we will see that just as Mussolini identified himself with Augustus and Nicholas II with the earliest Romanovs, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sought to present himself as a spiritual successor to the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. The Anniversary Celebrations of 1971 were the pinnacle of this effort to link the Pahlavi state with the ancient Achaemenid king. They took place on a grander scale and encouraged wider international support than most of the celebrations described in this chapter, but they shared similar characteristics, as will be made clear over the following chapters. But what was quite extraordinary about the Anniversary Celebrations is that they were aimed not only, perhaps not even primarily, at a domestic audience, but an international one, too. After two centuries of foreign interference in Iranian affairs, the purpose was to announce Iran's re-emergence as a serious and independent power to the world.

Throughout Iranian history rulers have made use of political spectacle. It was not enough to simply proclaim that Shiism was to be the official religion of the Safavid realm, a performance was required to articulate this change and involve the people. Safavid subjects essentially were bound to Safavid authority through participation in state-organised rituals, and thus the central position of the shah as the defender of both the state and the faith was firmly established. Although the Pahlavi state ideology explicitly moved away from Islamic tradition, it employed similar strategies in its efforts to establish its authority. There were even plans for a purpose-built ceremonial square in the Shahestan Pahlavi in northern Tehran, called the Shah and Nation Square. The revolution halted the construction of the space, but had it been completed it would have been even larger than Naqsh-e Jahan in Isfahan. It would also have served a similar

¹⁵⁰ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 6.

function to the square constructed by Shah Abbas; a stage upon which the Shah could play the role of the embodiment of the nation.

Chapter 2: Iranian Nationalism and Cyrus the Great

Although there are certain common themes that can be recognised in theories of nationalism, as the previous chapter has shown, each nationalist discourse is unique. It is therefore difficult to understand fully the Anniversary Celebrations without first answering a number of questions. Why, for example, was Cyrus the Great chosen by the Pahlavi ideologues as the figure with whom the Shah should identify himself? And how was the image of this ancient king manipulated to fit into the Shah's nationalist discourse? This chapter will explain how knowledge of Cyrus and the Achaemenid kings reached Iran through Westerners, who had long been fascinated by pre-Islamic Iran. As Reza Shah sought to distance himself from the Qajar dynasty and assert his new dynasty's rightful claim to the Iranian throne, he turned to Ancient Iran as a source of legitimacy, a move in keeping with intellectual trends developed in the 19th century by authors such as Akhundzadeh and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani. They argued that the Arab invasions marked the end of Iranian prosperity and that by removing foreign, particularly Arab, influences from Iranian culture and language, a more pure Iran could be found. Early in the reign of Reza Shah, Qajar buildings were demolished and in their places buildings were erected in styles reminiscent of the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods. By adopting these ancient architectural practices as his own, Reza Shah was connecting himself explicitly to the ancient kings of Iran. It is important to understand these trends in Iranian nationalism that developed throughout the late 19th century up to the Anniversary Celebrations in 1971. This will allow us better to understand the aims and motivations of the court of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in deciding to hold a celebration honouring the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great.

As Mussolini termed his Italy the Olympiad of Civilisation, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi spoke of his own Great Civilisation. In a press conference in 1971, the Shah explained the term:

I think that we can say very firmly and with absolute certainty that Iran will not only become an industrial nation but in my assessment will, in 12 years' time, enter what we say [sic] the era of the Great Civilisation. The era of the Great Civilisation, for

those who are interested to know, is a kind of welfare state, where everybody from birth until death will enjoy every kind of social insurances.¹⁵¹

The notion of a Great Civilisation had very clear ancient connotations, as the Shah sought to utilise Achaemenid historiography as a key component of his own historical narrative. The ideology espoused by the regime sought to combine, in the words of Shakibi, 'a Romantic interpretation of imperial history that was subjective and impassioned with a deterministic conception that identified it with the inevitable golden age of Iran's modern future.'¹⁵² The Achaemenid Empire had, however, been largely forgotten by Iranians until the arrival of European travellers to Iran from the 18th century onwards. Even the great ancient city of Persepolis was, and still is, commonly referred to as *Takht-e Jamshid* (the Throne of Jamshid) after the mythical fourth king of the world described in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. This begs the question, where did this resurgence of interest in Achaemenid history come from, why was it selected as a core part of Iran's nationalist discourse in the 20th century, and by whom?

Iranian Nationalism

The nation is commonly understood as a distinctively modern form of political society, bound together with a collective consciousness.¹⁵³ The term *vatan* had been used in Persian to denote a habitual place, or ordinary home, but its meaning was changed to denote a national homeland by intellectuals from the middle of the 19th century onwards.¹⁵⁴ During this period, education was controlled by the Shiite clergy through the *maktab* system, which stifled any open political discussion of modernisation.¹⁵⁵ The translation and proliferation of the works of modern Western political philosophers and the increased interaction between Westerners and Iranians helped to change this situation. A

¹⁵¹ Darius Kadivar, 'New Deal: Shah Explains "The Great Civilization" During Press Conference' (1971), *Iranian.com*, 1 September 2012, video available online at <<http://iranian.com/main/blog/darius-kadivar/new-deal-shah-explains-great-civilization-during-press-conference-1971-0.html>> [accessed on 5 September 2016].

¹⁵² Shakibi, 'Pahlavism' (2013), p. 118.

¹⁵³ Helen Ting, 'Social Construction of Nation – A Theoretical Exploration', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 14, no. 3 (2008), p. 454.

¹⁵⁴ Mohamad Tavokoli-Targhi, 'From Patriotism to Matriotism: A Tropological Study of Iranian Nationalism, 1870-1909', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (2002), pp. 218-219.

¹⁵⁵ Abdolmohammadi Pejman, 'The Political Thought of Mirzā Aqā Khān Kermani, The Father of Persian National Liberalism', *Oriente Moderno*, NUOVA SERIE, Anno 94, Nr. 1 (2014), p. 160.

number of prominent intellectuals, including Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani and Mirza Malkam Khan, criticised the role of Islam in public life and utilised the works of thinkers such as Voltaire, Ernest Renan and Montesquieu to attempt to construct a narrative for the Iranian homeland.¹⁵⁶ The rich catalogue of Persian history and literature, in the words of Tavakoli-Targhi, 'provided the pedagogical resources for the making of nationalist subjectivity and identity.'¹⁵⁷

The focus on Ancient Persia served three purposes.¹⁵⁸ First, by focusing on the ancient past, the movement naturally attained a level of authenticity. David Lowenthal noted this phenomenon in our understanding of history when he observed, 'Being ancient makes things precious by their proximity to the dawn of time, to their earlier beginnings... the more ancient a lineage the more highly venerated it is.'¹⁵⁹ Second, the lack of Persian material on the ancient period allowed for innovation and creativity, and the period served as a convenient template onto which the ideals and ideas of the modern world could be transplanted. As noted above, discussions of modernisation had been suppressed by the conservative teaching of the *maktab*, but through exploration of history this dialogue could take place. And third, this innovation and creativity, in a sense the rearticulation of ancient history, allowed for effective comparison with the current state of affairs. The high point of ancient Persian pre-eminence provided a sharp contrast to the dilapidated current state of affairs. It served, as Marashi observed, as a 'political call to arms.'¹⁶⁰

This contrast between the glorious past and the present reality inevitably led some to question who, or what, was to blame for the decline. One of the first intellectuals to tackle this question was Jalal al-Din Mirza (1827-1872), who was the forty-eighth son of Fath Ali Shah Qajar. He spoke French and was educated at the Dar al-Fonoun, where he was exposed to a number of important Western historical and philosophical texts, including John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, George Rawlinson's *History of the Sassanian Kings of Persia* and a number of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 149.

¹⁵⁷ Tavakoli-Targhi, 'From Patriotism to Matriotism, p. 221.

¹⁵⁸ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 55.

¹⁵⁹ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1998), p. 176.

¹⁶⁰ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 55.

works of Voltaire.¹⁶¹ His *Nameh-ye Khosrovan* (Book of Kings), which was written in simple Persian prose and intended as an elementary text book in the Dar al-Fonoun, marked a break from the Persian historiography of the Qajar period, in the sense that it stressed cultural and political continuity from the pre-Islamic to Islamic periods.¹⁶² Jalal al-Din Mirza presented a romanticised image of the pre-Islamic period and showed that the Arab invasions were, as Amanat writes, ‘a political catastrophe that pummelled the superior Iranian civilization under its hoof.’¹⁶³

Akhundzadeh (1812-1878) was another important nationalist intellectual during this period. His romantic interpretation of Iranian history was, in the words of Amanat, ‘the closest a nineteenth-century Iranian expatriate could come to the Deist ideas of the French Enlightenment’.¹⁶⁴ Like Jalal al-Din Mirza, with whom he was in contact, Akhundzadeh contrasted the glory of Ancient Persia with the Islamic period, tracing Iran’s deprivation to the barbarous Arab invaders:

It has been 1,280 years now that the naked and starving Arabs have descended upon you and made your life miserable. Your land is in ruins, your people ignorant and innocent of civilization, deprived of prosperity and freedom, and your King is a despot.¹⁶⁵

For Akhundzadeh, Ancient Persia represented modernity and authenticity, whereas the Islamic period was one of backwardness.¹⁶⁶ While the Islamic period provided an example of deprivation, the West was held up as model to which Persia should aspire. As Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi has written,

identification with heterotopic Europe served as an oppositional strategy for the disarticulation of the dominant Islamicate

¹⁶¹ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 59.

¹⁶² Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vajdani, ‘Jalal-al-din-Mirza’, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2008, available at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/jalal-al-din-mirza>> [accessed 04 September 2018].

¹⁶³ Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (2017), pp. 322-323.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 321.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (Houndmill: Palgrave, 2001), p. 102.

¹⁶⁶ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 72.

discourse and for the construction of a new pattern of self-identity grounded on pre-Islamic history and culture.¹⁶⁷

This shift towards the West and enlightenment ideas and away from Islam and the Islamite tradition represented a growing intellectual schism that developed during this period between the modernist intellectuals and the ulama.

An important aspect of Iranian nationalism that developed at this time was the Aryan myth, which came to have a huge influence on the Pahlavi state ideology under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, expressed most explicitly through his adoption of the term *Aryamehr*, Light of the Aryans. Western scholars such as Friedrich Max Müller and Arthur de Gobineau popularised the idea of a superior Aryan race and at the turn of the 20th century the word Aryan in many scholarly circles was used to mean a higher race.¹⁶⁸ While some scholars in Iran were certainly influenced by this racist doctrine, and the idea of a superior Iranian race perhaps had some allure, the Aryan myth in Iran reflected specific trends in Iranian nationalism and historiography. While the Aryan myth had distinctive anti-Jewish overtones in Europe, indeed it was used by some to denote one who is an anti-Semite, in Iran the ideology had its roots deep in Persian history and reflected, if anything, anti-Arab sentiment. Authors such as Akhundzadeh did not use ideas related to race to make abstract scientific pronouncements, but to legitimate their claims and to assert Iran, as Marashi writes, ‘as an equal and authentic member of a trans-European modernity.’¹⁶⁹ Like Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (1854-1896) sought to re-evaluate the ancient Iranian civilisation as distinct from the period after the Arab conquests. The idea of an ancient Aryan heritage again helped to emphasise this distinction.¹⁷⁰

The modern Iranian nationalism that developed from the middle of the 19th century and which was eventually embraced by the Pahlavi regime was stimulated by three factors: an increased awareness of European political

¹⁶⁷ Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran* (2001) p. 37.

¹⁶⁸ David Motadel, ‘Iran and the Aryan Myth’, in *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic*, ed. by Ali Ansari (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 124.

¹⁶⁹ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 75.

¹⁷⁰ For an analysis of race in nationalism, see Ali Ansari, ‘Iranian Nationalism and the Question of Race’, in *Constructing Nationalism in Iran: From the Qajars to the Islamic Republic*, ed. by Meir Litvak (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 101-117. Ansari argues that although the Aryan discourse may have been attractive, it was by no means popular and some of the key nationalists of the period, including Foroughi and Taqizadeh, not only did not support the racist doctrine, but argued against it.

philosophy and ideas of nationalism; an 'intellectual awakening', as Homa Katouzian terms it, to ancient Iranian history, in part influenced by Europeans; and the 'psychology of the downtrodden', in which modern Iranian nationalist intellectuals lamented their country's demise, which they associated, as some Westerners did, with the Arab invasion.¹⁷¹ They harked back to the glories of the Achaemenid and Sasanian periods in their search for the real Persia, a Persia uncontaminated by foreign culture and customs, and a Persia that commanded respect from the world. These ideas were, however, restricted to intellectuals and unknown to the general public, and at the beginning of the 20th century there was still no real sense of Iranian nationalism. Most Iranians had no concept of *vatan* and considered their local community or town as their homeland.¹⁷² These new ideas found a political voice at the beginning of the 20th century, with the publication of journals such as *Kaveh* and *Iranshahr* and into the Pahlavi period with the educational policies of the Pahlavi state.

As a scholar, as well as a statesman, Mohammad Ali Foroughi (1877-1942) had a profound influence on the politics and national ideology of Iran in the early- to mid-20th century. Like his predecessors discussed above, Foroughi sought to restore to Iran a degree of dignity and pride in Iranian culture and civilisation.¹⁷³ He contributed to the literature on Ancient Iran with a general history, published in 1902, as well as a history of the Sasanian period, published in 1898.¹⁷⁴ He dismissed the idea of race as a defining factor in national identity, concluding rather that it is history that provides a stronger binding force.¹⁷⁵ He helped to found the Society for National Monuments in 1922, which attempted to stimulate public participation in the nationalising efforts of the state, so that they would value more their culture and heritage.¹⁷⁶ Persian nationalism sought not only to transform history, but language too. In

¹⁷¹ Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 324.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 77.

¹⁷³ Ansari writes that for Foroughi 'Iran represented civilization, one that may have lost its way but a civilization nonetheless, that with a period of 'enlightenment' could once again contribute constructively to the progress of mankind.' Ali Ansari, 'Mohammad Ali Foroughi and the Construction of Civic Nationalism in Early Twentieth-Century Iran', in *Iran in the Middle East: Transnational Encounters and Social History*, ed. By H.E. Chehabi, Peyman Jafari and Maral Jefroudi (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 15.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁵ Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 105.

¹⁷⁶ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 125.

order to recover the true Iran that existed before the Arab invasions, it was argued that the Persian language must be purged of foreign, particularly Arab, words.¹⁷⁷ A number of organisations took part in the campaign to purify Persian language during the first decade of Reza Shah's rule, the most famous of which was the Farhangestan. Its purpose, as Foroughi stated, was to investigate strategies through which the Persian language could be altered in order to contribute to the 'Iranization' of culture and educational infrastructure and to stress the distinctiveness of Iranian civilisation.¹⁷⁸

In the nationalist newspaper *Kaveh*, which was published in Germany and ran from 1916 until 1921, Sayyid Hassan Taqizadeh (1878-1970) spoke of the importance of the 'revitalization of ancient Iranian national customs'.¹⁷⁹ The romantic nationalist intellectuals of the mid-late 19th century were important in re-articulating Persian history, but *Kaveh* sought to promulgate these ideas to a wider audience in order to instigate a societal move, as Pejman Abdolmohammadi writes, 'from theory to action.'¹⁸⁰ As well as engaging with orientalist literature and reformulating the history, myths and culture of Iran to the contemporary national form, Taqizadeh also called for fundamental reforms to Iran's education system and women's emancipation.¹⁸¹ The journal *Iranshahr*, which was launched after Taqizadeh and most of the *Kaveh* staff returned to Iran and which ran from 1922 until 1927, also rooted Iran's national spirit in the pre-Islamic past and presented a utopian idea of Ancient Iran.¹⁸² It also called for a 'spiritual revolution', achieved through educational modernisation and by infusing national culture through teaching.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁷ Mehrdad Kia, 'Persian Nationalism and the Campaign for Language Purification', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1998), p. 10.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Nematollah Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran: Anthropology, Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 36. See also Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (2012), pp. 55-65.

¹⁸⁰ Pejman Abdolmohammadi, 'History, National Identity and Myths in Iranian Contemporary Political Thought: Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh (1812-78), Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (1853-96) and Hassan Taqizadeh (1878-1970)', in *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic*, ed. by Ali Ansari (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 31.

¹⁸¹ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 88-83.

¹⁸² For a discussion of the content and aims of the journal, see Afshin Matin-Asgari, *Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 63-74

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 71.

During the late Qajar period there was a developing interest from the elite in ancient history. According to Lord Curzon, by the end of the 19th century, the Iranians were so enthused by their ancient capital of Persepolis, that the first modern warship of the Iranian navy, a 600-ton steamship purchased from Germany, was named *Persepolis*, while a small river steamer bought at the same time was named *Susa*.¹⁸⁴ At the same time, the Qajars began to show a willingness to engage with European archaeologists in the study of pre-Islamic history. For example, Prince Mo'tamad al-Dowleh Farhad Mirza, son of Abbas Mirza, led the third major excavations at Persepolis from 14 March to 16 April 1877. Persian interest in European investigations is reflected in the fact that Henry Rawlinson personally presented the first Persian language translation of the Bisotun inscriptions to Mohammad Shah, receiving a medal of the Lion and the Sun for his efforts.¹⁸⁵

In October 1877, Farhad Mirza gave permission to a German team to excavate at Persepolis, on the proviso that any artefacts they uncovered must remain in Persia.¹⁸⁶ The Germans refused to accept the condition, but the mere fact that it was set is indicative of a desire amongst the elite to safeguard Persia's cultural heritage. Artefacts were no longer commodities, but were part of Persian identity. Perhaps inspired by his travels to Europe, Naser al-Din Shah created the Royal Museum in his Golestan Palace in Tehran in 1876, which further reflects the growing interest in heritage amongst the Qajar elite during this period. The opening of the Bastan Museum in Tehran is often attributed to Reza Shah, however a precursor to the Bastan Museum, the National Museum, was established earlier in 1917 in the building of the Ministry of Education north of the Dar al-Fonun.¹⁸⁷ As we will see shortly, it was during the early Pahlavi period that the romantic nationalist discourse became part of the official state ideology, however this narrative had already become engrained in the political consciousness of the elite in late Qajar period.

¹⁸⁴ George Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1892), pp. 394-6.

¹⁸⁵ Talinn Grigor 'Orientalism and Mimicry of Selfness: Archaeology of the neo-Achaemenid Style', *L'Orientalisme architectural entre imaginaires et savoirs*, Paris, Picard (2009), p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Ali Mousavi, *Persepolis: Discovery and Afterlife of a World Wonder* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter Inc, 2012), p. 144.

¹⁸⁷ Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, 'Archaeology and the Iranian National Museum', in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran*, ed. by Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 129.

Appreciating Ancient Persia

The nationalist intellectual movement that occurred in Iran in the 19th and early 20th centuries reflected, to a certain extent, trends in European orientalist historiography. In the ancient world the Persians were respected to some extent by their Roman and Greek enemies, even though they were essentially considered barbarians, and Persians were the subjects of plays, poetry, philosophy and historical inquiry. However, this respect disappeared following the Arab invasion when, in the words of Richard Frye, 'a kind of curtain was drawn between the Persians and the West, and this lasted for many centuries.'¹⁸⁸ The classical and biblical sources remained the primary source for Westerners in the history of Iran and, as Ansari writes, they

left a narrative legacy that would permeate the medieval mind and be reinforced by the advent of the Renaissance, which, along with the growth in travel, literacy and publishing, ensured an increasing and fertile audience.¹⁸⁹

As interaction between Westerners and Persia increased in the early modern period, interest in Persian history developed once again in the West. This interaction began in earnest in the 16th century during the Safavid period. Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-1576) permitted foreigners to access Iranian markets, and the development of travel infrastructure under Shah Abbas made it easier for foreign merchants to travel through Persia.¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile, the exploits of the famous English adventurer Robert Sherley, who led Persian embassies to Europe during the reign of Shah Abbas, further fed the English public's fascination with the romance of the East.¹⁹¹ Partly inspired by these interactions, ancient Persian kings became popular subjects in theatre between the 16th and 18th centuries and plays were performed with titles such as *Xerxes: A Tragedy* and *The Tragedy of Darius*.¹⁹² At least four plays were written about

¹⁸⁸ Richard Frye, 'Persia in the Mind of the West', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 14:4 (2003), p. 403.

¹⁸⁹ Ali Ansari, 'Persia in the Western Imagination', in *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, ed. by Vanessa Martin (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 10.

¹⁹⁰ Lindsey Allen, *The Persian Empire: A History* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), p. 168.

¹⁹¹ For an account of the influence of the East on England during the Elizabethan period, see Jerry Brotton, *This Orient Isle: Elizabethan England and the Islamic World* (London: Allen Lane, 2016). For Shirley's exploits, pp. 233-266.

¹⁹² Parvin Loloj, 'Portraits of the Achaemenid Kings in English Drama: Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries', in *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by St John Simpson and John Curtis (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 34-40.

Cyrus the Great specifically, including the anonymously published *The Wars of Cyrus King of Persia, against Antiochus King of Assyria, with the Tragical End of Panthaea* (1594) and John Banks' *Cyrus the Great: or, The Tragedy of Love* (1696).¹⁹³

Throughout the proceeding two centuries, as Europeans, particularly the British, travelled to Iran, usually on diplomatic missions, interest in Ancient Persia grew further. It was during the early decades of the 19th century that the first attempts were made to excavate the site of Persepolis by British passers-by, such as Sir Gore Ouseley on his mission in 1811, with work continued by his attaché Robert Gordon and later by Lieutenant-Colonel Ephraim Gerrish Stannus in 1825 and Colonel John Macdonald in 1826.¹⁹⁴ The activity that can be observed at Persepolis indicates the enthusiasm that these early travellers felt at visiting the monuments of Ancient Persia. According to one report at the time,

English who wish to proceed overland from the East Indies, come by sea into the Persian Gulf... land at Benderabad... proceed to Shiraz... and take pleasure in visiting the ruins of Persepolis...¹⁹⁵

It was around this time that the first comprehensive history of Persia was published by Sir John Malcolm. Malcolm, who had travelled to Iran in 1800, was fascinated by the country and its history, and declared, 'I employ every leisure hour in researches into the history of this extraordinary country, with which we are but little acquainted.'¹⁹⁶ In his *History of Persia*, first published in 1815, he wrote that 'the English reader should be made acquainted with the history and condition of a people, who have in most ages acted a conspicuous part on the theatre of the world.'¹⁹⁷ Though many Western travellers to Persia were enthusiastic about visiting ancient ruins, not all were so enthralled. One British

¹⁹³ Which due to the sudden death of the actor playing Cyaxares, was abandoned after just four nights. See Hugh James Rose ed., *A New General Biographical Dictionary*, vol. III (London: Fellowes, 1841), p. 117.

¹⁹⁴ St John Simpson, 'Pottering Around Persepolis: Observations on Early European Visitors to the Site', in *Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire*, ed. by Christopher Tuplin (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2007), pp. 347-351.

¹⁹⁵ Von Kotzebue (1819), quoted in St John Simpson, 'Making their Mark' (2005), p. 12

¹⁹⁶ John Malcolm letter to his father from Shiraz, 17 August, 1800, in John William Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir John Malcolm*, vol. 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1856), p. 124.

¹⁹⁷ John Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1815), p. v.

serviceman wrote bitterly that Persepolis 'has been crammed down my throat, upon every available occasion, ever since I landed in Persia.'¹⁹⁸

These early travellers to Iran were struck by its backwardness, in direct contrast to its splendid past. Malcolm wrote that, 'Though no country has undergone, during the last twenty centuries, more revolutions than the kingdom of Persia, there is, perhaps, none that is less altered in its condition'¹⁹⁹ and Lord Curzon later characterised Iran as 'remote and backward'.²⁰⁰ Chamberlin explains how this attitude of Persia was in part stimulated by the foreigners' reactions to the ancient sites of Iran and other Eastern countries:

The cultured tourist was obliged to indulge in a complex piece of mental gymnastics. He had come to admire the great monuments of the past – Baalbeck, Persepolis, the Parthenon, Ctesiphon, the Pyramids. Demonstrably, they were the work of a brilliant civilization: equally demonstrably, they could have no relationship with the feckless, unwashed, immoral, poverty-stricken 'natives' who lived near, and only too often on, these glorious monuments. Therefore, the present inhabitants of the country housing these monuments must themselves be not only decadent, but interlopers.²⁰¹

To the European travellers, the modern reality of Persia provided a stark contrast to the splendid monuments of its past, and the imagined picture inspired by the romanticism of Hellenic and biblical accounts.

This disconnection, many European travellers reasoned, was brought about by the Arab invaders, whom they saw as brutish and uncivilised, or at the very least different and threatening. Some Europeans saw the advent of Islam as a direct cause of Persian depravity since their fall at the hands of the Arab invaders. Indeed, Malcolm writes that Islam was a prominent factor 'in retarding the progress of civilization among those who have adopted his [Mohammad's] faith... The History of Persia from the Arabian conquest to the present day may

¹⁹⁸ Quoted in Thomas Harrison, 'Reinventing Achaemenid Persia', in *The World of Achaemenid Persia*, ed. by Simpson and Curtis (2010), p. 23.

¹⁹⁹ Malcolm, *History of Persia*, vol. 2 (1815), p. 621.

²⁰⁰ Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 1 (1892), p. 634.

²⁰¹ Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979), pp. 20-21.

be adduced as proof of the truth of these observations.²⁰² Reza Zia-Ebrahimi notes that,

A certain distaste for Islam and anything Islamic was deeply ingrained in European writings on the Orient; it is therefore no surprise that Orientalists held the period before Islam in higher esteem. Secondly, many Orientalists looked at their subjects from a classicist perspective, through sources in Greek and Latin. Therefore, as Classicists, they had an aversion to Islam, seen as the phenomenon that put an end to western antiquity.²⁰³

While it is questionable that Westerners in general had an aversion to Islam, for most Europeans, there was a vast difference between Ancient Persia and Islamic Persia. While the former inspired great interest, the latter was, in general, met with indifference. The Western penchant for ancient things was not confined to Persia. Between 1810 and 1910, for instance, nearly all minor and major excavations by Westerners in the Islamic world focused on pre-Islamic sites such as Babylon, Khorsabad and Nippur. Europeans felt that this history, in some way, belonged to them, and that Islamic history was not considered particularly valuable or relevant.²⁰⁴ In focusing on Ancient Iran as the basis of the Pahlavi state ideology, the regime was, therefore, appealing to a foreign as well as domestic audience. The international focus of the regime's strategies for legitimisation can be observed throughout the early Pahlavi period, most strikingly during the 1000th anniversary celebrations of the birth of Ferdowsi in 1935.

Reza Shah and the Ferdowsi Celebration

Iranian claims to the uniqueness and indeed superiority of Iranian culture, race and civilisation, and the symbolism of monarchical rule, came to form the ideological basis of the Pahlavi national ideology. Reza Khan chose an ancient Persian language, Pahlavi, as the name for his new dynasty and Achaemenid monuments were displayed on stamps through this period and remained a

²⁰² Malcolm, *The History of Persia*, vol. 2 (1815), p. 622.

²⁰³ Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the 'Aryan' Discourse in Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 44:4 (2011), p. 465.

²⁰⁴ Magnus T. Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past: Archaeology and Nation Building in Modern Iraq* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005), p. 11.

dominant feature of Pahlavi iconography throughout the proceeding decades.²⁰⁵ During the early years of Reza Shah's rule, old buildings in Tehran were demolished and in their place new buildings were erected, often designed in ancient styles. The Bank Melli main office and police headquarters, for example, were constructed in neo-Achaemenid style and the Iran Bastan Museum was designed after Sasanian era Ctesiphon. Talinn Grigor has written that this adoption of neo-Achaemenid architecture constituted a 'thoroughly self-Orientalising spectacle' as the Pahlavi ideologues sought to live up to the Western idea of Persia.²⁰⁶ But, as we have seen, this only partly explains the Pahlavis' actions.

During the same period the state adopted a series of educational reforms, intended to propagate an official version of Iranian history. Like Atatürk's Turkey, the Pahlavi state sought to unite state and society under the standard of a distinct national culture. Educators such as Isa Sadiq, Ali Asghar Hekmat and Hasan Pirnia were tasked with implementing policies aimed at promoting the nationalist treatises of Jalal al-din Mirza, Akhundzadeh and Kermani, as well as the articles contained within *Kaveh and Iranshahr*.²⁰⁷ The educational policies of the early Pahlavi period reflected, according to Marashi, 'the state's desire to reconcile the dual interests of modernity and nationalism'.²⁰⁸ The development of a curriculum and the writing of historical textbooks reflected the historiography of the 19th century, as the state sought to produce an official narrative for mass dissemination. Pirnia, a notable political figure of the period, wrote a *History of Ancient Iran* in four volumes and was one of the founders of the Society for National Heritage in 1921, an organisation that aimed to safeguard and promote Iran's national heritage.²⁰⁹ An abridged version of the first volume, entitled *Iran-e Qadim*, was widely distributed and became a standard textbook for young Iranian students.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ Roman Sibertz 'Depicting Power: The Commemorative Stamp set of 1935', in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah*, ed. by Devos and Werner (2014), p. 156.

²⁰⁶ Grigor, *Orientalism & Mimicry of Selfness* (2009), p. 273.

²⁰⁷ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 89.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 92.

²⁰⁹ Talinn Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste": The Early Pahlavi Modernists and their Society for National Heritage', *Iranian Studies*, 37:1 (2004), pp. 20-21.

²¹⁰ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 99. It can still be found in many bookstores in Iran, usually alongside a volume on Iran after Islam. For example a popular volume entitled *Tārikh-e Iran* features two texts, *Ghabl az Islam (Iran-e Qadim)* by Pirnia and *B'ad az Islam* by Abbās Eqbāl Āshtiāni and Bāqer 'Aqeli (Tehran: Nashr-e Nāmak, 1393).

On 22 April 1925 Arthur Upham Pope, the famous American art dealer and scholar, gave a lecture in Tehran entitled 'The Past and Future of Persian Art'. In attendance were the cabinet, ministers of the Majles and the man who would soon become shah, Reza Khan. During the lecture Pope evoked images of the great Iranian kings such as Cyrus and Ardashir, and he concluded his speech with an appeal to Iranians to appreciate their vibrant heritage.

So instead of worshiping at the Peacock Throne, Persians can do much better to study thoughtfully the work of their own true artists. One page of the work of Mir Ali Qazvini is worth a hundred Peacock Thrones in the judgement of at least one student of Persian art. At least the principle that it is not wealth and display that make art but something more fundamental and noble, that cannot be challenged.

If by instruction and by example these wrong theories, that retard the revival and development of real artistic sense can be corrected, then with the government's energetic support of practical measures, the future of Persian art is secure... The government and the people together must do everything possible to bring art again to life in Persia.²¹¹

According to the historian Laurence Elwell-Sutton, it was this event that stimulated the first Pahlavi monarch's personal enthusiasm for Iranian heritage.²¹² Donald Wilbur agreed, noting that 'there can be no doubt of the lasting impact of what he had heard on this occasion. More than ever he was convinced that the heights reached by Iranians in the past must be scaled again'.²¹³ This analysis is supported by the fact that the speech was immediately translated into Persian and was widely distributed 'for the use of teachers all over the country.'²¹⁴ Furthermore, the principal suggestions for the revitalisation of Persian art stated in the speech were carried out by the Society

²¹¹ For full text of the speech see Arthur Upham Pope, 'The Past and Future of Persian Art', in *Surveyors of Persian Art: A Documentary Biography of Arthur Upham Pope and Phillis Ackerman*, ed. by Jay Gluck and Noël Siver (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1996), pp. 93-110.

²¹² Elwell-Sutton, 'Reza Shah the Great' (1978), p. 37.

²¹³ Donald N. Wilber, *Reza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran* (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1975), p. 98.

²¹⁴ Isa Sadiq quoted in Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste"' (2004), p. 33.

for National Heritage, as the words of Pope, according to Isa Sadiq, 'kindled fires within us like magic. We became proud of ourselves.'²¹⁵ Pope said nothing truly groundbreaking or represented any real break in the government position on Iranian heritage, but the fact that these words were uttered by a foreign scholar legitimised, in a sense, the Persian cultural renaissance.

The Society for National Heritage's push for the revival of Iranian art in the early Pahlavi period explains the rationale behind the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the birth of Ferdowsi in 1935. Pope was involved in the organisation of the event and according to one of his former colleagues, Rex Stead, the celebration would 'have never succeeded without the efforts of Professor Pope.'²¹⁶ The celebration was held between 4 and 14 October and for the first four days an International Congress of Orientalists took place, consisting of 45 delegates from 18 different countries.²¹⁷ They included such renowned scholars as Henri Massé, Jan Rypka, Arthur Christiansen, Vladimir Minorsky and Sir Edward Denison Ross.²¹⁸ According to Afshin Marashi, the scholarly congress 'was presented as an affirmation of Iran's national culture by the world.'²¹⁹ After a brief stop at Omar Khayyam's grave in Nishapur, where scholars read excerpts from Khayyam and made a toast with wine in his memory, they arrived in Tus on 12 October, where the Shah inaugurated the mausoleum of Ferdowsi.²²⁰ Stressing the revivalist attitude of the Pahlavi ideologues, Grigor observes, 'Morphologically, the structure was a synthesis between the Parthian mausoleum buildings and Cyrus's tomb as examples of Iran's pre-Islamic architecture.'²²¹ By modelling Ferdowsi's tomb on Cyrus the Great's, he became a national hero alongside Cyrus and Iranians were provided with 'a site on which collective history could be experienced at an exact place and time.'²²²

²¹⁵ Isa Sadiq, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 2.

²¹⁶ Rex Stead in J Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 11.

²¹⁷ Arthur Upham Pope, 'The Celebrations of the Thousandth Anniversary of the Birth of Firdawsi, Epic Poet of Persia', *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology*, 7 (December 1934), p. 39.

²¹⁸ See A. Shahpur Shahbazi, 'Ferdowsi, Abu'l-Qasem iv. Millenary Celebration', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, IX/5 (1999) pp. 527-530, available online at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ferdowsi-iv>> [accessed on 13 September 2016].

²¹⁹ Afshin Marashi, 'The Nation's Poet: Ferdowsi and the Iranian National Imagination', in *Iran in the 20th Century*, ed. by Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 105.

²²⁰ Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran* (2008), p. 110

²²¹ Grigor, *Recultivating "Good Taste"* (2004), p. 37.

²²² Talinn Grigor, *Building Iran* (New York: Periscope Publishing, 2009), p. 75.

The anniversary of Ferdowsi's birth attracted attention around the world. In London, for example, the British Museum organised an exhibition of manuscripts of the *Shahnameh*,²²³ Sir Percy and Lady Cox exhibited Persian maps at the Royal Geographical Society, the Persian Club held a special event under the auspices of the Persian ambassador, Hossein Ala, and a symposium on matters concerning Ferdowsi was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies.²²⁴ Western scholarship was an important tool for Reza Shah in his promotion of Iranian civilisation as a dominant cultural force in the region and the world. Iran had been intellectually subservient to the West, in the sense that Iranian scholars relied on Western intellectuals for the study of Iranian history. When Pirnia and Foroughi attempted to utilize modern historiographical methods in the study of their country, for example, their works relied heavily on Western scholarship.²²⁵ The Ferdowsi celebration was part of a transformation that was occurring during this period, in which there was a concerted effort on behalf of the Iranian regime to work actively with foreign scholars, deciding research priorities and enthusiastically encouraging studies on certain aspects of Iranian history, culture and civilisation. The politicisation of culture during Reza Shah's rule played a part in this, but it was also stimulated by an increase in dialogue between academics in Iran and academics from outside. Underpinning the celebration was a striving for legitimacy as Reza Shah's ideologues, reflecting modern nationalist trends, used the *Shahnameh* and the mausoleum of Ferdowsi to emphasise Iran's culture as distinct from Arab culture, and link the Pahlavi regime to the long line of Persian kings, mythical or otherwise.

Cyrus the Great

Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* was written as *lieu de memoire*, a text in which memory could be preserved²²⁶ and in 1935, the tomb of Ferdowsi became a place in which the poet himself could be venerated as a national hero. A similar process occurred in 1971 when the Shah's regime sought to establish the tomb of Cyrus as an important site of collective remembrance for all Iranians. This is reflected

²²³ Joanna Bowring, *Chronology of Temporary Exhibitions at the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 2012).

²²⁴ Pope, 'The Celebrations of the Thousandth Anniversary of the Birth of Firdawsī' (1934), p. 42.

²²⁵ Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Self-Orientalization and Dislocation' (2011), p. 465.

²²⁶ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs* (2002), p. 22.

in the Shah's language in his speech at the tomb at the opening ceremony of the Anniversary Celebrations when he used 'we' instead of 'I', when promising to preserve Cyrus' legacy. The question remains, why was Cyrus in particular chosen as the figure to whom the Shah's regime would turn as the basis of its nationalist ideology?

Cyrus the Great was born between 600 and 590 BC and ruled from 559 until his death in 530 BC. During his reign he defeated the three regional powers of Media, Lydia and Babylonia to forge the largest empire the world had known, and laid the foundations for his successor Cambyses II's addition of Egypt to this domain. His apparent benevolence towards conquered rulers and his respect of local religions was exceptional in a typically violent region, accustomed to the brutality of the Assyrian kings.²²⁷ Their behaviour stood in sharp contrast to that of Cyrus, who not only spared the great cities of the territories that he seized, but allowed their kings to live, usually sending them into retirement on an estate within his empire.²²⁸ Proving that benevolence is not equal to weakness, he created a political system that stretched from the Hindu Kush in the east to the Hellespont in the west, a system that would remain intact for two and a half centuries.

Cyrus' supposed benevolence earned him legendary status in the ancient world. Herodotus of Halicarnassus, in his *Histories*, called Cyrus a 'father' who 'was gentle, and procured them [his subjects] all manner of goods.'²²⁹ In Herodotus' account Cyrus achieved freedom for his people by overthrowing Astyages, ruler of the Medes. The work is however, in part, a philosophical exploration of human nature and the character of kingship, and includes colourful and morally questionable characters such as the greedy Croesus, the tyrannical Cambyses and the deceitful Ephialtes. Herodotus guides us to appreciate the virtues of Cyrus in so far as it is possible to

²²⁷ For an example of the violence of Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883-859 BC), see Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 229.

²²⁸ The Lydian capital of Sardis was, however, brutally seized since its king, Croesus, had risen against Cyrus. Cyrus, it seems, was not adverse to brutality when the situation demanded it. According to some sources, however, Croesus was spared and received an estate in the Median town of Barene, with a personal attachment of 5,000 cavalry and 10,000 light infantry. See Reza Zarghamee, *Discovering Cyrus: The Persian Conqueror Astride the Ancient World* (Washington: Mage Publishers, 2013), p. 109.

²²⁹ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by George Rawlinson (London: Everyman's Library, 1997), III: 89.

appreciate a king, for Cyrus ultimately succumbs to his ambition and dies in a bloody battle while fighting a Scythian tribe.²³⁰

Xenophon's philosophical study, *Cyropaedia*, written around 70 years after Herodotus' *Histories*, presents Cyrus as the ideal king, compassionate, thoughtful and valiant. In Xenophon's account Cyrus is also presented as a father figure to his people:

... this is not the first time I have had occasion to observe that a good ruler differs in no respect from a good father. Even as a father takes thought that blessings may never fail his children, so Cyrus would commend to us the ways by which we can preserve our happiness... Of one thing we may be sure: Cyrus will never put us to any service which can make for his own good and not for ours. Our needs are the same as his, and our foes the same.²³¹

As an historical account it is questionable, but it impresses upon us the high regard in which Cyrus was held in the ancient world. Xenophon's work remains an influential source on Cyrus and the philosophy of leadership, and Thomas Jefferson later wrote to his son that *Cyropaedia* was the first book he should read in Greek.²³² The idea of the king as a father was an important aspect of the conceptualisation of the monarchy in the Pahlavi period too, particularly under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi after the White Revolution.

Other Greek philosophers and playwrights discussed the admirable qualities of the Persian king. Plato, for instance, wrote that Cyrus allowed for 'full liberty of speech' and that in his Persia 'there was freedom and friendship and communication of mind'.²³³ According to Diodorus Siculus, Cyrus

²³⁰ As Daniel Beckman noted, this failure by overreach is a recurring theme in Herodotus, since Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes fail in Ethiopia, Scythia and Greece respectively. See Daniel Beckman, 'The Many Deaths of Cyrus the Great', *Iranian Studies*, 51:1 (2018), p. 5.

²³¹ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus*, trans. by Henry G. Dakyns (Breinigsville: Dodo Press, 2010), 8:1-5.

²³² 'Cyrus Cylinder: How a Persian monarch inspired Jefferson', *BBC*, 11 March 2013, available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-21747567>> [accessed on 7 September 2016].

²³³ Plato, *Laws III*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, available at <<http://classics.mit.edu/>> [accessed on 18 September 2016].

'possessed exceptional qualities' and was 'the greatest man of his time.'²³⁴ In many of these early Greek works Cyrus was a convenient and accepted model on whom the ideals of the civilised Greek world could be projected.

Alexander the Great shared a deep respect for Cyrus. When he saw Cyrus' tomb at Pasargadae, he was moved by the majestic simplicity of the monument, above which an inscription read, 'O man, I am Cyrus the son of Cambyses who founded the empire of Persia and was the king of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument.'²³⁵ Indeed, later Alexander was so perturbed at finding the tomb vandalised and robbed that he ordered a 'thorough repair.'²³⁶ That Alexander, as a well-educated Greek, would have respect for Cyrus the Great is perfectly understandable, however it is possible that there was a more pragmatic motivation for his tribute to Cyrus, connected to his attempts to legitimise his rule as the new king of Persia. Aware of the reverence in which Cyrus was held by his people, Alexander sought to bypass the impossibility of relating himself through blood to the Achaemenids and rather present himself as a spiritual successor to the conquered dynasty.²³⁷ Two thousand three hundred years later Mohammad Reza Pahlavi would employ a similar strategy in his attempts to legitimise his rule.

Reverence for Cyrus was not confined to the Greek world. After he released the Jews from captivity in Babylon, where they had been held since Nebuchadnezzar II's conquest of Jerusalem at the end of the 7th century BC, Cyrus' actions were lauded by the Jewish chroniclers. According to Ezra, Cyrus issued a decree calling for the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem²³⁸ and for this Isaiah refers to him as the 'Lord's anointed'.²³⁹ Therefore, the modern perception of Cyrus going into the 19th century could be said to be an amalgam

²³⁴ Quoted in Shojaeddin Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Committee of International Affairs of the Festivities, 1971), p. 11.

²³⁵ Piotr Bienkowski, 'Cyrus', in *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*, ed. by, Piotr Bienkowski and Alan Millard (London: British Museum Press, 2000), p. 87.

²³⁶ Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, trans. by Aubrey de Séincourt (London: Penguin Books, 1971), VI: 29-30.

²³⁷ Ali Mousavi, 'Pilgrimage to Pasargadae: A Brief History of the Site from the fall of the Achaemenids to the Early Twentieth Century', in *Cyrus the Great: An Ancient Iranian King*, ed. by Touraj Daryaee (Santa Monica, CA: Afshar Publishing, 2013), p. 29.

²³⁸ Ezra, 6:3-14.

²³⁹ Isaiah, 45:1. This appears not to have been an empty gesture, for indeed there is evidence that the rebuilding of the temple commenced as little as two years after the first exiles returned home to Jerusalem. See Zarghamee, *Discovering Cyrus* (2013), p. 235.

of Greek and biblical tradition. Just as Xenophon used the Greek perception of Cyrus to create his ideal king, Cyrus became convenient to the Pahlavi ideologues as one who appeared to encapsulate the ideals of modern European political thought. This certainly contributed to the presentation of the Cyrus Cylinder in the 20th century as the first bill of human rights.

The idea of ideal government explicitly expressed by the Greeks became an increasingly important aspect of Persian nationalism at the end of the 19th century. Of Cyrus the Great, Kermani writes:

His government was based on justice and equality, and for this reason history baptised him as a 'prophet'. His personality became so notable because he never abused his power and treated the defeated monarchs as his political allies. The reign of Kurosh was based on social justice and on the freedom of expression and faith.²⁴⁰

To Kermani, religious fanaticism and the despotism of rulers were two of the worst evils in human society.²⁴¹ Cyrus, as presented by Kermani, was the antithesis of these ills and in his society 'justice' and 'freedom' prevailed. The memory of Cyrus' ideal government also served as a spiritual and political rallying call:

Oh sons of this chaotic Iran: the people in the world have successfully freed themselves from the chains of ignorance and slavery, going towards progress, freedom and equality. While we transformed the 'ideal reign' (of Kurosh) to a dark cemetery. We are a sleepy nation, while others are awake. Look at how the spirit of freedom, justice and constitutionalism has already spread throughout the world. Then wake up and commit yourselves to realising a new political government, to make a free and dignified Iran.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Kermani quoted in Abdolmohammadi, 'History, National Identity and Myths in Iranian Contemporary Political Thought' (2014), pp. 26-27.

²⁴¹ Abdolmohammadi, 'The Political Thought of Mirzā Aqā Khān Kermani' (2014), p. 153.

²⁴² Kermani quoted in Abdolmohammadi, 'History, National Identity and Myths in Iranian Contemporary Political Thought' (2014), p. 27.

Not only did the government of Cyrus mark a high point of Iranian history, but Iranians could once more return to prominence.

Standing in front of the tomb of Cyrus the Great in 1971, the Shah pledged to the spirit of Cyrus that his Iranians were now awake, and always would be. His regime's adoption of Cyrus mirrored the writings of Xenophon in that it presented Cyrus as the ideal king, a model for political leaders. It also mirrored Kermani, in that Cyrus presided over an ideal government, in which justice and freedom flourished. In a significant publication for the Anniversary Celebrations, Shojaeddin Shafa quoted at length from a 1951 book by René Grousset, in which he spoke of the 'profoundly humane' nature of Iranian civilisation.

At a time when UNESCO, to save the world from chaos and hatred, has appealed to all mankind, to all people of goodwill, Iranian civilization provides a great historical example, for the common task a great spiritual force, for the common effort total support.²⁴³

The opinions of such scholars were endorsed and promoted in this period by the Pahlavi regime in order to reinforce the official state narrative.

In 1960, Arthur Upham Pope also stressed the moral importance of the Achaemenid Empire. He wrote that,

For the first time in history an empire was built on an *ethical foundation* with not only a superb political organisation (the Assyrians were competent in this field also), but also primarily because new principles, particularly those of *religious and racial tolerance*, were put into effect to build an empire that could command the loyalty and enthusiasm of its subjects by reason of the *human dignity* conferred [emphasis added].²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Quoted in Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration* (1971), pp. 7-9.

²⁴⁴ Arthur Upham Pope letter to Amir Ebrahimi, 4 December, 1960, in *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 427.

In the Shah's publications at the time, he echoed the sentiments expressed by these historians. In his *Mission for my Country*, published in 1961, the Shah wrote that Cyrus was 'one of most dynamic men in history'²⁴⁵ and that,

wherever Cyrus conquered, he would pardon the very people who had fought him, treat them well, and keep them in their former posts... While Iran at the time knew nothing of democratic political institutions, Cyrus nevertheless demonstrated some of the qualities which provide the strength of the great modern democracies.²⁴⁶

The enlightenment might have occurred in Europe in the 18th century, but according to the Shah some of the principal ideas of the enlightenment were embraced by Cyrus over 2,000 years earlier. The Shah further observed that,

[the] empire founded by Cyrus the Great was not based on territorial acquisition alone, but also on international tolerance and understanding. The rights of all the subject nations were upheld, and their laws and customs respected. Indeed, I see in our first empire something of the United Nations of nearly 2,500 years later.²⁴⁷

This understanding of history is, of course, highly subjective and illustrative of the Pahlavi ideologues' presentation of their history through both the prism of modern Western philosophical tradition and the romantic nationalism which developed from the middle of the 19th century.

Having identified Cyrus as one of the great heroes of Iranian history, a moderniser in his own time and intellectually progressive, the Pahlavi ideologues set about presenting the Shah as his spiritual successor, thereby legitimising the Pahlavi dynasty in the context of a 2,500 year old monarchical tradition. A passage from a commemorative bibliography of Iran published on the occasion of the Shah's coronation in 1967 expresses this sentiment clearly: 'It has been said that what Xenophon wrote of Cyrus the Great in 401 B.C.

²⁴⁵ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for my Country* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), p. 21.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 164

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 21.

could equally well have been written of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.²⁴⁸ Publications in Persian at the time also stressed the similarities between the progressive policies of Cyrus the Great, and the progressive policies of the current king. Some books published in Persian on the occasion of the Celebrations featured in the introductory pages a gold-lettered translation of the text of the Cyrus Cylinder, alongside text of the Shah's White Revolution, clearly linking Cyrus with Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.²⁴⁹ The organisers of the Anniversary Celebrations reproduced these texts, engraved in Persian and cuneiform on stone slabs, and displayed them in many different towns and cities across Iran.²⁵⁰ The official programme for the Celebrations also implicitly makes the comparison between Cyrus and the Shah. It states that Cyrus was 'Strong and magnanimous, just and humane... a man of high ideals who lived up to his belief that no man was fit to rule unless he was the most capable man in the kingdom.'²⁵¹ The same page refers to the 'far-sighted leadership' of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. It can be seen, therefore, that the presentation of the Shah as a successor to Cyrus gained political capital throughout the 1960s, reaching a climax during the Celebrations in 1971.

Legitimising the Pahlavi Dynasty

The Pahlavi regime adopted a number of strategies in order to legitimise its rule, one of which was, in line with the romantic nationalist discourse, to present the Pahlavi regime as rooted in a long and ancient tradition of kingship, stretching back to the Achaemenids. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations continued this policy of legitimation, as the regime used, in the words of Mostafa Vaziri, 'the hypothetical reconstruction of a remote dynastic connection as the basis of its own legitimacy'.²⁵² The idea of the continuation of monarchy was to show that Iran had always had kings, and that the glory of its past had been due to the strength of the monarchical institution. In this way the regime made

²⁴⁸ Ardeshir Zahedi, 'A Memoir of His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Shahanshah of Iran', in *Bibliography of Iran*, by Geoffrey Handley-Taylor (London, Bibliography of Iran, 1967), p. xvii.

²⁴⁹ See, for example, *2500 Sāleh-ye Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān: az Kurush tā Pahlavi* [2500 Years of Imperial Iran: From Cyrus to Pahlavi] (Tehran: Vežarāt-e Behdāri [Ministry of Health], 1971).

²⁵⁰ See Norman Sharp letter to Paul Gotch, 13 August 1967, Gotch Papers.

²⁵¹ *Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1971), pp. 7-8.

²⁵² Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Paragon House, 1993), p. 193.

'patriotism synonymous with cherishing the monarchy and the monarch.'²⁵³ As a tribute to the historical monarchical tradition in Iran, the Anniversary Celebrations sought to strengthen the people's bond to their king, thus legitimising the Shah's position.

The Cyrus Cylinder was an important cultural symbol that the regime adopted as part of the Celebrations and which became, in a sense, a tool of legitimisation. It was tangible evidence of the narrative of Cyrus promoted by the regime. By the time of the Celebrations in 1971, scholars spoke of the 'message of Cyrus', enshrined in the Cylinder, which had 'transcendental power.' In his presentation to the Congress of Iranology, Argentine scholar Ismael Quiles said,

It is certain that Cyrus believed in a transcendent divine order, which goes above human and temporary events and governs the destinies of men, and which constitutes a guarantee of moral order for human relations. And that seems to us to be a fundamental and clear point in Cyrus' message, which gives great power, transcendental power, to his historical declaration of human rights made 2,500 years ago.²⁵⁴

The Pahlavi regime was successful in promoting the Cylinder as an ancient declaration of the rights of man. It became the official logo of the Celebrations, which appeared on all literature and featured the artefact in a blue halo, with the Pahlavi coat of arms above, surrounded by Persepolitan style lotus flowers. Lowenthal observed that 'manipulating antiquities refashions their appearance and meaning' and we see clear evidence of this in the Pahlavi appropriation of the Cylinder.²⁵⁵

One of the leading ideologues in the Pahlavi Court was Shojaeddin Shafa, who was well versed in the romantic nationalist discourse of the 19th century. Indeed, in his *Pas az 1400 Sal* (After 1400 years), published from exile in the early 2000s, Shafa regularly quotes the works of Akhundzadeh and

²⁵³ Idid, p. 198.

²⁵⁴ Ismael Quiles, 'La Philosophie Sous-Jacente au Message de Cyrus', in *Acta Iranica*, vol. 1, ed. by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (Tehran: Bibliothèque Pahlavi; Leiden: Brill, 1974), p. 23.

²⁵⁵ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 263.

Kermani.²⁵⁶ In the 1940s Shafa had started his own political party with a group of friends called the *Mihan Parastān*, which had its own newspaper. The stated goal of the party was to ‘defend Iranian nationalism and its cultural and historical values in the face of the psychological effects of Soviet, British and German propaganda’ and to promote a moderate discourse given the re-emergence of ‘religious fanatics’ after the departure of Reza Shah.²⁵⁷ He had considerable influence in the Pahlavi Court, having first proposed the Anniversary Celebrations in 1958, served as the Shah’s primary speechwriter and ghost-written a number of the Shah’s books. In a document about the Anniversary Celebrations, he wrote of Cyrus:

Such a vast empire was founded by Cyrus the Great on the principles of liberty and tolerance; freedom of individuals and nations to practice any religion, freedom of expression and freedom of national habits and customs. This is the greatest gift that Iran has given to human society.²⁵⁸

When discussing the role of ideology in the Pahlavi period, it should be noted that these ideas were driven not necessarily by the Shah himself, although he was clearly the chief mouthpiece, but primarily by members of his regime. This can be seen also with the White Revolution, for instance, for which Asadollah Alam was instrumental.²⁵⁹

The White Revolution reforms launched in 1962, which included land reforms and women’s suffrage, served to present the Shah as fundamental to the success of Iran. It decreased the power of tribes by removing their land holdings, while reasserting the central authority of the state. According to Ali Ansari, the White Revolution served as a ‘strategy for legitimation’, as it sought to identify such reforms as dependent on the monarchy:

As the founder and guarantor of a new order for Iran, he [the Shah] would consolidate his dynasty’s position within the political

²⁵⁶ See Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), pp. 213-214.

²⁵⁷ Shafā, ‘Shojā’ eddin Shafā az Zabān-e Khodash’, in *Yādnāmeḥ-ye Shojā’ eddin Shafā* (Paris, 2013), p. 49.

²⁵⁸ Shojā’ eddin Shafā, *Jashnhā-ye 2500 Sāleh-ye Shāhanshāhi*, undated document, p. 13, Shojaeddin Shafa Archives, Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations, Paris.

²⁵⁹ See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and After* (London: Longman, 2003), pp. 149-150.

system, which he would argue was dependent upon the continuation and consolidation of his dynasty.²⁶⁰

Some of the policies of the White Revolution clearly aimed to modernise, or perhaps rather Westernise, the Iranian state. As Ansari further explains, the strategy was 'akin to 'Bonapartism' – peasants and the petit-bourgeoisie would be drawn into a social and political alliance with their enlightened despot.'²⁶¹

Another strategy of legitimisation, which intended to present the Shah as a king worthy of both Iran's historical tradition of kingship and the global monarchical tradition, was the coronation ceremony of 1967. Although it was anti-colonial in sentiment, it embraced Western models of ritual and modernisation. The Shah had come to power in 1941, but then felt that such a national demonstration of his authority was inappropriate while the country was under foreign occupation. In 1967, with the White Revolution taking shape, the consolidation of the Shah's power and the emergence of Iran as a force on the international stage, the time was ripe for this official rite of passage.

Although the coronation ceremony was a presentation of the independence of the Shah against the backdrop of Iran's colonial past, some aspects of the event had a distinct British flavour. The British had as policy supported monarchies as a form of governance in the Middle East, having established one in Jordan, and backed one in Egypt. The incorporation of traditional British practice in the traditions of its colonies led to an amalgamation of 'Oriental' and colonial expression in state festivities. The crowning of Faisal in Iraq in 1921, for example, closely resembled a British coronation, yet it was presented as a traditional Islamic ceremony.²⁶² Turning to the British for advice in such matters as royal protocol was common in Iran. For Reza Shah's coronation in 1926, for example, Vita Sackville-West noted the Persian desire to follow the British example:

These ideas were European, and novel. The Persians themselves cared not at all whether the paint in the throne-room betrayed

²⁶⁰ Ali Ansari, 'The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, 'Modernization' and the Consolidation of Power', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37:3 (2001), p. 3.

²⁶¹ Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921* (2003), p. 158.

²⁶² Elie Podeh, 'From Indifference to Obsession: The Role of National State Celebrations in Iraq, 1921-2003', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 37:2 (2010), p. 185.

patches of damp, or whether the china for the state banquets matched, and said so quite frankly. “You see”, said one of them, “it is only recently that we have begun to sit on chairs.” Their anxiety to impress the Europeans was endearing; there was no point, however humble, on which they would not consult their English friends.²⁶³

Sackville-West interpreted the requests for advice by the Persians in this instance as them seeking to impress the British. It is equally likely that they sought to replicate British practice in order to demonstrate the authority of the new king. The late Qajar period had been blighted by a number of weak kings, who had easily succumbed to internal and international pressures. The message in imitating British tradition was that Iran could prosper under a strong new leader. It represented a break from the Qajar past and a new order that could succeed as the British had.

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s coronation can be seen in a similar context. Ali Ansari calls the event ‘a curious amalgam of invented ‘Persian’ tradition and European, specifically British, appropriation.’²⁶⁴ The Shahbanou wore a long, white dress, designed by Christian Dior, not dissimilar in style to Queen Elizabeth II’s at her coronation in 1953. The luxurious horse-drawn carriage was made in Vienna and the red carpet and accompanying military escort smacked of European tradition. As Ansari has noted, even the guardsmen looked remarkably like British Life Guards.²⁶⁵ The Pahlavi court made a very conscious effort to incorporate European features into its royal ceremony. In the planning stage of the coronation, the Shah sent Mehdi Sami’i from the Foreign Ministry to London to seek advice from the Duke of Norfolk regarding royal ceremony. Sami’i brought back with him to Iran a video tape of Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation.²⁶⁶ Food for the banquets was bought from abroad, with lobsters, oysters, cheeses and wines ordered from Paris.²⁶⁷ Of course, part of this can be explained by the Europhilic nature of the Pahlavi court, with the Shahbanou

²⁶³ Vita Sackville-West, *Passenger to Teheran* (London: Leonard and Virginia Wolff, 1926), p. 140.

²⁶⁴ Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921* (2003), p. 169.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Denis Wright, in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, Haddenham, England, 10 and 11 October, 1984, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 4, p. 4.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Farah Diba having been educated at a French institution and the Shah himself having been educated in Switzerland, but on a deeper level there was a desire on behalf of the Shah to be accepted at home and abroad as a serious leader.²⁶⁸

Besides the very clear European influence, however, there was also a distinct Persian flavour to the coronation. The event took place in the Golestan Palace, formerly the principal residence of the Qajar kings, where Reza Shah had held his coronation in 1926.²⁶⁹ The Shah placed upon his own head a crown modelled on Sasanian design, with a feather protruding from the top; all the programmes and invitation cards were printed only in Persian and themes from classical Persian literature were expressed in accompanying dramatic performances.²⁷⁰ One of the primary criticisms of the Anniversary Celebrations was their over-reliance on foreign goods and services. The decision to rely on foreign commodities was made in part due to practical considerations, which will be explored in the following chapter, but it also reflects the tastes of the Pahlavi court dating back to the coronation of Reza Shah. Replicating successful Western procedure also legitimised the Pahlavi dynasty in the context of the global monarchical institution, while the focus on pre-Islamic Iranian monarchs, such as Cyrus the Great, sought simultaneously to place the Pahlavi regime within the context of a distinctly Iranian tradition.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the idea of the Iranian homeland developed from an intellectual movement into a political movement and ultimately state ideology from the middle of the 19th century to the Pahlavi period. Ancient Persia provided the inspiration for this movement, serving to accentuate the successes of pre-Islamic Iran and lament Iran's demise with the Arab invasions. Many intellectuals during this period also looked to the Arab Conquests as the reason for Iran's dilapidated condition and denigrated the Arabs in their writings. Sadeq Hedayat's historical play *Maziyar* (1933), for instance, is an expression of

²⁶⁸ A number of the Shah's entourage could also be said to be Europhiles, including Asadollah Alam, who although not educated abroad was fond of European wines. Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran, 1941-1979*, vol. 1 (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 47.

²⁶⁹ Though not the same room. Reza Shah chose the Marble Throne Room, where the Qajar kings held their coronations, whereas Mohammad Reza held his ceremony in the grand Museum Hall.

²⁷⁰ Sir Denis Wright to Mr Brown, 30 November 1967, FO 248/1637.

nationalist sentiment, glorifying pre-Islamic Iranian civilisation and commenting on the inferiority of the Arabs.²⁷¹ Other nationalist intellectuals, notably Abdolhossein Zarrinkub in his *Two Centuries of Silence* (1957), also magnified the achievements of the ancient Iranian empires, which ended with the Arab invasions. In this sense, as Zia-Ebrahimi writes, modern Iranian nationalism 'transmuted the Iranian nation into a phoenix, which rises time and again from the ashes of foreign invasion.'²⁷²

The first Pahlavi monarch, Reza Shah, sought to acquire legitimacy from the Persian monarchical tradition and the glories of Ancient Persia, rather than from the previous Qajar dynasty that had ruled for nearly 150 years. His Ferdowsi Celebration in 1935 reflected his efforts to place his regime within a distinctly Iranian cultural and historical context. Reza Shah ruled Iran as a strongman, putting an end to years of humiliation at the hands of the British and Russians, who had shown a disregard for Iranian sovereignty. Despite this, he was deposed by the British and Russians, and his son and successor, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was left to consolidate his rule in the turbulent post-war period. By the 1960s he had gained confidence domestically and internationally, and was able to seek to secure Iran's position as an influential and commanding global power. Through reforms such as the White Revolution, and events such as the coronation ceremony in 1967, the Shah sought to legitimise his rule by presenting the fortunes of Iran as dependent on the strength and fortitude of the monarchical institution. By comparing himself to Cyrus, he was appealing to a global and domestic audience. Cyrus was presented not only as an Iranian hero, but also as a historical figure on whom modern European philosophical ideas could be projected. By presenting himself as Cyrus' successor, the Shah was indicating that he belonged to a time-honoured tradition of monarchy.

During the Celebrations Cyrus played a central role, as will be shown in the following chapters. The Cyrus Cylinder was presented as an historic bill of rights, evidence of the benevolence of Cyrus in particular, but also of the general enlightened nature of the Iranian kings. In town squares all over the

²⁷¹ Homa Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat: The Life and Legend of an Iranian Writer* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 73-76.

²⁷² Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Better a Warm Hug than a Cold Bath: Nationalist Memory and the Failures of Iranian Historiography', *Iranian Studies*, 49:5 (2016), p. 839.

country columns were constructed with quotes from the Shah's White Revolution alongside text of the Cyrus Cylinder to show that the Iranian monarchy could be at once traditional and revolutionary.²⁷³ Just as Cyrus set an example for just kingship in the ancient world, as demonstrated by Xenophon and Herodotus, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi could set an example in the modern world.

The man who conceived of the Celebrations, Shojaeddin Shafa, later wrote that Iran 'had declined to the level of an underdeveloped medieval state during the Qajar period' and:

By holding this international celebration, we sought to remind the public that Iran is the same country with over 3,000 years of history that they had studied in school; a country that had a prominent role in the ancient world, that fought against the Greek and Roman empires... By holding this commemoration, Iran was sending a message to the world that the country had passed its period of decline and by reconnecting with its glorious past, was ready to accept its future as a dynamic and constructive nation.²⁷⁴

In this passage we see echoes of the earlier generation of nationalist writers who venerated the early history of Iran in order to bring order and meaning to the present. As Pierre Nora put it history can be used as a way of 'figuring out what we are from what we are no longer.'²⁷⁵ Having established in this chapter the ideological foundations of the Celebrations, over the course of the following chapters we will see how these ideas were expressed in practical terms, by stimulating genuine cultural activity and focusing on economic development.

²⁷³ On 14 October, coinciding with the principal festivities at Persepolis, a commemorative tablet was even installed at the summit of Damavand. Shojaeddin Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (Tehran, 1976), p. 2055.

²⁷⁴ Shafa, 'Shojā'eddin Shafā az Zabān-e Khodāsh' (2013), p. 74.

²⁷⁵ Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History' (1996), p. 13.

Chapter 3: Planning and Implementation

This chapter will investigate the development of the Celebrations from their initial conception until the event took place in October 1971. With the background of the theoretical and contextual matters explored in the previous chapters, it will explore how the organisers of the Celebrations used aspects of them to legitimise the Shah's rule and promote the Pahlavi state ideology. The Celebrations were a dramatic expression of Iran's development under the Shah's rule. The Shah was not merely seeking to legitimise this rule in a domestic context, but also internationally. In order to understand the controversy surrounding the Anniversary Celebrations, it is necessary to examine the event in detail, from the initial idea, through the development of the programme, until the event itself. What initially was planned as a modest cultural commemoration, supported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), developed into a grand and politically elaborate national and international event. In the period following the Celebrations they were criticised abroad for their extravagance and domestically for the over-reliance on foreign businesses. But how did the organisers of the Celebrations allow this to happen?

This chapter will attempt to understand why and how the Celebrations grew into this extravagant, highly politically charged event. It will show that the organisers of the Celebrations were motivated by a number of different political, economic, cultural and social factors. Some have argued that the Celebrations were an expression of the Shah's megalomania and he bore the brunt of the ensuing criticism. It will become clear in this chapter that in fact the Shah was only minimally involved in the organisation of the event; even his speeches were written entirely by one of his aides.

Conception

The idea to hold a celebration to commemorate the 2,500th anniversary of Cyrus the Great's campaign in Babylon and the supposed humanitarian acts that followed was put forward in 1958 by Shojaeddin Shafa, the Shah's cultural counsellor. The Shah approved the idea and decreed that the event would take

place in the autumn of 1962.²⁷⁶ An organising council for the Celebrations was established in 1958 in order to oversee the development of the project, with the support of UNESCO.²⁷⁷ This UNESCO support was significant and suggests that from the outset the Celebrations were intended to have a global relevance. Shafa had a close affiliation with UNESCO and considered it important for Iran's emerging position in the world and the United Nations community that it nurtured these ties. In this context in 1965 he spearheaded Iran's UNESCO-supported campaign to end illiteracy worldwide, hosting a congress in Tehran and giving talks around Europe.²⁷⁸ Shaking off the image of oriental despotism, the Shah was presented as an enlightened monarch, leader of a worldwide effort in education. It even appears that UNESCO may have partially inspired the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations in the first place. Since 1954 UNESCO had been encouraging member states to hold commemorations of events or people of significance, and published a list of proposals annually. These lists included occasions such as the 100th anniversary of the birth of Anton Chekhov (1960), the 1,000th anniversary of the founding of the city of Luxembourg (1963) and the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation (1963).²⁷⁹

UNESCO responded positively to the initial idea for the Celebrations, which proposed to commemorate 'the start of the expansion of a culture whose arts, science and literature have been central forces in the artistic and intellectual development of both Orient and Occident.'²⁸⁰ At the General Conference of 1960, UNESCO urged the world to join in the commemoration of Cyrus.

[The General Conference] Recommends to Member States and interested non-governmental organizations that they associate

²⁷⁶ 'Gozāresh va barnāmeḥ-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye korosh-e bozorg va bonyād-e shāhanshāhi-ye irān' [report and programme of the 2500 anniversary of Cyrus the Great and the founding of Imperial Iran], 24 Esfand 1337/ 15 March 1959, *Bazm-e Ahriman: jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi beh revāyat-e asnād-e sāvāk va darbār* [The Devil's Feast: The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations according to SAVAK and court documents], vol. 1 (Tehran: Markaz-e Barrasi-ye Asnād-e Tārikhi-ye Vezārat-e Etela'āt, 1998), pp. 1-5.

²⁷⁷ *Parade at Persepolis: Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1971).

²⁷⁸ There is a file dedicated to this particular project in the Shafa Archives, consisting of documents primarily in Persian, English and French, held at the Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations in Paris.

²⁷⁹ 'Commemoration of Anniversaries of Great Personalities and Events: The Living Past', Paris, 31 August 1962, UNESCO/MC/46.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

themselves with the celebration of this event at the cultural level, in whatever way they deem most suitable; [and] invited the Director-General to take appropriate measures to co-operate with the Iranian authorities in this commemoration.²⁸¹

Cultural dissemination through commemoration was within the framework of what UNESCO was attempting to achieve at the time, and the occasion proposed by Shafa contributed to this effort. In November 1970, when, after almost a decade of delays, the event began to take shape in earnest, UNESCO again stressed its support for the occasion.

Taking into consideration that the celebration of the twenty-fifth centenary of the founding of Iran will take place in the year 1971 instead of the year 1962/1963 as it was previously announced...

Invites once more the Director-General to take appropriate measures to cooperate in this commemoration with the Iranian authorities, in particular by organizing international talks and conferences and by disseminating information within the limits of the activities and funds provided for in UNESCO's programme and budget.²⁸²

The continued support of UNESCO offered a degree of authenticity to the Celebrations while underscoring the global significance of Iran in both past and present.

The initial organising committee, which was called the Central Council for the Celebrations (*Shurā-ye Markazi-ye Jashn-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān*), consisted of 33 members, with Court Minister Hossein Ala as chairman, Senator Javad Boushehri, a prominent government official and uncle of Mehdi Boushehri,²⁸³ as vice-chairman and Shojaeddin Shafa as secretary general. From the outset important ministers and other political figures were involved in the development of the project, such as the foreign minister, the interior minister, the minister of culture and arts, the head of the police and the

²⁸¹ UNESCO, Records of the General Conference 11th session, Resolution 4.723, Paris, 1960, p. 57.

²⁸² Shojaeddin Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration* (1971), p. 21.

²⁸³ Mehdi Bushehri was to become the Shah's brother-in-law; he married Princess Ashraf in 1960.

governor of Fars. There were eight sub-committees: finance; implementation; publications; culture; arts; ceremonies and receptions; military and sports; and communications.²⁸⁴ It is clear from the published communications that Ala took on more of a ceremonial role and Boushehri was effectively in charge of the committee.

The Celebrations were initially planned to take place in 1962, but due to 'financial hardships', they were delayed until certain financial targets could be met.²⁸⁵ A new date of 1965 was decided upon, however, in a letter dated 13 September 1964, Javad Boushehri asked Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Aram to inform embassies around the world that the Celebrations would be postponed until 1967.²⁸⁶ It was then intended for the Celebrations to coincide with the coronation, which was due to take place in November 1967. But the organisers felt that there might be difficulties in holding the two events at the same time, so the Celebrations were again sidelined, with a significant portion of the budget for the Central Council taken to fund the coronation.²⁸⁷ Some organisers were clearly frustrated at the relaxed nature in which the Central Council dealt with the organisation of the Celebrations during this period. An undated report from the General Directorate of the Press and Radio stated that over the past four years the committee had not been meeting regularly and this had caused many problems. Further organizational and financial problems were caused, the report argued, by administrative negligence and by changes in government personnel.²⁸⁸

It was beginning to appear as though the event might never take place, when in 1969 the Shah personally insisted that plans for the event should

²⁸⁴ 'Dovvomin gozāresh-e motāl'āt-e shurā-ye markazi-ye jashnhā...' [second study report of the Central Council for the Celebrations...], c. January 1961, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 1, pp. 96-104.

²⁸⁵ Minister of Court Hossein Ala to Prime Minister Ali Amini, 17 Dey 1340/ 7 January 1962, 'Pahlavi-ye dovjom va nemuneh-ye andishehhā-ye bāstāngerāyāneh: negāhi be asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' [The Second Pahlavi and some Elements of Archaistic Thoughts: A look to the Secret Documents Relating to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations], *Tārikh-e Mo'āser-e Irān*, 2:5 (1377/1998), p. 125.

²⁸⁶ Javad Boushehri to Minister of Foreign Affairs Abbas Aram, 22 Shahrivar 1343/ 13 September 1964, *ibid*, pp. 127-128.

²⁸⁷ Boushehri to Alam, 4 Shahrivar 1347/ 26 August 1968, *ibid*, p. 128. This sum was around \$3 million.

²⁸⁸ 'Gozāresh-e edāreh-ye kal-e enteshārāt va rādio' [report of the General Directorate of the Press and Radio], undated, Shafa Archives.

accelerate.²⁸⁹ The year 1971 was chosen and in an attempt to rejuvenate the project, the Shah issued a farman (imperial decree) to promote 26 people to the Central Council, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Ardeshir Zahedi, Minister of Finance Jamshid Amuzegar, Minister of Culture Mehrdad Pahlbod and Director of the Plan Organisation Mehdi Sami'i.²⁹⁰

In September 1970, Javad Boushehri left his role as head of the Central Council to receive treatment for cancer, whereupon Mehdi Boushehri was promoted in his place. Mehdi Boushehri was, however, busy leading the *Maison de L'Iran* in Paris, so Abdolreza Ansari, who worked for the Pahlavi Foundation, was invited by Princess Ashraf to act as the deputy head of the Council (*qā'im maqām-e rayis*).²⁹¹ Ansari noted at this time that the purpose of the Celebrations was to initiate 'The reawakening of the history, civilization, and culture of Iran and creating awareness among the peoples of the world'.²⁹² In order to achieve this aim a number of projects had already been discussed for the occasion including: an international congress of scholars to be held in Shiraz; the publication of significant works on Iran; the production of books on Iranian history and culture by scholars; the construction of a monument and museum reflecting 2,500 years of Iranian civilisation; and the hosting of exhibitions, conferences and festivals in Iran and around the world.²⁹³ Some of these projects were already underway, however, the organising committee suffered from poor central leadership and financial organisation. Alam blamed the lack of progress during the previous decade on Javad Boushehri, whom he apparently disliked. In a diary entry at the time of Boushehri's death he wrote,

Senator Javad Boushehri has died. He was a miserable, strange and greedy man. Ten years as head of the committee for the

²⁸⁹ Cyrus Kadivar, 'We are Awake: 2500-Year Celebrations Revisited', *The Iranian*, 25 January 2002, available online at <<http://iranian.com/CyrusKadivar/2002/January/2500/index.html>> [accessed on 19 December 2016]. Apparently Court Minister Asadollah Alam was personally against the Celebrations, but fell into line upon the Shah's insistence. See Mohammad Baheri in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, Cannes, France, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14 August 1982, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 20, p. 2.

²⁹⁰ '2,500th Year of Monarchy', *Kayhan International*, 8 May 1969.

²⁹¹ Abdolreza Ansari, *The Shah's Iran - Rise and Fall: Conversations with an Insider* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), p. 249.

²⁹² *Ibid*, p. 250.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 250-251.

Celebrations and he had done nothing, until finally the Shah told me to do it and it was done.²⁹⁴

It is perhaps harsh to attribute the failure of the organising council at this stage solely to Boushehri, however it was clear at the time that it seemed as though it would be impossible to implement the event on a large scale. Without the direct involvement of the Imperial Court, Ansari told Alam, the Celebrations might never be ready in time.²⁹⁵

After consulting with the Shah, Alam announced that from October 1970, the Central Council for the Celebrations would act as a consultative body, and a new High Executive Committee would be established which would work full-time on the Celebrations. The High Executive Committee consisted of nine members: Minister of the Imperial Court Asadollah Alam; Head of the Central Council of the Celebrations Mehdi Boushehri; Deputy Head of the Central Council of the Celebrations Abdolreza Ansari; Chief of Protocol of the Imperial Court Hormoz Gharib; Head of Iranian Radio and Television Reza Qotbi; Director General of the Imperial Court Amir Mottaqi; Deputy Minister of the Imperial Court Shojaeddin Shafa; Minister of Culture and Arts Mehrdad Pahlbod; and Head of SAVAK General Nematollah Nasiri.²⁹⁶ Individuals within the Executive Committee took on responsibilities corresponding to their professional experience. General Nasiri, for instance, was in charge of security and Hormoz Gharib was responsible for issues relating to procedure. Shojaeddin Shafa was the head of a special sub-committee in charge of orchestrating international operations.²⁹⁷ The Executive Committee met once a week at the Ministry of Court under the chairmanship of Alam and once a fortnight at Niavaran Palace under the Shahbanou's supervision.²⁹⁸ The programme was now completely under the remit of the Imperial Court and it was not until two months before the Celebrations were due to take place that

²⁹⁴ Diary entry 5 Ordibehsht 1352/ 25 April 1973, *Yāddāshthā-ye 'Alam*, vol. 3, (Tehran: Ketābsarā, 2014), p. 27.

²⁹⁵ Conversation with Abdolreza Ansari, 2016.

²⁹⁶ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 252.

²⁹⁷ Shojaeddin Shafa to Hendrik Jonker, 28 January 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

²⁹⁸ Kadivar '2500-Year Revisited'.

Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda and his cabinet were invited to give their approval.²⁹⁹

The decision to place the Celebrations under direct supervision of the Imperial Court allowed the Executive Committee to implement the plans that were already in place and meant that its members would now be held accountable for their actions, which had not previously been the case. There were to be no excuses for failure and the importance of the occasion was made abundantly clear to those involved. The governor of Fars, for example, had been left to supervise progress of preparations in and around Shiraz, which included the construction of the Darius Hotel at Persepolis and the Cyrus Hotel in Shiraz. He had previously assured the Celebrations' organisers that everything was on schedule. However, when the committee members visited the province less than a year before the Celebrations were due to take place, they found the Cyrus Hotel still under construction and that of the Darius Hotel barely under way. The committee members were disappointed, particularly Alam, who berated the gathered officials. 'I'm telling you, once and for all,' he warned,

that the staging of these celebrations is a national priority, and what is at stake is Iran's honor in the eyes of the world. If there is to be the slightest error in the work that has been assigned to you and if the ceremonies are not conducted to the highest expected standards, I will personally take my pistol and shoot every one of you before taking my own life! From today you know what has to be done and be warned that no excuses will be tolerated.³⁰⁰

Alam's dramatic outburst illustrates the frustration of the committee and its understanding that there was a huge amount of work to be done in a short space of time. The hotels in Fars appear to have eventually been completed with little time to spare. On 14 September 1971, less than a month before the Celebrations were due to take place, the Dutch ambassador observed that the Darius hotel at Persepolis was still not finished,³⁰¹ however ten days later he

²⁹⁹ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 273.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p.257.

³⁰¹ It was due to be completed by 1 Shahrivar 1350 (23 August 1971). See Javad Bushehri to Alam, 22 November 1969, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 108-110.

reported that it was finally completed, adding sarcastically that ‘the cold water tap in one of the rooms was even running.’³⁰² The hotel fiasco is perhaps a reflection of the entire project, planned for over a decade yet hastily put together in a little under two years. It is astonishing that the hotels were built at all, given the short time available, but by October 1971 all was completed. An advertisement for the hotels from that year proudly reads: ‘Introducing the hotels that took 2500 years to build... Each with a style even Cyrus the Great would have loved.’³⁰³ Despite the public facade of confidence the organisers clearly had their concerns about the preparations, and as late as March 1970 there were informal soundings from the Imperial Court that the Celebrations would have to be postponed again.³⁰⁴

From October 1970, with the Executive Committee working towards clear deadlines, there was an acceleration in the organisation of the event. It is from this period onwards that we see the Celebrations taking their form and considerable progress being made. The extensive programme developed by the Executive Committee at this time included a ceremony honouring Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae, a congress of Iranologists in Shiraz, a military parade, a light show at Persepolis, seminars around Iran and the world and the publication of books, including a reproduction of the *Baysonghori Shahnameh* manuscript.³⁰⁵ Committee members worked on the details of the programme over the following year and, in this manner, as Abdolreza Ansari wrote ‘the celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire, which had until now been semidormant, came to life.’³⁰⁶

The Tent City

In the 1960s Arthur Upham Pope, the highly respected and influential American academic and arts dealer, made some suggestions to the Iranian organisers as to how the Celebrations should be carried out. They should be organised on a

³⁰² Jonker to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 14 September 1971; and Jonker to Foreign Ministry, 22 September 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³⁰³ *Iran '71: An independent survey of the Iranian economy on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian empire* (Tehran: Iran Trade and Industry, 1971), p. 10.

³⁰⁴ Dutch Embassy Tehran to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 March 1970, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. The letter reads: ‘Protocol told me confidentially, repeat, confidentially, that it is possible that a decision will be made very soon to further postpone the celebrations “because Iran with the exception of Tehran is not ready” for these festivities.’

³⁰⁵ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 253.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 254.

large scale, he asserted, in order to stress that 'it is not merely an episode in Persian history, but a very great event in the history of civilization.'³⁰⁷ To achieve this, Pope suggested the construction of a great library in Iran to rival the Library of Congress,³⁰⁸ a military parade at Persepolis, a light display at the ruins which should 'be done on a very large scale with tremendous effect', and tented accommodation which should 'err a bit on the luxurious side for the sake of foreign visitors.'³⁰⁹ At this stage, however, there were no concrete plans for inviting heads of state. Indeed, it was not until early 1970 when it was understood that there would be large numbers of important dignitaries attending that serious consideration was given to the question of where they would stay. The resources available in Fars province were already stretched in order to complete the construction of the Darius and Cyrus Hotels, so it became clear that alternative arrangements would have to be made. It was apparently by chance that Alam met with the director of the Swiss interior design firm of Jansen while on a trip to Europe in 1970.³¹⁰ Alam then negotiated a price for a city of tents, which was proposed to the rest of the Executive Committee.³¹¹ The idea of tented accommodation conformed to ancient Persian tradition, in which a king would entertain guests in large tents while his entourage was on the move. The plan was accepted for this reason, but also for lack of credible alternatives.

The tent city complex provided accommodation in private apartments for heads of state or their representatives, and also included a large dining hall. The apartments each consisted of a sitting room, two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a service room, and were spaced out along five lanes branching out from a central fountain, with each lane named after a different continent.³¹² They were designed to be 'elegantly but not extravagantly decorated.'³¹³ In the sitting room, each head of state found their own portrait woven from silk, which they

³⁰⁷ Arthur Upham Pope to Amir Ebrahimi, 4 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 427.

³⁰⁸ Memo from Asadollah Behroozan, *ibid*, p. 427.

³⁰⁹ Pope to Ebrahimi, 4 December 1960, *ibid*, p. 429.

³¹⁰ Kadivar '2500-Year Revisited'.

³¹¹ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), pp. 264-265.

³¹² Though interestingly guests were not placed in their continent-wing. For example, the Afghan Princess Belghise and Prince Abdulrahim Khan were placed in America Avenue, flanked by Korea's Jung Pil Kim on one side and Mauritania's Ould Daddah on the other. See 'Where the Guests Slept', *Tehran Journal*, 20 October 1971.

³¹³ *Tehran Journal*, 3 July 1971.

were able to take away as a souvenir.³¹⁴ Each tent was designed in a unique style, ranging from Louis XVI to contemporary, and floors were spread with Persian carpets.³¹⁵ Suggestions that bathrooms were built using marble were strongly refuted by a spokesperson for Jansen.³¹⁶ Indeed, much of what was written about the opulence and extravagance of the tent city appears to have been based on hearsay. The Dutch ambassador noted this in a report.

The same goes for the supposed excessive (and not actually existent) luxury of the tent city, which unfortunately was described by someone as being like the camp set up for the Battle of the Golden Spurs, after which everyone started claiming it was made of gold brocade.³¹⁷

Although the decadence of the site was overstated by some sections of the foreign media, it is clear that a considerable amount of money was spent on providing a comfortable atmosphere which gave the impression of luxury.

Apartments were equipped with the finest French toiletries, including Guerlain shaving preparations for men and Joy eau de cologne for women, while the linen and towels were supplied by Porthault of Paris.³¹⁸ Such luxuries may appear excessive, however they were largely provided in response to concerns from foreign ambassadors. For example, at a meeting of foreign diplomats the Spanish ambassador raised the issue of the need for hairdressing facilities.³¹⁹ To answer these concerns the Iranian chief of protocol organised for fully equipped salons to be set up, and for renowned hairdressers flown in to be at the service of guests. The Iranians even circulated a questionnaire to guests beforehand, in which they were asked, among other things, to indicate dietary requirements, preferred meals for breakfast, and 'preferred type and brand of

³¹⁴ Each one featured a portrait of the guest against the backdrop of Persepolis. *Paris Match* reported that these tapestries were produced at a cost of 350,000 francs each (approximately \$65,000, the equivalent of \$500,000 today), an exorbitant and unrealistic amount. See 'Persepolis: La fête d'un empereur et de son peuple', *Paris Match*, 23 October 1971, p. 33. For five guests who accepted their invitations at the last minute, leaving no time for the tapestries to be made, they were sent in August 1975. Diary entry 2 August 1975, Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I: Confidential Diary of Iran's Royal Court, 1969-1977*, introduced and edited by Alimaghi Alikhani (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 432.

³¹⁵ Antony Mann, 'Paris wins order of the Bath', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1971.

³¹⁶ *Tehran Journal*, 3 July 1971.

³¹⁷ Jonker report, 3 November 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³¹⁸ Charlotte Curtis, 'Tent City Awaits Celebration: Shah's "Greatest Show"', *The New York Times*, 12 October 1971, p. 39.

³¹⁹ Danish Ambassador to Jonker, 3 July 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

beverages, cigars and cigarettes.³²⁰ It was particularly important, given that the Celebrations were partly inspired by the desire to showcase Iran's progress, that guests were treated in the manner to which they were accustomed.

The Celebrations presented Iran as a land of stability and prosperity. It had, according to the official narrative, been dragged from destitution into modernity by the two Pahlavi monarchs and was a truly emerging power. To enforce this presentation, the event organisers were careful to hide signs of poverty. For example, Abdolreza Ansari wrote to the Mayor of Tehran to ask him to remove a homeless camp from the view of a major highway on which foreign guests would be travelling.³²¹ In Fars province walls were built to hide slums, villages were whitewashed to look, according to one diplomat, 'quaint instead of grubby'³²² and plans were made to construct 200 houses to accommodate the homeless in and around Shiraz.³²³ The Celebrations were a declaration of Iran's emergence as a global power and it was important that the foreign guests saw only signs of progress.

12-15 October 1971

The Celebrations were inaugurated with the officially titled Glorification of Cyrus Ceremony at Pasargadae on Tuesday 12 October, which, in the words of one journalist, 'set the tone of deadly seriousness which the Shah and his Ministers want to maintain.'³²⁴ In preparation for the occasion column drums surrounding Cyrus' tomb, marking the presence of a congregational mosque constructed in the 13th century, were removed in order to smarten up the area.³²⁵ The removal of Islamic era features also reflects the regime's attempts to present to the world its particular understanding of Iranian history.³²⁶ Invited guests included

³²⁰ 'Necessary Information and Questions', undated, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³²¹ Abdolreza Ansari to Gholamreza Nikpey, 2 Shahrivar 1350/ 24 August 1971, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 179.

³²² Quoted in Jenkins, 'Iran's Birthday Party', *Newsweek*, 25 October 1971, p. 33. Funds were allocated to modernise areas in Fars close to where foreigners might pass by, such as Marvdasht and Sa'adat Shahr. See Governor of Fars to Minister of Interior, 30 Farvardin 1350/ 19 April 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 32-33.

³²³ Alam to Bushehri, 12 Khordad 1349/ 2 June 1970, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, p. 183; and Bushehri to Alam, 18 Khordad 1349/ 8 June 1970, *ibid*, p. 191.

³²⁴ Schwartz, 'A Kingdom Remembered', 1971.

³²⁵ David Stronach, 'Cyrus and Pasargadae', in *Cyrus the Great: An Ancient Iranian King*, ed. by Touraj Daryaee (Santa Monica, CA: Afshar Publishing, 2013), p. 63.

³²⁶ This sort of state-sponsored vandalism of historical monuments is not uncommon and reflects the problems inherent in using history and archaeology for political propaganda. During Mussolini's Augustus celebration, as was shown in Chapter 1, layers of history were removed from the site of Augustus' tomb. Similarly, in the 19th century in Europe, medieval churches were

Iranian ministers, officials, representatives of religious bodies, Iranologists, journalists, Iranian academics, representatives of the Revolutionary Corps, and representatives of the Imperial Army.³²⁷ The ceremony was brief and simple, lasting just 45 minutes, but was charged with emotion and served to express the significance of the ancient king Cyrus. The official programme records the following lines with which the Shah opened the event:

Twenty five centuries ago, in a world where ruling was based on threats, terror and fear, and where the conquerors [sic] beliefs were imposed on the conquered, the Iranian Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great on the highest human principles of mutual understanding among nations and religious freedom. The moral and spiritual life of my people has been based on these principles.³²⁸

There was little doubt that the event was a dedication to a significant ruler, the father of the Iranian nation and a moderniser whose empire was built on moral principles. The memory of this great king was employed to support the Shah's modernist policies and by putting the Pahlavi monarchy in the context of the first king of the Persian Empire he was legitimising his position and that of his dynasty.

The Glorification of Cyrus Ceremony began with the arrival of the Shah, Shahbanou and Crown Prince by helicopter at 11:00, after all of the guests had arrived and taken their seats. The Shah entered a royal tent at 11:30, emerging 10 minutes later to the sound of the national anthem and the firing of 101 salute guns. The imperial family then approached the 'imperial arena', just short of Cyrus' tomb. The Shah stepped forward and placed a wreath at the foot of the tomb, returning after a minute's silence. At 11:36 he gave his grandiloquent speech to the tomb. In a voice shaking with emotion the Shah's tribute included the following lines:

purged of later additions in the hope that this would reveal the true nature of the monuments and bring the restorers closer to the pure spirit of the Christian faith. See Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), p. 278.

³²⁷ Programme: *The Glorification of Cyrus the Great Achaemenian King of Kings*, Pasargad, 12 October 1971.

³²⁸ Ibid.

Cyrus! Great king, king of kings, Achaemenian king, king of the land of Iran, on my behalf as king of Iran, and from my nation, I offer you greetings. In this glorious moment of Iranian history, me and all Iranians, descendents of this ancient kingdom that was founded 2,500 years ago, praise you before your tomb, and vow to preserve your extraordinary memory... Cyrus, hero of Iran and the world, rest in peace, for we are awake and will always be awake.³²⁹

Asadollah Alam recalled that this was the most emotional that he had ever seen the Shah and that he was 'so emotional that he had to stop for a second' to gather himself.³³⁰ The event was screened around the world and the Shah was fully aware that he was not merely speaking to a domestic audience, but also a global one. Many who were there spoke about the presence of a whirlwind of desert sand that appeared during the speech and which added a certain eeriness to the occasion.³³¹ One article describes the wind as keeping a 'respectful distance',³³² although the guards who were charged with keeping the audience quiet during the speech were angry at the noise caused by the flags blowing in the wind.³³³

The Shah was later mocked for the speech, the 'rest in peace', or 'sleep calm' line receiving particular attention. In one joke, a man is so excited at reading about the speech in a newspaper that he rushes home early to tell his wife, whereupon he finds her in bed with their neighbour, Cyrus. Overcome with emotion, the man raises his hand and says 'sleep easily Cyrus, for we are awake'.³³⁴ Others, taking advantage of the opportunity to attack the Shah's policies, simply said: 'Sleep calm, we're ruining the country. Sleep calm we're spending the oil money. Sleep calm, we're pissing away all the wealth.'³³⁵ At the time, however, the Shah was evidently pleased with the speech. It had been written by Shojaeddin Shafa, as were all of the speeches for the Celebrations,

³²⁹ This is the author's translation from video footage of the speech, which is widely available online. For a full English translation see 'The Torch has Never Died', *Kayhan International*, 23 October 1971, p. 3.

³³⁰ Quoted in Margaret Laing, *The Shah* (London: Sigwick and Jackson, 1977), p. 22.

³³¹ See for example Peter Chelkowski interviewed in *Decadence and Downfall* (BBC, 2016).

³³² Schwartz, 'A Kingdom Remembered', 1971.

³³³ 'Sjah belooft aan Cyrus een nog groter Iran' [Shah promises Cyrus an even greater Iran], *Leidsch Dagblad*, 13 October 1971, p. 9.

³³⁴ Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (1987), p. 327.

³³⁵ Bani Sadr interviewed in *Decadence and Downfall* (BBC, 2016).

and was accepted by the Shah with only minor alterations.³³⁶ Unlike other speeches, which the Shah usually practised just once beforehand, the Shah, aware of the speech's 'publicity-value', spent some time practising the text, 'discovering the intonations he liked.'³³⁷ Responding to praise of the speech from an interviewer later, the Shah said, 'Thank you for the tribute, which I do not deserve. However, I need hardly assure you that we are awake and we shall for ever stay awake to guard Iran's precious heritage.'³³⁸ Word of the public ridicule of the speech had perhaps not reached the imperial ears.

The speech encapsulated the ethos of the Celebrations, which presented Cyrus as a king at the cradle of the ideals of European intellectual history. The Shah's promise to 'preserve forever the traditions of humanism and goodwill, with which you founded the Persian Empire' illustrates this fact. Meanwhile, the Shah was presented as Cyrus' spiritual successor. This idea was understood by those in attendance. Roger Savory, for example, who was one of the Iranologists present, wrote:

We are celebrating this anniversary because the present Shahanshah of Iran sees himself as being, in a very real sense, the heir of Cyrus the Great and the inheritor of his empire. No one, I think, who was present at the dignified and moving ceremony at the tomb of Cyrus, could doubt this for one moment.³³⁹

This presentation was made more credible by the attendance of foreign academics, who had dedicated their lives to the study of Iran.

The message was that Cyrus the Great was the father of the modern Iranian state and that Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was his successor. Internationally, the implication was that the Shah was a moderniser who should be taken seriously and who was worth investing in. According to the Dutch ambassador, it was perhaps a mistake not to invite the official dignitaries to this particular occasion. 'The great disappointment of the festivities', he wrote, 'was

³³⁶ Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005), pp. 21-22.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 22.

³³⁸ Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch* (1977), p. 29.

³³⁹ Roger Savory, 'Iran: A 2500-year historical and cultural tradition' in *Iranian Civilization and Culture: Essays in Honour of the 2,500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire*, ed. by Charles Adams (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1973), p. 77.

unfortunately the fact that there was no natural and inspiring climax for the eminent guests.’ The commemoration at Pasargadae, he continued,

could have served through the surroundings and the atmosphere as an inspiring spark for guests, more, much more even, than the speech of the Shah in Persian and the answer of the Emperor of Ethiopia in Amhari, which came after the dinner.³⁴⁰

In what was a celebration of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, there was no event in the programme of the foreign dignitaries dedicated to Cyrus. All of the major events for dignitaries took place either at Persepolis or in Tehran. The space around Cyrus’ tomb was perhaps considered too small for a significant number of guests, or perhaps there were security or transport concerns. Whatever the reason, the ambassador’s comments suggest that it may have been a mistake not to include dignitaries at this occasion.

The Second International Congress of Iranology, organised as an important part of the Celebrations, took place from 13 until 15 October, and will be discussed at length in Chapter 5. The official programme records that 275 scholars from 38 countries were present at the Congress, including 24 from the USSR, 22 from the USA, 18 from Germany, 17 from India, 15 from Britain, and 14 from France.³⁴¹ The scholars had a similar programme to the heads of state, although they were not permitted to enter the tent city. They attended the *son et lumière* on a different day, took part in a number of receptions and were invited to the parade at Persepolis, as well as the events in Tehran.

Heads of state or their representatives began to arrive from 12 October, landing in Shiraz from where they were transferred by helicopter or car to Persepolis. As they arrived at Persepolis the Shah, who drove around the site in his open Rolls-Royce, was there to greet them.³⁴² In all, 62 heads of state or their representatives attended, 50 of whom were accommodated at the tent city. Among the 50 were: Prince Philip and Princess Anne representing Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom; King Hussein of Jordan; Prince Bernhard

³⁴⁰ Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 November 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³⁴¹ See Programme: *World Congress of Iranology: On the Occasion of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, Shiraz, 13-15 October 1971.

³⁴² Walter Schwarz, ‘Finale Saves the Cyrus Show’, *The Guardian*, 16 October 1971, p. 1.

representing Queen Juliana of the Netherlands; President V.V. Giri of India; President Nikolai Podgorny of the Soviet Union; Cardinal Maximilian von Furstenberg representing the Vatican; and Vice-President of the United States Spiro Agnew.³⁴³ For guests who arrived on 12 October an informal lunch and dinner were prepared, and for the following two days, guests could take part in a number of activities, including trips to local historical sites or a game of golf.³⁴⁴ The British representatives, Prince Philip and Princess Anne, for example, were taken on a tour of Pasargadae by archaeologist David Stronach of the British Institute of Persian Studies, followed by a trip to the Royal Stables.³⁴⁵

The Gala Dinner

The evening of 14 October culminated in the royal banquet, which took place in the dining hall at the tent city. Guests at the banquet included Iranian government ministers and other dignitaries, foreign guests and ambassadors, and members of the Pahlavi family. The Shah opened the occasion with a speech, in which he said:

I take the present assembly of the great personages of the world at Persepolis, the historic birthplace of the Persian Empire as a good omen, because I feel that in our gathering this evening, past history is linked with the realities of today. Naturally such a bond of past and present, achieved by understanding and friendship, is to be taken as a good omen... Distinguished friends, if we have been eager to invite you to the greatest festival in our history, it is because we thought that the occasion was one which merited the trouble you have taken to come here, for this festival is, above all, in honour of Iranian cultural heritage which belongs to humanity

³⁴³ For a complete list of attendees, see Appendix A.

³⁴⁴ A questionnaire provided to guests stated: 'Please indicate which of the following activities are preferred: Visit to Naghshe Rostam, Pasargadae (the Palace and tomb of Cyrus the Great), Persepolis (the Palace of Darius), the Camp of the World Welfare Legion, The Aryamehr pilot farm, the Darius Dam, games such as mini-golf etc. or is it preferred to have meetings with the other Heads of States.' 'Necessary Information and Questions', undated, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³⁴⁵ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, FCO 17/1529. After the Celebrations ended, there were even opportunities to travel further afield. Cardinal von Furstenberg, for example, travelled to Rezaiyeh, in West Azerbaijan, Prince Moulay Abdallah of Morocco travelled to Mashhad, and Governor General of Canada Roland Michener visited Rasht, Babolsar, Babol and Ramsar. See General Nasiri to Central Commander of the Gendarmerie, 26 Mehr 1350/18 October 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 340.

as a whole. In fact, your host this evening is “History” itself rather than ourselves.³⁴⁶

The Shah was eager to stress that the Celebrations were first and foremost a commemoration of Iranian cultural heritage, a heritage which belonged to all mankind. The Shah was also keen to present himself as a serious political leader.

We all know that man is still grappling with many problems. We are aware that a large part of the population of the world still suffers from poverty, ignorance, hunger and all kinds of discrimination. Every day, in some corner of the world, we hear the whistling of bullets and come across various manifestations of violence and hatred. On the other hand, we also know that if man has thus far failed to eliminate disorder and prejudice, there is no cause to despair, for man’s eternal and changeless mission is constant progress towards perfection. In order to follow the true path in fulfilling this mission, each one of us must try as hard as possible, as much as circumstances allow, to turn the world into one of love, peace and cooperation for mankind, a world in which every person may enjoy to the full the amenities of science and civilization.³⁴⁷

Against the backdrop of Persepolis, the imperial capital of an empire which the Shah’s regime had presented as based on values of tolerance and human rights, the message presented the Shah as a progressive, willing to take the lead in solving the problems of the world. The speech was answered by Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, who held a prominent position during the Celebrations as the longest-serving monarch. He said, ‘These celebrations show how to use history positively – not for false glorification or idle self-congratulations, but for new strength and revitalisation.’³⁴⁸ Not all those who watched the Celebrations unfold on their television sets agreed with this assessment, or were so generous in their praise.

³⁴⁶ ‘The Shahanshah’s Speech at the Banquet on 14 October 1971’, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. For full text of this speech and Haile Selassie I’s reply, see Appendix B.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ ‘Reply of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I at Iran Banquet’, *ibid.*

The subsequent criticism of the banquet was understandable. It was extremely expensive, with most of the food, equipment and waiters flown in from Europe.³⁴⁹ According to reports the most significant Iranian contribution to the banquet was 300 pounds of caviar,³⁵⁰ but such figures are difficult to verify. This again highlights the fallibility of the press coverage of the Celebrations. One Dutch newspaper, for example, suggested 50 tonnes of caviar was supplied, one-eighth of the global yearly production.³⁵¹ Guests were served a meal which included dishes such as quail eggs with Iranian caviar, mousse of crayfish tails, champagne sorbet and imperial peacock. Drinks included 60-year old champagne, the finest French wines and vintage cognac.³⁵² The dinner was reported by one journalist to be

an expression of the most absolute luxury... and the most complete refinement. It was the greatest of all the parties of the twentieth century and it is very possible that a similar one is never organised again.³⁵³

Despite some clearly exaggerated reports on the dinner, one must conclude that it was particularly lavish. Additionally, as critics were keen to stress, in this celebration of Iran, there was a distinct lack of Iranian flavour to the occasion.

The lack of Iranian food served at the royal banquet was hard for some to understand, since the Celebrations were, above all, a commemoration of Iranian heritage and culture. Even important Iranian figures were critical of the decision to serve French cuisine. Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi, who served on the Central Council, asked why, at the foot of one of the world's most inspiring ancient capital cities, guests could not be served Iranian dishes such as *kabab kubideh* or *ab-gusht*?³⁵⁴ This was a decision that was reached by the

³⁴⁹ According to one of the catering staff the food for the guests was flown in on special aircraft and included 2,700 kilograms of meat and 1,280 kilograms of fowl and game. See Bartin Beglinger, 'The Most Expensive Party Ever', *Tages-Anzeiger*, May 2014, available online at <<https://www.alimentarium.org/en/magazine/history/most-expensive-party-ever>> [accessed 30 January 2017].

³⁵⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, 10 October 1971.

³⁵¹ 'Uitbundig Feest in Persepolis', *Gerlderlander Pers*, 4 August 1971.

³⁵² 'Diner Persepolis op 14 October 1971', MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. According to one of the waiters, there were only 12 bottles of the vintage cognac from 1860, so empties were refilled using the cheaper Courvoisier. Diners were apparently none the wiser. See Beglinger, 'The Most Expensive Party Ever', 2014.

³⁵³ Quoted in Clark, 'The Party' (2008), p. 23.

³⁵⁴ Milani, *The Shah* (2011), p. 326.

Executive Committee. Abdolreza Ansari had made enquiries with Iranian caterers as to whether they would be able to provide dinner for such an occasion. He was told by the head of the catering department of the Imperial Court, Abolfath Atabai, who was experienced in entertaining dignitaries, that catering for such numbers at Persepolis was far beyond his capabilities. Ansari received further negative assessments from Hossein Maghsoudi, head of a group responsible for running a number of luxury hotels, and Taqi Emami, head of the National Tourist Board, although the former agreed to cater for the journalists and academics staying in Shiraz.³⁵⁵ The Iranian infrastructure simply lacked the experience and personnel for such a huge event and at relatively short notice it would have been impossible to develop these industries to the desired standard.³⁵⁶

It was only after examining the available options in Iran that Alam decided to look abroad. The Shahbanou later recalled that she recognised at the time that this might be a problem. 'We've waited twenty-five hundred years', she said, 'we can wait a few more.' However, it was inconceivable at this point that the Celebrations would be delayed any further, so 'practically speaking', she concluded, 'it was too late.' The Shahbanou also supposed that the press would come to criticise the event for this: 'Knowing what journalists are like, I suspected that they would latch on to these foreign contracts as a pretext to criticize'.³⁵⁷ It was eagerness to impress the guests gathered from around the world that led to the controversial decision, as the Shah argued after the event, 'What am I supposed to do, serve them bread and radishes?'³⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the lack of Iranian cuisine at what was one of the principal events of the Celebrations was a public relations failure. It should be noted, however, that Iranian food was served on the second night, which was a more informal affair. At this event guests were offered a buffet with a selection of Iranian dishes alongside international dishes, with Iranian hostesses on hand to explain what the dishes were. Iranian chefs were also chosen to assist the foreign chefs in

³⁵⁵ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), pp. 263-264.

³⁵⁶ It should be noted that as well as the 150 heads of state and other special guests dining in the main banqueting hall, the Iranians also had to arrange a separate full dinner service for their entourage, which numbered some 600 people, in a separate dining hall. See Amir Mottaqi to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 Esfand 1350/ 20 February 1972, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 181.

³⁵⁷ Farah Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love: My Life with the Shah* (New York: Turnaround Distributor, 2004), pp. 216-217.

³⁵⁸ Curtis, 'Tent City Awaits Celebration: Shah's "Greatest Show"', p. 39.

preparing the Iranian food.³⁵⁹ If this was done on the second night, could it not have also been done for the gala dinner? This was a missed opportunity and perhaps reflects a loss of nerve on behalf of the organisers, unsure as to the foreigners' reactions to Iranian cuisine.

Following the royal banquet the guests moved out to the ruins of Persepolis where they watched a *son et lumière* display and fireworks. Greek avant-garde composer Iannis Xenakis' latest work was premiered. The ruins were brought to life as actors dressed in traditional Achaemenid dress walked solemnly around them, while projected luminous patterns evoked the Zoroastrian symbolism of Ancient Persia and the voices of Achaemenid kings echoed around the once-great ceremonial capital.³⁶⁰ The firm charged with installing the lights at Persepolis was reputable, and had already been employed on similar projects at sites such as the Pyramids in Egypt and the Palace of Versailles.³⁶¹ The event organisers were eager to make sure that the light show would be an impressive display, not out of place at any of the world's great historical sites.³⁶² Talinn Grigor has pointed out that this magnificent high-tech spectacle at the ancient ruins displayed to the visitors that the Shah could transcend Orientalist traditions and modernise, while at the same time remaining true to Iran's cultural heritage.³⁶³

The following day the parade at Persepolis took place; a military procession executed on a grand scale, intending to showcase over 2,500 years of Iranian history, with soldiers dressed in historical costumes. Once again the Shah gave a speech in which he sought to merge the past with the present:

Today, after 25 centuries, Iranian soldiers once again will march past the pillars which stand upright in this vast plain as monuments of the age-old grandeur and glory of Persepolis. But

³⁵⁹ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 267.

³⁶⁰ Maria Anna Harley, 'Music of Sound and Light: Xenakis's Polytopes', *Leonardo*, 31:1 (1998), p. 59.

³⁶¹ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016) p. 258.

³⁶² In April 1971 the light and sound machine suffered a technical fault and the organisers were anxious that this would occur again during the Celebrations. To avoid such embarrassment the company that installed the equipment arranged for a specialist to be sent to Iran in the months leading up to the Celebrations and for a number of individuals in Iran to be given specialist training. See Mehrdad Pahlbod to Abdolreza Ansari, 14 April 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 31.

³⁶³ Talinn Grigor, 'Preserving the Antique Modern: Persepolis '71', *Future Anterior*, 2:1 (2005), p. 26.

these soldiers, like the soldiers of Achaemenid times, revere as the sacred goal the combination of national sovereignty and moral standards of twenty-five centuries ago, in an inscription which is only a few paces away from us now, and in which Darius the Great recorded the victories of his army, he also said these words: "I love truth and abhor evil. I do not wish the strong to oppress the weak in my kingdom. I do not wish one to cause loss to another out of wickedness."³⁶⁴

The Shah was presenting himself again as heir to the ancient Iranian kings, in this case Darius, whose typical Zoroastrian typology he cited. These ancient kings, according to his narrative, ruled fairly and justly and their soldiers were inspired to act according to the moral conviction of their ruler. The participation of the modern Iranian armed forces and the Revolutionary Corps in the parade enforced the idea of continuity, moral and ethnic. But it was also a show of military strength. The event, which was apparently watched by millions around the world, indicated Iran's ability to reinvent itself throughout the ages. The message was that Iran had always played an important regional role which it had assumed with responsibility and moral courage over the past 25 centuries. The Shah was announcing to the world Iran's readiness to take back its rightful place amongst nations.

Over the course of one and a half hours, soldiers in carefully designed costumes paraded in front of an audience consisting of royalty, political figures, academics, journalists and private guests. The parade began with soldiers dressed as pre-Achaemenid warriors, followed by soldiers in various costumes of the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian, Saffarid, Delamite, Safavid, Afshar, Zand and Qajar periods, culminating in the Pahlavi period with the march of the Revolutionary Corps.³⁶⁵ The Achaemenid section included additions such as minutely detailed reconstructions of triremes and siege equipment, and it has been alleged that for added realism some of the 3,500 soldiers participating in

³⁶⁴ 'Shahanshah's Message at the Grand Parade 15 October 1971', MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³⁶⁵ Programme: *Parade of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, Persepolis, 15 October 1971. The Revolutionary Corps, or Literacy Corps, established as part of the White Revolution in 1963, was an educational programme that sought to improve literacy levels in the Iran. For a comprehensive study of the Literacy Corps see Farrian Sabahi, *The Literacy Corps in Pahlavi Iran (1963-1979): Political Social and Literary Implications* (Lugano: Sapiens Lugano cop. 2002).

the procession were banned from shaving in the weeks leading up to the event.³⁶⁶ The organisation of the parade was entrusted to the army under the control of Commander-in-General Fathollah Minbachian and a separate committee was established to oversee the development of the project.³⁶⁷ It was a scholarly operation, the culmination of around 12 years of study, which had incorporated a wide variety of sources 'to ensure the greatest authenticity possible.'³⁶⁸ The historian Eric Chamberlin admired the costumes, noting that they were created with a 'mixture of rigorous scholarly research and practical experiment.'³⁶⁹ There was a book published to accompany the parade, which included detailed illustrations of the soldiers from the various epochs³⁷⁰ and they retain a scholarly significance. They were recently reproduced in part in Kaveh Farrokh's 2007 study of the history of warfare in Iran entitled *Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War*.³⁷¹ The parade was undoubtedly politically charged, but at its heart it was a cultural event and a credible commemoration of Iran's military history.³⁷²

On the evening of the military parade the guests were served a more informal dinner at the banqueting hall of the tent city. The Executive Committee had decided that Iranian food would be served on this occasion in order to 'present an opportunity to advertise our national culinary tradition as equal to those of China, Italy, India and France.'³⁷³ Guests were advised not to wear short dresses, since they would be sitting on the floor or on low seats, in traditional Persian fashion.³⁷⁴ The entertainment for the evening was also Iranian, with traditional dancing and music. As the Shahbanou recalls in her

³⁶⁶ Grigor, 'Preserving the Antique Modern' (2005), pp. 26-27. Although some of the facial hair in the published pictures definitely appears to be artificial. People at the time even speculated that the wigs and facial hair would have cost 600,000 tomans (approximately \$80,000). See SAVAK report, 9 Khordad 1350/ 30 May 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 85.

³⁶⁷ Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005), p. 33. This was a serious undertaking and by January 1969 the committee had met 340 times. By March 1970 they had met 445 times. See 'sorat jalaseh-ye komisiyon-e arteshi-ye jashn-e shāhanshāhi-ye irān' [Proceedings of the military commission of the imperial celebrations], *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 40-41; and pp. 154-156.

³⁶⁸ Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration* (1971), p. 28.

³⁶⁹ Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979), p. 25.

³⁷⁰ *Parade at Persepolis* (1971).

³⁷¹ See Kaveh Farrokh, *Shadows in the Desert: Ancient Persia at War* (Oxford: Osprey, 2007).

³⁷² Twenty-five mannequins dressed in the costumes of the Parade are on permanent display in the Military Museum at the Sa'dabad Palace complex in Tehran, complete with weapons, standards and artificial beards. Outside the museum in a small pool a wooden boat is displayed; an Achaemenid trireme perhaps?

³⁷³ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 267

³⁷⁴ Jonker to Head of Protocol, 8 September 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

memoirs, 'We had brought in artists and artisans from all the regions of the country for this event.' She continues:

Musicians, painters, weavers, and cooks responded to our invitation; this dinner was designed to show everyone the cultural richness of Iran, beginning with its cuisine and its crafts. One of our ambitions was to get this sector flourishing again, especially the export of village-made carpets.³⁷⁵

However, this dinner received far less attention in the press than the gala dinner and was overshadowed by the parade which took place earlier in the day. As recently as 2016 a 75-minute documentary produced by the BBC on the Celebrations failed to mention the informal dinner at all,³⁷⁶ although footage of it exists in Farrokh Golestan's *Flames of Persia*.

The Pahlavi regime was, in general, committed to the promotion of native art, a cause taken especially to heart by the Shahbanou. The initial primary objectives of her Shiraz Arts Festival (1967-1977), for example, were the promotion of traditional Iranian music, and to provide a platform for the presentation of theatrical performances devised by native artists.³⁷⁷ Throughout the Celebrations, too, attention was paid to traditional arts and crafts. The official invitations, for example, were sent out in special wooden boxes, designed by Haji Eslamian, head of the Culture Ministry's miniature design workshop. The finished products were worked on by 20 artists at the workshop, along with 10 specialist Isfahani artists, and were meant as an example of Iranian art to be kept as a souvenir by the invitees.³⁷⁸ Other gifts included copies of the Cyrus Cylinder, a specially published book of miniatures from the *Baysonghori Shahnameh*, a 240-page leather bound book entitled *Iran, Philosophy Behind the Revolution*,³⁷⁹ specially produced porcelain plates, a recording of the symphony *Persepolis* by Aminollah Hossein recorded by the Paris Opera Orchestra, a book of stamps, and the aforementioned woven

³⁷⁵ Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love* (2004), p. 225.

³⁷⁶ *Decadence and Downfall* (BBC, 2016)

³⁷⁷ Hormoz Farhat, 'Shiraz Arts Festival', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2015, available at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/shiraz-arts-festival>> (accessed on 2 November 2016).

³⁷⁸ 'Invitations', *Kayhan International*, 26 July 1971.

³⁷⁹ The book is described as 'a selection of writings and speeches of the Shahanshah' and features passages from *Mission for my Country*, a publication on the White Revolution from 1967, and various speeches of the Shah. See Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Iran, Philosophy Behind the Revolution* (London: Orient Commerce Establishment, 1971).

portraits.³⁸⁰ Contrary to popular understanding that the Celebrations focussed too heavily on foreign tastes, there was a very clear effort on the part of the organisers to promote Iranian arts and culture.

Tehran

On 16 October, the day after the parade, guests were flown to Tehran to attend the inaugurations of the Shahyad monument and the Aryamehr Stadium, as well as a wreath laying ceremony at the tomb of Reza Shah. Conforming to the theme of cultural integrity in the face of modernisation, the move from the ancient capital of Persepolis to the modern capital of Tehran represented what Grigor describes as, 'a conspicuous evocation of change and continuity – of ancientness and modernity.'³⁸¹ The Shahyad monument itself was a symbol of the strength of the institution of monarchy in the face of dynastical change, and presented

an excellent synthesis of Roman triumphal arches, Parthian fire temples (Chahar-taq), the Sasanian Ctesiphon Iwan, Seljuk tomb towers, Safavid muqarnas, and the various modernist architectural qualities of austerity, iconoclasm, axiality, and monumentality.³⁸²

The monument was designed by Hossein Amanat, a young graduate of Tehran University, after a nationwide competition was announced by the Central Council in the 1960s, which inspired a huge number of proposals. The winning design successfully encapsulated the synthesis of past and present. Its location, close to the airport, provided a further link to the modernisation of the city and ensured that all foreign visitors who travelled from the airport to the city would pass by.³⁸³

Inside the monument was a museum space of 87,000 square feet with an 'art centrum' which would display the cultural and artistic history of Iran from

³⁸⁰ 'Special Mementoes for Special Guests', *Kayhan International*, 23 October 1971, p. 6.

³⁸¹ Grigor, 'Orientalism and Mimicry of Selfness' (2009), p. 6.

³⁸² Grigor, 'Of Metamorphosis' (2010), p. 211.

³⁸³ See letter Javad Boushehri to Mayor of Tehran Fathollah Forood, 24 Bahman 1339/ 13 February, 1961, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 129.

'at least the last 2,500 years',³⁸⁴ and the area immediately surrounding the monument was designed to be the centre of a public square. Construction on the monument began in July 1968³⁸⁵ and shortly before then a memorial plaque was placed in the monument's foundations.³⁸⁶ During the opening days of the museum, the original Cyrus Cylinder was on display, on loan to Iran from the British Museum.³⁸⁷ At the opening ceremony a special plaque made with 12 kilograms of gold,³⁸⁸ which featured on one side a message of appreciation for their Imperial Majesties and on the other the 12 principles of the White Revolution, was presented to the Shah by Tehran Mayor Gholamreza Nikpay.³⁸⁹ A number of foreign military bands performed at the ceremony and also the following day at the inauguration of the Aryamehr Stadium.³⁹⁰

The Aryamehr Stadium was a 100,000 seat sports stadium designed by Abdolaziz Farmanfarmian for the 1974 Asian Games, which were to be hosted by Iran.³⁹¹ It later became an important part of Iran's bid to host the 1984 Olympic Games.³⁹² The inauguration event featured traditional Iranian athletics and a dance spectacle.³⁹³ The stadium, which was part of a state of the art sports village, showed attending guests that Iran was developing economically, socially and politically. Sport appears to have been an important means through which the regime promoted the state ideology and Iran's progress internationally. There was, for instance, an international football tournament held in June and July 1971 called the Cyrus the Great Cup, which Iran won,

³⁸⁴ 'The Official Ceremonies' by the Committee of the International Affairs of the Festivities, July 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

³⁸⁵ Hossein Amanat to Javad Boushehri, 30 Esfand 1346/ 20 March 1968, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), pp. 131-132. Footage of building at different stages of its construction can be observed in the documentary *Hargez Nakhah Kurush* (Manoto, 2012).

³⁸⁶ Produced with 5 kilograms of 18 karat gold by the Organisation for Military Industries. See Javad Boushehri to Mehdi Sami'i, 9 Mehr 1346/ 1 October 1967, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 131.

³⁸⁷ This loan will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

³⁸⁸ Letter Ansari to Alam, 23 Mordad 1350/ 14 August 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 204

³⁸⁹ 'Tehran's Ctesiphon', *Kayhan International*, 23 October 1971.

³⁹⁰ Including 79 members of a Jordanian band, 144 members of an Algerian band, 42 members of a Pakistani band, 133 members of a Swiss band, 19 members of a Romanian band and 99 members of a Kuwaiti band. See Public Relations Office of the Military Council of the Imperial Celebrations to Head of the Central Council of the Imperial Celebrations, 21 Mehr 1350/ 13 October 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 334-335.

³⁹¹ Milani, *Eminent Persians*, vol. 1 (2008), p. 151.

³⁹² Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005), pp. 37-38. Iran withdrew shortly after the revolution, leaving Los Angeles as the only remaining candidate.

³⁹³ Farrokh Golestan, *Flames of Persia* (1972).

beating Romania's Fotbal Club Argeş Piteşti 1-0 in the final.³⁹⁴ Oman even printed a special series of stamps to commemorate the Anniversary Celebrations, with illustrations of famous Iranian football players.³⁹⁵ Other sporting events included a tennis tournament, which the Shah attended, called the Aryamehr Cup, held in May 1971 at the Imperial Sports Club in Tehran,³⁹⁶ and the Cyrus the Great Polo Tournament, held the same month.³⁹⁷ On the same evening of the inauguration of the Aryamehr Stadium, guests were invited to attend a ballet by the National Iranian Ballet Company, with music by the Tehran Symphony Orchestra.³⁹⁸ After these events guests began to leave, but those who remained were given the opportunity to visit historical sites in Tehran and to travel to Isfahan for more sightseeing.³⁹⁹

The buildings inaugurated in Tehran during the Celebrations were not merely vanity projects of the Shah; they sought to reinvigorate the international image of Iran while injecting a degree of pride into the population. Naming the new buildings Aryamehr (light of the Aryans) and Shahyad (remembrance of kings) reinforced the central idea of the Celebrations; that the monarchy had been and always would be essential to the success of Iran. While the practical application of the sports stadium is clear, the Shahyad monument attained a symbolic significance. It was referred to by foreigners at the time as the Iranian Arc de Triomphe and it became an emblem of modern Iran, even appearing on banknotes in the late 1970s. The vast square surrounding the monument became an important gathering point during the revolution and the monument came to symbolise the end of the monarchy that it was built to glorify. It was renamed *Borj-e Azadi* (Freedom Tower). In the protests of 2009 huge crowds gathered around the monument in order to voice their anger against allegedly fraudulent elections.

³⁹⁴ *Echo of Iran*, 5 July 1971. The Cyrus the Great Cup was a pre-season friendly tournament and featured a curious mix of national and club teams, including the Turkey national under-23 team, the Austrian and Dutch amateur national teams, FC Zbrojovka Brno of the Czechoslovakia and Zamalek Sporting Club of Egypt.

³⁹⁵ See Figure 4.

³⁹⁶ *Shafa Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2008.

³⁹⁷ The final was played between Iran and America on 9 May, with the Shahbanou in attendance. *Ibid.*, p. 2006.

³⁹⁸ 'Grand Finale', *Kayhan International*, 23 October 1971, p. 6.

³⁹⁹ For full details, see Programme: *Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire* (1971), pp. 14-22.

Conclusion

The Celebrations began as a relatively modest cultural occasion, yet as this chapter has shown, when interest in them increased, they acquired a greater political significance. In the final year leading up to the event, the stakes got much higher and the event seemed to become as much about international prestige as the commemoration of an ancient king. Had the Celebrations actually taken place in 1962, as originally planned, then they would very likely have been more modest. One need only look at the comparatively reserved coronation in 1967, which was in theory a more significant event, to understand the capacity that the regime developed during this short period. By 1971 Iran's international standing was on the rise, the Shah had gained confidence through the successes of the White Revolution, and Iran had emerged from the 1960s as a land of economic opportunity. The Celebrations presented an occasion to showcase Iran to the world in a way which the regime felt would have been somewhat misplaced in the early 1960s.

The Celebrations became a grand expression of the political aspirations of the Pahlavi regime, legitimising these aspirations in the context of Iranian history and expressing them through cultural activity. The organisers of the event were opportunists, ready to exploit the occasion for all its worth, and elevated a modest cultural event into one of the most significant episodes in the history of the Pahlavi period. Manning describes celebration as a 'dramatic arena in which cultural politics assumes style, shape, and significance'⁴⁰⁰ and this can be seen clearly in the Anniversary Celebrations. The presentation of durable cultural symbols and investments in the country's prestige was significant and by focusing on culture and economic development throughout the Celebrations, the Shah presented himself to the world as an enlightened monarch rather than an oriental despot.

Although the Shah was presented throughout the Celebrations as the harbinger of Iranian glory, this chapter has shown that, in fact, from the formation of the idea through to its execution, his input was negligible. The Executive Committee, charged with designing the programme, was made up of influential figures within the regime who adopted roles corresponding to their professional expertise. The Shah's speeches for the occasion were composed

⁴⁰⁰ Manning, 'Cosmos and Chaos: Celebration in the Modern World' (1983), p. 16.

by Deputy Minister of Court Shojaeddin Shafa, who had first proposed the idea in 1958. This is perhaps an illustration of the culture of politics within the Pahlavi court, whereby the Shah surrounded himself with trusted ministers, to whom he was content to assign significant responsibilities. The Shah did approve aspects of the programme and was kept au fait with developments, but he did not attend meetings of the Executive Committee and share ideas. Contrary to the common characterisation of the Shah as a megalomaniac and the Celebrations as proof of this, the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that he was only minimally involved in the organisation of the event and was generally amenable to the advice of his ministers.

Throughout the main events of the Celebrations the Shah had stressed links between the past and the present. As already stated, the presence of the Shah's creations such as the Revolutionary Corps and the Universal Welfare Legion, physical manifestations of his White Revolution, served as evidence of his progressive attitude. During free time, guests were even invited to visit local Revolutionary Corps headquarters in Fars province.⁴⁰¹ Was this deliberate synthesis of past and present successful? Chamberlin believed so:

'preserving cultural values'... 'marching forward into the future but preserving links with the past'... One has learned to hear phrases like this with a certain sinking of the heart. But in this manner, Iran does seem to be using, consciously and successfully, the past as a vital ingredient of the present. The Shah made this point explicit. 'My hope is that we Persians may be able to merge into a new and harmonious form our antiquity and our modernity.'⁴⁰²

That the Shah was seen to be promoting Ancient Iran at the expense of Islam led to exasperation among sections of the ulema, expressed most explicitly by Khomeini in his speeches from Najaf.⁴⁰³ But the pervasiveness of the Cyrus legend and of the glory of the Achaemenid civilisation of which the Shah was a champion, even amongst today's political establishment, in Iran and abroad, suggests that the promotion of this narrative was successful to a degree.

⁴⁰¹ 'Necessary Information and Questions', undated, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁴⁰² Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979), p. 26.

⁴⁰³ See Chapter 7.

Chapter 4: Pahlavi Iran on the Global Stage

Few who observed the Shah's speech at the foot of Cyrus' tomb would have been in any doubt that the message was not merely directed to the Iranian people, but to the world too. The Shah took centre stage in the political life of Iran, but it was also on the global stage that he sought to make an impression. During the festivities of October 1971 Iran was described as being the 'centre of gravity of the world'⁴⁰⁴ as political figures and royalty from across the globe gathered at Persepolis. It is often argued that the Shah was out of touch with the realities of his country, but this exploration of his diplomacy during the Celebrations will show that he was in tune, at least, with the realities of global politics, and the Celebrations had the rich and powerful of the world paying tribute to him and his vision for Iran. By putting the Celebrations in the context of the Shah's international rise, rather than his downfall, we are presented with an opportunity to explore the Shah's regional and global standing during this important period of his reign.

This chapter will explore how the central themes of the Celebrations were expressed internationally. While the Shah presented himself as belonging to an ancient Iranian tradition of kingship domestically, the attendance of other monarchs legitimised the Shah's claims to be a respected figure within the global monarchical tradition, too. Cyrus the Great was presented around the world as a figure of importance not just to Iranian, but also to European history. The Cyrus Cylinder became a relic of national significance, a tangible reminder of Iran's historic regional and global leadership. The loan of the Cyrus Cylinder from the collection of the British Museum for the Celebrations and the subsequent concerns from the Foreign Office offer clues as to how the Shah's ideology was perceived internationally.

The Celebrations were effective in helping the Shah fulfil his international ambitions and as the organisers became more aware of potential global opportunities, the Celebrations acquired a greater significance for the Pahlavi state. For a period, the Celebrations became the most pressing issue in Iranian foreign policy and foreign ministries from around the world worked tirelessly to

⁴⁰⁴ Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride* (1989), p. 39.

ensure that their interests in Iran were successfully promoted through participation in this event. The Shah has often been caricatured as a Western puppet in both scholarly and popular accounts, but at this point in his reign when he was reaching the zenith of his political authority this assessment was unjustified.⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, his evocation of Ancient Persia and the presentation of himself as a spiritual successor to Cyrus the Great often lead to the conclusion that he was an obsessive megalomaniac who was not taken particularly seriously by foreign powers.⁴⁰⁶ In fact, the Shah was keenly aware of geopolitical realities and he knew how to manipulate Iran's state ideology to his advantage. One of the claims of this Pahlavi state ideology was that Iran had an historical obligation to be a dominant regional power and this sentiment was articulated at Persepolis. This chapter will attempt to understand the motivations of the individuals and organisations that took part in the Celebrations, as well as what the Shah hoped to gain from the occasion. This also allows us an opportunity to observe how Pahlavi Iran interacted with the world of the 1970s, and how the world, in turn, interacted with Pahlavi Iran.

Historical Context

From the late 18th century until the early 20th century, Iran's interactions with the West can be understood in the context of the rival imperial ambitions of the British and Russians. The protection of India was a central priority in British foreign policy. Indeed, Lord Curzon, writing at the end of the 19th century, observed that 'without India the British Empire could not exist.'⁴⁰⁷ The biggest threat to India were the Russians, whose control of Persia's northern provinces could open the doors to Herat and Baluchistan, putting them on India's doorstep. Persia, therefore, became in the words of Denis Wright, 'an outer bastion in the defence of India'⁴⁰⁸ and was caught in the middle of an imperial tug of war that would come to be termed The Great Game. Persia was a pawn in this game, and Lord Salisbury noted wryly that 'were it not for our possessing

⁴⁰⁵ For discussion on the U.S.-Iran relationship in particular see Barry Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience in Iran* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981); Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion* (1988).

⁴⁰⁶ See for example Shawcross *The Shah's Last Ride* (1989), p. 47; Buchan, *Days of God* (2012), p. 56.

⁴⁰⁷ Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, vol. 1 (1892), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Denis Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians During the Qajar Period, 1787-1921* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 171.

India, we should trouble ourselves but little over Persia.⁴⁰⁹ Maintaining the status quo in Persia was more convenient than allowing it to modernise, and at a time when railways were being built around the world, Russia and Britain refused to allow them to be constructed in Persia.⁴¹⁰ Persia was geopolitically important in the context of British and Russian imperial rivalry, but it was not considered significant enough to colonise.

Russian interference and contempt for Persian sovereignty was as profound as that of the British. The Russo-Persian War of 1804-13, started by the Persians in response to Russia's annexation of Georgia in 1801, resulted in Persia being forced to sign the humiliating Treaty of Golestan in October 1813. Under the treaty Iran relinquished control over many of its Caucasian territories, including Baku, Darband, Ganjeh and Georgia, lost a naval presence in the Caspian, and was forced to accept unfavourable tariffs on trade.⁴¹¹ The treaty included a provision that Russia would recognise Abbas Mirza as the rightful heir to the throne, promising assistance if there was any dispute in his succession.⁴¹² According to Abbas Amanat the treaty marked a 'turning point in modern Iranian history, for it epitomized the gravity of the Russian threat for the remainder of the Qajar era.'⁴¹³

A devastating second war prompted by Russian encroachment and Persian bitterness over the Treaty of Golestan led to further Persian humiliation and territorial loss with the Treaty of Turkmanchay in 1828. Under the terms of this treaty, Iran lost Yerevan, would have to pay Russia 20 million roubles and would allow Russian merchants unprecedented privileges in Persia.⁴¹⁴ This set a precedent for the granting of favourable commercial treaties with other European nations such as Britain.⁴¹⁵ This series of humiliations at the hands of

⁴⁰⁹ Quoted in Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia, and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 11.

⁴¹⁰ Gad G. Gilbar commented that 'It is impossible to over-emphasise the deleterious effect of the condition of the transport system on the whole spectrum of the country's economic activity.' This can, therefore be seen as a deliberate attempt by the British to halt any substantial economic progress in Persia. Gad G. Gilbar, 'The Persian Economy in the Mid-19th Century', *Die Welt des Islams*, 19:1 (1979), pp. 177-211.

⁴¹¹ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia: Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 5.

⁴¹² Michael Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), p. 180.

⁴¹³ Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (2017), p. 196.

⁴¹⁴ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia* (2013), p. 6.

⁴¹⁵ Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (2017), p. 215.

the Russians and the significant loss of territory undermined the legitimacy of the Qajar monarchy as the defender of Persian territory. This impacted upon the way in which the Qajars dealt with both the Russians and the British. One motivation of Naser al-Din Shah in signing the Reuter concession in 1872, for instance, was to secure British support for Iranian territorial integrity in the face of the Russian threat.⁴¹⁶ As Michael Axworthy has observed, during the second half of the 19th century, particularly after the Peace of Paris, which followed a humiliating Persian military defeat to the British, 'the British and Russians interfered so insistently in Persian government that in some respects the shah's independence appeared merely nominal.'⁴¹⁷

Some British diplomats' attitudes to Persia began to change in the beginning of the 20th century, but Britain continued to interfere in Iranian politics. The intellectual schism this caused is best observed through the careers of Lord Curzon and Edward Granville Browne, who were both actively engaged in the 'Persian Question'.⁴¹⁸ Both men travelled extensively in Persia in preparation for their works on the subject, Curzon's *Persia and the Persian Question*, and Browne's *A Year Amongst the Persians*, though they differed significantly in their methodologies. Curzon considered the peasantry to have 'no articulate opinion... Or, if they have any political feelings, no mouthpiece exists for giving them expression.' For this reason he considered that 'The duty of a British traveller is to describe things as they appear to Britishers.'⁴¹⁹ Browne, on the other hand, was not deterred by differences in status or rank and conversed freely with whomever he pleased.⁴²⁰ He attempted to change British foreign policy towards Persia during the period after the Constitutional Revolution with his book *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* (1910), but the decision-makers at the Foreign Office were unmoved.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁶ Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia* (2013), p. 112.

⁴¹⁷ Axworthy, *Empire of the Mind* (2010), p. 192.

⁴¹⁸ For a discussion of these two remarkable yet very different men see Christopher N.B. Ross, 'Lord Curzon and E.G. Browne Confront the 'Persian Question'', *The Historical Journal*, 52:2 (2009), pp. 385-411.

⁴¹⁹ George Nathaniel Curzon, 'Workers and their work', 13 May 1893, Quoted in Ross 'Lord Curzon and E.G. Browne' (2009), p. 392.

⁴²⁰ For a discussion of his attitude see Edmund Bosworth, 'E.G. Browne and His "Year Amongst the Persians"', *Iran*, 33 (1995), pp. 115-122.

⁴²¹ Hasan Javadi, 'E.G. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement', *Iran*, 14 (1976), p. 136. See also David McLean, 'A Professor Extraordinary: E.G. Browne and His Persian Campaign 1908-1913', *The Historical Journal*, 21:2 (1978), pp. 399-408.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the British extended their influence by extracting concessions such as the Reuter concession of 1872, the tobacco concession of 1890 and the oil concession of 1901. According to Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 'Few things resonate more strongly with Iranians than the sense of humiliation following these concessions.'⁴²² In 1907 Russia and Britain, suspicious of German overseas ambitions, signed a treaty that divided Iran into three zones, with Russia controlling the north and Britain the south.⁴²³ By 1911 Britain and Russia had, in the words of Zirinsky, 'crushed Iran' by suppressing the Constitutional assembly by forcing the expulsion of Morgan Shuster, who had been hired by the Majles as treasurer general.⁴²⁴

British support of the coup that brought Reza Khan to power in 1921 was vital to its success, although the coup itself was carried out entirely by Iranian forces.⁴²⁵ The British ambassador in Tehran, Sir Percy Loraine, encouraged British support of Reza Shah ultimately to keep Russia at arm's length, preserve British oil resources in Persia and prevent Russian encroachment in Iraq, the Persian Gulf and India. Reza Shah was backed as one who could engender a degree of stability in Persia, thereby furthering British interests.⁴²⁶ The British ultimately did not benefit from the coup and, as Zirinsky has written, instead Britain gained 'the reputation of having been behind it, and that idea was proof to nationalists of England's perfidy.'⁴²⁷

Iranian political integrity was further challenged throughout the early to mid 20th century, most significantly in 1941 when, ignoring Iran's declared neutrality during the Second World War, Britain and Russia invaded and forced Reza Shah to abdicate. The BBC Persian Service broadcast derogatory stories about Reza Shah in an effort to legitimise this intervention.⁴²⁸ The blatant flaunting of international law to invade a country that had stayed neutral during

⁴²² Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *Iran: Stuck in Transition* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 173.

⁴²³ Axworthy, *Iran: Empire of the Mind* (2008), pp. 211-212.

⁴²⁴ Michael P. Zirinsky, 'Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the Rise of Reza Shah, 1921-1926', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24 (1992), p. 640.

⁴²⁵ Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 86.

⁴²⁶ Zirinsky, 'Imperial Power and Dictatorship' (1992), p. 658.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 647.

⁴²⁸ See Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh, *Persian Service: The BBC and British Interests in Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), pp. 39-43.

the war left Iranians in a sense of 'disbelief and revulsion'.⁴²⁹ The rial was set at an unreasonable rate against the British pound, going from 68 rials to the pound to 168 in order for Iran to pay for the occupying British forces.⁴³⁰ Bars frequented by foreign troops had signs at the entrances that read 'Iranians and dogs forbidden'⁴³¹ and Iranian soldiers were made to salute British troops when passing them in the street. British soldiers were not expected to return the courtesy.⁴³²

One BBC Persian employee at this time was Laurence Elwell-Sutton, who later went on to work at the British Embassy in Tehran from 1943 until 1947.⁴³³ Despite the role that he played in bringing down Reza Shah, he later wrote a piece in which he argued that the great tragedy of Reza Shah's rule was that he had not been allowed to complete his work.⁴³⁴ In the spirit of Browne's *Persian Revolution*, Elwell-Sutton wrote a damning assessment of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in his *Persian Oil*. The stated aim of the work was to serve 'as a record of the struggle of a small Asian country for independence and international recognition.'⁴³⁵ It was supposed to influence government policy while supporting the cause of nationalism in Iran. The British government did not sympathise with this position and the oil nationalisation crisis, which culminated in the coup in 1953, brought about more imperialist intervention in Iran.

The extent to which Britain and the United States were involved in the events of 1953 is a contentious issue.⁴³⁶ But the coup that brought about the fall of the popular Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq typified, in the eyes of many Iranians, the incorrigible meddling of Britain and the United States in Iranian politics and the weakness of Iranians for failing to stand up to such

⁴²⁹ Fariborz Mokhtari, *In the Lion's Shadow: The Iranian Schindler and His Homeland in the Second World War* (Stroud: The History Press, 2011), p. 69.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Fereydoun Hoveyda, *The Fall of the Shah* (New York: Wyndham Books, 1980), p. 70.

⁴³² Peter Frankopan, *Silk Roads: A New History of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 400.

⁴³³ Carole Hillenbrand, 'L.P. Elwell-Sutton (1912-84)', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, 11:2 (1984), p. 212

⁴³⁴ Elwell-Sutton, 'Reza Shah the Great' (1978), p. 50.

⁴³⁵ Laurence Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1976), p. 6.

⁴³⁶ For a flavour of the debate see: Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne ed., *Mohammad Mossadeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Syracuse University Press; New York, 2004); Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup* (The New Press: New York, 2013); and Darioush Bayandor, *Iran and the CIA: The Fall of Mossadeq Revisited* (Palgrave Macmillan; New York, 2010).

foreign influence. The British ambassador to Iran during the Anniversary Celebrations felt that these humiliations were 'at the root of modern Iranian nationalism.' The ignominy of foreign intervention had inspired a sense of patriotism, for 'although the Iranian reaction to these humiliations was anti-Imperialist in sentiment, paradoxically they re-aroused Iranian national and imperial pride more than any successful conquest might have done.'⁴³⁷

During the late 1950s and 1960s the Shah consolidated his power domestically and gained confidence internationally. During the Cold War Iran was seen as a strategically important partner of the West, increasingly so during the presidency of Richard Nixon. The Nixon Doctrine ensured that after the eventual withdrawal of its forces from Vietnam, America would not shy away from its duties in fighting communism in the third world. Instead of direct military intervention, however, the United States would protect its interest by providing material assistance. In this context, Nixon imagined that, if provided with such assistance, Iran could contain Soviet influence in the Gulf region.⁴³⁸ The Shah was evidently pleased with the faith Nixon showed in him; Nixon listened to him, took his advice and offered support. In May 1972 Nixon travelled to Iran, the first president in 13 years to make the trip, and asked for the Shah's protection.⁴³⁹ The speedy development of Iran's economy during the 1960s further increased Iran's international appeal. Due to the new oil deal negotiated after Mossadeq's fall, Iranian oil revenues grew to \$555 million annually by 1964, and to \$1.2 billion by 1971.⁴⁴⁰ In 1973 the Shah was confident enough to use his position in OPEC to quadruple the price of oil, causing an economic crisis in many Western countries.

The international aspects of the Anniversary Celebrations should be seen in the context of Iran's emergence as a serious international player during this period. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ascended the throne in 1941 as the ruler of an occupied country, a country that had suffered a century of humiliation at the hands of the imperial powers. The growing confidence of the Shah during the late 1960s partly explains the rationale behind the Anniversary Celebrations,

⁴³⁷ Ramsbotham, Diplomatic Report, 'The Dynasty Blessed by the Gods', 11 October 1971, p. 2, FCO 57/323.

⁴³⁸ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* (2014), p. 48.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 63.

⁴⁴⁰ Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran* (2013), p. 71.

as the Shah sought to confirm the place of a resurgent Iran on the international stage. The Shah was keen to show the world that Iran was no longer a subservient power, and the event marked in essence his, and Iran's, coming-of-age. The international community was aware of the political and economic opportunities that an emerging Iran could present, as they competed for influence with the Shah. From the time the Celebrations began to take shape nations from around the world were keen to be involved as much as they could, by promoting their business interests, organising cultural events and other means. This was a change of fortunes that few could have predicted when the timid and insecure Mohammad Reza Pahlavi took power as a young man in 1941.

Monarchy and Protocol

The aims of the Celebrations on an international level were manifold, motivated by both ideological and tangible factors. The Pahlavi regime developed a robust ideological foundation, based around the glory of Iran's pre-Islamic past and the strength of the monarchical tradition, which pervaded every aspect of the Celebrations and influenced how foreign powers communicated with Iran on a political level. One of the key aspirations of the Pahlavi state ideology was for Iran to take its rightful position as a dominant regional power.⁴⁴¹ The Shah's foreign policy was built on a strong understanding of geopolitical realities, so the Celebrations provide an excellent opportunity to observe the complex synthesis between ideology and realpolitik. The Shah did not merely want to attract foreign businesses, sell Iranian products, or increase the marketability of Iran to foreign tourists, though as we will see these were important aspects; he wanted to announce Iran's reawakening, while stressing its fortunes as dependent on the strength and endurance of the monarch.

Three central aspects of the Pahlavi state ideology, or Pahlavism, were designed to convince the world that Iran belonged to the Western family of nations, namely: the employment of the Aryan myth to place Iranians in the same race as Europeans; glorification of monarchy as a form of governance; and the appropriation of the pre-Islamic past, which demonstrated, firstly, that

⁴⁴¹ Zhand Shakibi, 'The Rastakhiz Party and Pahlavism: the beginnings of state anti-Westernism in Iran', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2016), DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2016.1246242, p.5.

Iran was not, in essence, an Islamic country, and secondly, that Iran's ancient past was at least as glorious and civilised as that of Europe. The Celebrations offered the regime an opportunity to promote each of these aspects of Pahlavism to a global audience.

The presentation of monarchy as the ideal form of governance had a global significance. According to Michael Axworthy, the Shah sought to 'assert the strength and enduring character of Iranian kingship, at a time when monarchy as an institution was menaced by republicanism and communism internationally.'⁴⁴² The 20th century had been miserable for the monarchical institution; most of Europe's monarchies had been abolished at the end of the First and Second World Wars and from the 1950s onwards a number of Commonwealth countries had relinquished the British crown. In the Middle East, King Farouk of Egypt was toppled in 1952, Faisal II of Iraq lost his throne (and life) in 1958, and the monarchies of Yemen and Libya were abolished in 1962 and 1969 respectively. But when asked why the Shah's recently deposed and exiled friend King Constantine of Greece was in attendance at the Celebrations, an Iranian protocol officer declared, 'For us, the government is the king.'⁴⁴³ Writing in an English-language publication for the Celebrations and stressing the importance of monarchy to Iran's culture and heritage, Deputy Minister of Information Mohammad Ali Samii wrote that 'monarchy was – and still is – the main factor in the survival of Iranian nationhood. The secret of Iran's unique ability to withstand the devastating forces of 2,500 years of history lies in the guidance from the throne.'⁴⁴⁴

Further signs of this attitude to monarchy can be observed in the strict adherence to rules of protocol established in the 19th century, according to which kings and emperors hold a higher status than presidents and prime ministers.⁴⁴⁵ Iran's chief of protocol, Hormoz Gharib, travelled around Europe in

⁴⁴² Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran* (2013), p. 77.

⁴⁴³ Quoted in William A. McWhirter, 'The Shah's Princely Party', *Life Magazine*, 29 October 1971, p. 26.

⁴⁴⁴ R. Tarverdi and Ali Massoudi eds., *The Land of Kings* (Tehran: Ettela'at Publications, 1971), p. 1.

⁴⁴⁵ The only other option open to the organisers would have been to follow the protocol of the day as they saw it, in which countries were ordered according to their success in the Second World War. In this context, Britain, the Soviet Union, France and America would be accorded the highest status. See Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 266.

1971 in order to learn the finer details of these regulations,⁴⁴⁶ and the British were called upon to resolve any confusion. In a letter to Gharib, the British ambassador wrote, 'Presidents, being Heads of State, take precedence after Monarchs but before Consorts and Crown Princes.' He continued:

I am informed that Prince Philip takes precedence over Prince Charles. Although he is not officially called "the Consort", Prince Philip is in fact the Consort. Assuming, therefore, that Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands has been Prince Consort longer than Prince Philip, the former takes precedence over the latter. They both, of course, take precedence over the Crown Prince of Sweden.⁴⁴⁷

This adherence to protocol may seem old-fashioned, perhaps even amusing, but it was important in promoting the Pahlavi monarchy as part of the global and historical monarchical tradition. By observing these accepted diplomatic practices, moreover, the Shah was asserting his and Iran's sovereign equality to the crowned heads of Europe. In the Shah's imagination, monarchy was a sort of worldwide fraternity, and its members were brought to Persepolis to promote, with a degree of swagger, the institution itself. The Celebrations stressed what could be achieved by an assertive king possessing a deep sense of morality and a spiritual relationship with his people, such as Cyrus the Great and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

The protocol did cause some practical problems, since non-royal guests did not want to be upstaged. This was the reason for French President Pompidou's late withdrawal from the event, which particularly displeased the Shah.⁴⁴⁸ As a result, the event organisers went to great lengths to ensure that no guests felt underappreciated and the British were also on hand to help with practical matters relating to procedure. Ramsbotham was approached by Gharib to help with the seating arrangements for the gala dinner at Persepolis. Gharib was keen that no guests should feel a sense of embarrassment by being

⁴⁴⁶ Kadivar, '2500-Year Revisited.'

⁴⁴⁷ Ramsbotham to Hormoz Gharib, 28 August 1971, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 141.

⁴⁴⁸ See Anthony Mann, 'Shah Attacks Pompidou for Missing Party', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1971.

placed too far from the Shah, or being sat next to someone they considered of a lower status than them. Gharib told Ramsbotham:

the English, we acknowledge, are better than anybody in the world at these things. We are new to this, Western style; we could do it, of course, our own way, but we are having everybody here. We would like you to advise on this.⁴⁴⁹

Together Ramsbotham and Gharib devised a system whereby the table was set out like a 'big snake', with 'five big sweeping points'. At the top of each point was seated a member of the Pahlavi family; either the Shah himself, the Shahbanou, the Queen mother, or one of the Princes and Princesses. It did not matter too much who it was because each guest would be sat close to someone of honour and the layout made it difficult to determine whether one person was better placed than another so as to cause minimal offence.⁴⁵⁰ Iran was keen to prove that not only could it hold such a huge event, but it could do it successfully, while demonstrating its understanding of international procedure and protocol.

The Celebrations presented an opportunity to underscore Iran's similarities with the West, with a focus on its pre-Islamic past. It was hoped that Iran would be transformed in the eyes of the world, from a traditional Islamic country to a modern, industrial and even perhaps secular state, far more palatable to the West. The Pahlavi ideologues were keen to push this shift in perception at any available opportunity. In one example of this attitude, the Dutch Foreign Ministry proposed to send a carillon⁴⁵¹ to Iran as a gift for the Celebrations.⁴⁵² A prominent Dutch Islamic scholar, Hanna Kohlbrugge, was consulted about the issue and advised that it might be considered insensitive to send an essentially Christian symbol to the ruler of an Islamic country.⁴⁵³ The Dutch ambassador, Hendrik Jonker, nevertheless put the proposal directly to Court Minister Asadollah Alam, who thought it a 'splendid idea', even

⁴⁴⁹ Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, London, UK, 18 October 1985, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 1, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁵⁰ Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Shusha Assar, 20 January 1986, Hampshire, UK, in the Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies, pp. 65-66.

⁴⁵¹ A set of bells typically housed in the bell tower of a church.

⁴⁵² Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 January 1970, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. Jonker even promised to find out which melodies the Iranians would like for their carillon.

⁴⁵³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Embassy Tehran, 1 March 1970, *ibid*.

suggesting that it could be placed at Persepolis.⁴⁵⁴ When Jonker relayed his ministry's fears over the appropriateness of the gift, Alam urged the ambassador not to worry. After all, he responded, 'we are not real Muslims, we are Shi'ites.'⁴⁵⁵

One British diplomat commented that the Celebrations were 'proof that the Pahlavi Dynasty was frivolous; it was not serious.'⁴⁵⁶ It is, of course, the gift of hindsight that gives such statements credibility, for at the time of the Celebrations, although foreign powers did not necessarily buy into the Pahlavi ideology, they did not hesitate to employ it to improve their relations with the Shah. Although individuals may not have taken the ideology seriously in private, in official correspondence they were careful not to challenge it. On a state visit to Iran in 1969, for example, British Foreign Minister Michael Stewart was given a private tour of the ruins of Persepolis, after which he commented on the wisdom of Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes - 'Your present ruler seems to possess something of the qualities of all three of these mighty kings.'⁴⁵⁷ The minister's statement perhaps amounted to little more than flattery, but it is nevertheless evidence that the state ideology had become a useful tool in negotiations with the Pahlavi regime. Furthermore, foreign governments acknowledged the importance of this ideology to the Shah, as shown by the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder from the British Museum to Iran to coincide with the Celebrations.

The Cyrus Cylinder

The Cyrus Cylinder was discovered during Hormuz Rassam's excavations at Babylon on behalf of the British Museum in 1879 and was subsequently purchased by the British Museum in 1880. The Cylinder itself has always been an item of significance, but it was not until the 1960s that it began to take on a different meaning. Its original function had been to record building work carried out at the Babylonian temple following Cyrus' invasion in 539 B.C. Far from being a unique declaration, this was standard practice, for as Amelie Kuhrt writes, 'Such pious acts of temple work were part of a standard process of

⁴⁵⁴ Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 April 1970, *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 March 1970, *ibid.* To the ambassador's disappointment the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to send the Shah a concert organ instead, before changing their minds and taking to Persepolis a silver model of the famous Dutch flagship of Admiral De Ruyter, *De Zeven Provinciën*, weighing 13 kilograms.

⁴⁵⁶ George Middleton in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, London, England, 16 October 1985, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 3.

⁴⁵⁷ Alam diary entry 29 May 1969, *The Shah and I* (1991), p. 71.

legitimisation in Babylonia, and thus follow conventional forms.⁴⁵⁸ The Cylinder also sought to present the foreign invader Cyrus as a liberator who would respect Babylonian gods and free its people from a tyrant. According to Josef Wiesehöfer:

[the Cylinder] fits into the framework of the ideological conflict between the new and the old king, and says less about Cyrus's character than about his efforts at legitimisation and his ability to use local traditions and modes to serve his own purposes.⁴⁵⁹

A.T. Olmstead, in his 1948 publication *History of the Persian Empire*, wrote that the Cylinder was merely a 'model of persuasive propaganda',⁴⁶⁰ while Richard Frye in his *The Heritage of Persia*, published in 1962, makes no mention of any special qualities of the Cylinder, noting rather that the inscription is 'characteristic of older conquerors in the Near East.'⁴⁶¹ By the time the political manipulation of the artefact reached its peak in 1971, P.R. Berger from the University of Münster, announcing the identification of a fragment belonging to the Cylinder, stressed that the find should 'emphasise the essential character of the Cyrus Cylinder as not a general declaration of human rights or religious toleration but simply a building inscription.'⁴⁶² Taken out of a political context, therefore, the link between the Cylinder and human rights is tenuous.

Pierre Nora wrote that 'the less memory is experienced from within, the greater the need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists qua memory.'⁴⁶³ The Cylinder, as an ancient relic, served as material evidence of the idea of Cyrus that the Shah wished to project. These types of historical artefacts are generally vulnerable to change and reinterpretation. According to David Lowenthal, relics can undergo two types of transformation, physical (location, enhancement or iconoclasm), and conceptual (interpretation and appreciation).⁴⁶⁴ The Cylinder thus evolved from a building

⁴⁵⁸ Amelie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 72.

⁴⁵⁹ Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 49.

⁴⁶⁰ A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 52.

⁴⁶¹ Richard Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (London: Cardinal, second edition, 1976), p. 89.

⁴⁶² C.B.F. Walker, 'A Recently Identified Fragment of the Cyrus Cylinder', *Iran*, 10 (1972), pp. 158-159.

⁴⁶³ Nora, *Realms of Memory* (1996), p. 7.

⁴⁶⁴ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), p. 264.

inscription found beneath a temple in Babylon into a national symbol, tangible evidence of a supposed humanitarian ancient king and an important part of the British Museum's collection.

As early as 1968, Iran had been contacting embassies around the world to request loans of Iranian artefacts to be exhibited in Iran during the Celebrations.⁴⁶⁵ A request to borrow the Cyrus Cylinder was relayed through the British ambassador to the Foreign Office on 20 August 1971.⁴⁶⁶ The request was rejected by the Foreign Office on the grounds that it would 'merely arouse Iranian cupidity'⁴⁶⁷ and 'would cause immense complications for us if we ever wanted to get it back to Britain.'⁴⁶⁸ The merits of such a loan to the Iranians were clear; after all, the Cylinder, surrounded by Persepolitan style flowers,⁴⁶⁹ was the emblem of the Celebrations and served as physical proof of the benevolent character of Cyrus. There was even a suggestion that the Cylinder should be presented to the Shah as a gift, which was rejected by the Foreign Office, since it could be interpreted as 'a consolation prize if the Islands problem cannot be solved on his [the Shah's] terms.'⁴⁷⁰ The idea that the Cylinder could be used in the context of the serious issue of Britain's withdrawal from Abu Musa and the Tunbs is evidence of the perceived importance of the artefact.⁴⁷¹ Moreover, it is perhaps a measure of the emerging influence of the Shah that the British were so concerned that they would be powerless if the Shah refused to give the Cylinder back.

As it happened, the British Museum's Board of Trustees had already agreed to a request from the Iranian ambassador to allow Iran to have the Cylinder for the duration of the Celebrations.⁴⁷² As soon as Ramsbotham heard of the loan he attempted to warn the British Museum against it, but by that point the Cylinder was already in Iran.⁴⁷³ Richard Barnett, keeper of Western Asian Antiquities, had been invited to take part in the Congress of Iranology in Shiraz and was asked to bring the Cylinder with him, an arrangement which was

⁴⁶⁵ *Echo of Iran*, 26 August 1968.

⁴⁶⁶ Ramsbotham to Sir Denis Greenhill, 21 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ Greenhill to Ramsbotham, 15 September 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁶⁹ There were 25 such flowers, each symbolising a century of monarchical rule.

⁴⁷⁰ S.L. Egerton to Parsons, 13 September 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁷¹ On the islands dispute see W.R. Louis, 'The British Withdrawal from the Gulf, 1967-71', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33:1, 2003, pp. 83-108.

⁴⁷² FCO Correspondence, 26 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁷³ Ramsbotham to Greenhill, 21 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

approved by the Board of Trustees in July 1971.⁴⁷⁴ Neither the Iranian Embassy nor the British Museum informed the Foreign Office and there was a growing concern from the Foreign Office that if Iran attempted to exert pressure on the British Government to give them the Cylinder, it might result in a rather uncomfortable diplomatic incident. These worries were not unfounded, as the Iranian newspaper *Kayhan* suggested that Iran 'might take the opportunity afforded by the centenary celebrations and ask the British Museum to let Iran keep the cylinder for good.'⁴⁷⁵

The request came shortly after Barnett's arrival in Iran, when he was invited to a meeting with Minister of Culture and Art Mehrdad Pahlbod. At the meeting, as expected, Pahlbod put forward the idea of an extension of the loan, perhaps even to a permanent arrangement. Barnett, however, explained that the Cylinder was required back in London for the British Museum's commemorative *Royal Persia* exhibition, and drew from his pocket a leaflet advertising the event.⁴⁷⁶ Another request was expected to come at the opening of the Shahyad monument, where the Cylinder was on display in the museum. Ramsbotham was concerned that the Shah could put a request directly to Prince Philip, who, being put on the spot, might find it difficult to refuse. To ensure that such a request was not made, Barnett chaperoned Philip for the entire event, keeping him as far away from the Shah as possible.⁴⁷⁷ The Cylinder left Iran safely on the evening of 19 October, stored, as it had been when it arrived, in Barnett's sports holdall.⁴⁷⁸ The loan had been a success, in part due to Barnett's 'tactful handling'⁴⁷⁹ of the situation, but more outspoken advocates of giving the Cylinder to Iran came from Britain when the artefact was safely back in the British Museum.

Former Attorney-General Lord Hartley Shawcross, Liberal MP Jeremy Thorpe, newspaper tycoon Vere Harmsworth, Conservative MP Sir Clive Bossom and former MP and head of the Iran Society Sir Peter Agnew, all

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ 'Cyrus' cylinder flown to Tehran', *Kayhan International*, 23 October 1971, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁶ Conversation with David Stronach, April 2014, cited in Robert Steele, 'British Persian Studies and Celebrations of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire in 1971', unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Manchester, 2014, p. 68.

⁴⁷⁷ Ramsbotham to Greenhill, 21 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁷⁸ Barnett to Ramsbotham, 5 November 1971, FCO 17/1529. Barnett even took the Cylinder to Israel where he stopped off to see his son on his way back to London.

⁴⁷⁹ Hartley Shawcross to Barnett, 18 November 1971, FCO 17/1529.

respectable British establishment figures and private guests of the Shah at the Celebrations, supported the idea of a permanent loan of the Cylinder. Bossom wrote directly to Prime Minister Edward Heath: 'I feel that by allowing this cylinder to be on permanent loan it could greatly smooth the way before next year's problems arise.'⁴⁸⁰ Shawcross, a highly respected and decorated establishment figure, also wrote to the Prime Minister:

The four of us [Jeremy Thorpe, Clive Bossom, Vere Harmsworth and himself] unanimously agreed (before we had seen the place given to the Cylinder in the Museum) that we should strongly recommend to you that the Cylinder should be presented to Iran... in view of the serious disputes which exist between Britain and Iran which will soon come to a head, we have no doubt that a decision to make the gift to Iran (and naturally the sooner the better) would immensely improve the atmosphere of our relations. I believe that our Ambassador shares this view.⁴⁸¹

The idea that the Cylinder could become a bargaining tool in the issue of Britain's potentially awkward retreat from the Persian Gulf was apparently not without merit, and is reflective of the significance of the Cyrus ideology in Iranian diplomacy.

It was clear to those involved that the Cylinder could become, if it was not already, a powerful diplomatic tool which could both hinder and improve British relations with Iran. Even Ramsbotham, having fought to keep the Cylinder in the British Museum's possession, supported the idea of another loan in the future. 'The Iranians' readiness to let the tablet slip through their hands this time suggests', he argued, 'that we ought to be able to hold them to an understanding of any loan.'⁴⁸² The British Museum, however, was adamantly opposed to any further agreement, in particular the Foreign Office's proposal that the Cylinder could be displayed in Iran every third year. The Museum's chairman Lord Trevelyan argued that it would be 'incredibly unlikely that the

⁴⁸⁰ Clive Bossom to Edward Heath, 18 October 1971, FCO 17/1529. The problem to which the letter referred was Britain's military withdrawal from the Persian Gulf.

⁴⁸¹ Shawcross to Heath, 20 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁸² Shawcross to Greenhill, 21 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

Iranians would ever return the Tablet to the British Museum at the end of the first year's loan.⁴⁸³

An Icelandic member of the Congress of Iranology wrote to Shafa after the Celebrations, stating his belief that the Cylinder was a 'holy symbol, historically, culturally and nationally',⁴⁸⁴ and the British Foreign Office was aware of the power of this 'holy symbol'. The Foreign Office was clearly expecting a more robust challenge to the British Museum's ownership of the Cylinder and one draft report has a note scribbled in pen that 'it looks as though the Iranians may develop a campaign about this, and we will be in for a long tussle.'⁴⁸⁵ It is for this reason that Heath was forced to intervene, writing to Shawcross to urge him not to make public his opinion that the Cylinder should be given to Iran.⁴⁸⁶ The Foreign Office was advised that if the Iranian ambassador should bring up the question of a permanent agreement, then they should respond that, while appreciating the importance of the Cylinder to Iran,

it forms too important a part of the British Museum collection for the Trustees to be able to agree to a permanent loan to Iran; they had already made a major concession in permitting it to leave the Museum for the Celebrations.⁴⁸⁷

There was a romance attached to the Cylinder, which was historically, in large part, stimulated by the Cyrus legend in the West. One finds it hard to imagine such a campaign to repatriate the Ardabil Carpet from the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example. There was a particular aura surrounding the Cylinder, which was encouraged by the Shah and which fuelled the Pahlavi ideology.

In addition to the loan, replicas of the Cylinder were displayed in the United Nations buildings in New York and Geneva, in an effort to accentuate the message of Cyrus and the Anniversary Celebrations.⁴⁸⁸ On 14 October in New York, Princess Ashraf presented a replica Cylinder to UN Secretary-General U Thant, who declared that 'in creating the ancient Persian Empire twenty-five

⁴⁸³ Quoted in Martin Bailey, 'How Britain Tried to use a Persian Antiquity for Political Gain', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 150, September 2004, p. 19.

⁴⁸⁴ Jakob Jónsson to Shafa, undated, Shafa Archives.

⁴⁸⁵ 'Cyrus the Great Clay Cylinder (Defensive)', October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁸⁶ Heath to Shawcross, 4 November 1971, FCO 17/1529. Shawcross had apparently planned to use a speech to the Iran Society in London on 4 November to argue this.

⁴⁸⁷ 'Cyrus the Great Clay Cylinder (Defensive)', October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁴⁸⁸ Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration* (1971), p. 30.

hundred years ago, Cyrus displayed the wisdom of respecting the civilizations and peoples whom he “unified” under his sway.⁴⁸⁹ Additional casts were made and distributed among dignitaries who attended the festivities in Iran,⁴⁹⁰ as well as scholars such as Ali Sami of the Persepolis Museum⁴⁹¹ and Richard Barnett.⁴⁹² As a result of the Shah’s campaign to promote the Cylinder as a nationalist symbol, the artefact retains to this day a special place in the hearts of Iranians and is still mentioned in terms of human rights. Speaking at her Nobel Prize lecture in 2003, Shirin Ebadi, for example, said that ‘The Charter of Cyrus the Great is one of the most important documents that should be studied in the history of human rights.’⁴⁹³

The Shah’s presentation of himself as Cyrus’ successor is generally viewed with some scepticism. His speech at the tomb of Cyrus became a source of mockery within Iran and William Shawcross suggested that the presented connection constituted a ‘complete divorce from reality.’⁴⁹⁴ The Cylinder loan is clear evidence, however, that foreign governments were more than willing to speak to the Shah in his own language and use his ideology to further their own interests. The idea that the Cylinder could become a bargaining tool during Britain’s withdrawal from the Persian Gulf is reflective of the importance the Iranians attached to the Cylinder within the context of the Pahlavi state’s ideology. Even if the international political establishment did not take the Shah’s comparison of himself to Cyrus seriously in private, in public they toed the official line. The fact that countries from around the world familiarised themselves with and used this narrative is illustrative of the emergence of the Shah as a serious presence on the international stage during this period.

⁴⁸⁹ Press Release, ‘Iran Presents Replica of Ancient Edict to United Nations’, 14 October 1971, UN HQ/264.

⁴⁹⁰ Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love* (2004), p. 219.

⁴⁹¹ ‘The Cyrus Cylinder’, The British Museum, available at <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1> [accessed on 18 February 2016].

⁴⁹² St John Simpson, ‘The Cyrus Cylinder: Display and Replica’, in *The Cyrus Cylinder: The Great Persian Edict from Babylon*, ed. by Irving Finkel (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. 82.

⁴⁹³ Shirin Ebadi, *Nobel Lecture*, 10 December 2003, available at <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2003/ebadi-lecture-e.html> [accessed on 13 September 2016].

⁴⁹⁴ Shawcross, *The Shah’s Last Ride* (1989), p. 47.

Iran's Political and Economic Standing

Why were states so eager to present themselves as understanding the Shah's ideology? And how did this translate into economic or political benefits? Throughout the 1960s Iran's economy expanded considerably, boosted in large part by increased oil revenues. Gross national product (GNP) rose from \$3.8 billion in 1959/60 to \$10.6 billion in 1970/71, a growth of 181 percent.⁴⁹⁵ By the late 1960s Iran offered one of the Middle East's most lucrative prospects for foreign investors, with vast natural resources and, due to its recently acquired financial clout, considerable purchasing power. Realising the potential of this growing market, foreign powers scrambled for influence in Iran and the Celebrations, in some respects, became an elaborate business fair, with many countries competing for contracts, trade deals and political leverage. Furthermore, dealing with Iran required a certain *savoir-faire* and success depended as much on whom one knew and how one presented oneself, as what one could offer. Business leaders were included on the international committees for the Celebrations and many companies launched special advertisements to show their support for the occasion.⁴⁹⁶ Being involved with the Celebrations brought high-level exposure which companies were naturally glad to take advantage of. A number of firms even took part 'in an honorary capacity', offering their services for free, such as the famous hairdressing salons of Carita, Alexander and Elizabeth Arden.⁴⁹⁷

Other firms competed for lucrative contracts. One British firm, for example, won an \$864,000 contract to supply street lights for Tehran and Shiraz.⁴⁹⁸ Spode produced commemorative dinner plates for £5,000 (approximately \$12,150),⁴⁹⁹ a comparatively modest sum, but with considerable prestige. The Swedish company Sporrong was commissioned to make commemorative gold medals, men's bronze brooches and women's pins⁵⁰⁰ and the Dutch electrical company Philips won the contract to supply lights at the

⁴⁹⁵ Charles Issawi, 'The Iranian Economy 1925-1975: Fifty Years of Economic Development', in *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, ed. by Lencozowski (1978), p. 141.

⁴⁹⁶ See for example, *Iran 71: An independent survey on the Iranian economy on the occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire* (Tehran, 1971).

⁴⁹⁷ 'Necessary Information and Questions', p. 2, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁴⁹⁸ 'Decorations', *Kayhan International*, 5 June 1971.

⁴⁹⁹ Letter Alam to Ansari, 11 Khordad 1350/ 01 June 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 91.

⁵⁰⁰ Letter dated 26 Khordad 1350/ 16 June 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 100.

Shahyad monument and Persepolis.⁵⁰¹ But the main short-term beneficiaries were the French, whose jewellers produced jewellery for the imperial family, interior designers provided furniture for the tents, and whose chefs provided food for the main receptions. Using the international interest in the Celebrations to promote their new model, from 11 until 23 August the car manufacturer Citroën even sent a brigade of 600 cars to tour Iran, with 1,400 passengers and a 29-man strong film crew.⁵⁰² A group of French department stores declared Shahrivar 1350 (August-September 1971) to be 'Iran Month', during which shops were decorated with Iranian art and customers given the opportunity to taste Iranian food.⁵⁰³

There were also long-term commercial opportunities on offer for those who managed to win favour. The success of this courtship became naturally linked to political representation. For example, British and French competition to win the rights to mine copper at Kerman became 'inextricably linked with the presence or absence of President Pompidou at the celebrations.'⁵⁰⁴ Furthermore, directly as a result of Pompidou's snub the Shah 'cancelled all the big orders given to the French and for a number of years the French were in the doghouse.'⁵⁰⁵ According to Ramsbotham, despite concerns over human rights, President Heinemann was persuaded to attend the event 'for the sake of Germany's extensive commercial interests in Iran.'⁵⁰⁶ Facing criticism at home over the plight of political prisoners in Iran Heinemann argued that 'When a state maintains ties to another state, in international understanding that implies neither judgement of its form of government nor the politics of that state.'⁵⁰⁷ In an open letter to his country's young socialists, Heinemann noted Iran's regional political and economic power as justification for his decision to take part in the

⁵⁰¹ Minister of Water and Electricity to Ansari and Nikpay, 22 Tir 1350/ 13 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 149.

⁵⁰² 'Barnāmeḥ-ye otomobilrāni-ye sitro'en dar irān' [Programme of Citroën's car show in Iran], 05 Mordad 1350/27 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 173-174.

⁵⁰³ Shafa *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2032.

⁵⁰⁴ Ramsbotham report, 23 October 1971, p. 4, FCO 57/323.

⁵⁰⁵ Denis Wright, in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, Aylesbury, UK, 10 and 11 October 1984, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 6, p. 44. Some two years later Alam recorded in his diary that the Shah refused to arrange a formal greeting for Pompidou upon a brief stopover in Iran: 'HIM bears Pompidou a grudge for not having attended our monarchy celebrations.' Alam diary entry 22 August 1973, *The Shah and I* (1991), p. 312.

⁵⁰⁶ Ramsbotham report, 23 October 1971, p. 4, FCO 57/323.

⁵⁰⁷ 'Heinemann rechtfertigt seine Persien-Reise', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 August 1971.

festivities.⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, a member of the Swiss delegation accompanying President of the Swiss Confederation Rudolf Gnägi declared that his mission was 'not very pleasant', but necessary since 'international customs and commitments simply cannot be ignored.'⁵⁰⁹ Economic alignment was widely presented as justification, despite widespread concerns in some European states over issues such as human rights.

The Shah was troubled by the negative presentation of the Celebrations in the Western press in the months leading up to the festivities. At the end of July he complained about the issue to Prime Minister Hoveyda, who ordered the Minister of Information to Paris to assess the situation.⁵¹⁰ European states were evidently aware at the offence that negative articles could cause in their relations with the Shah. Consequently, in order to inspire more positive articles in Germany, the German Federation of Advertising paid the newspaper *Die Welt* 80,000 Deutschmarks (around \$22,000) to produce some flattering articles about the Celebrations.⁵¹¹ There were later concerns that other German papers, such as *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Der Spiegel* and *Stern* might demand similar payments, otherwise they would continue to make 'false claims' about the Celebrations. The British ambassador too made an offer to Alam to 'try to inspire a constructive article in one of our leading newspapers'.⁵¹²

In the Netherlands the Foreign Ministry was forced to defend Iran in public in order to maintain good relations during this important period, narrowly avoiding a scandal in the process. When an Iranian carpet dealer living in the Netherlands refused an order from the Iranian ambassador to give discounts during the Celebrations, his passport was revoked and he was ordered to return to Iran 'as soon as possible'.⁵¹³ The implication in the press was that this was punishment for his disobedience and the issue was debated in the Dutch House of Representatives, with House members asking whether the ambassador overstepped the mark with his 'unacceptable behaviour'.⁵¹⁴ Minister of Foreign

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ 'Zwitserland: feestje in Perzië is niet leuk', *Nieuwe Leidsche Courant*, 13 October 1971, p. 9.

⁵¹⁰ SAVAK internal report, 7 Mordad 1350/ 29 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 179.

⁵¹¹ SAVAK internal report, 15 Shahrivar 1350/ 6 September 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 248-250.

⁵¹² Ramsbotham to A.D. Parsons, 21 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁵¹³ 'Intimidatie van 'Nederlandse' Pers: Opponent van Sjah krijgt geen pas', *Trouw*, 12 October 1971.

⁵¹⁴ 'Kamerleden laken gedrag Perzische ambassadeur', *Volkskrant*, 13 October 1971.

Affairs Norbert Schmelzer, in defence of the ambassador, argued that 'it should not be seen as uncommon that on occasion of special events or for other reasons compatriots should be asked to lend their support to such a manifestation.'⁵¹⁵ Schmelzer declined to take the ambassador to task over the allegations, even when faced with hostile journalists who were, in general, critical of the Shah and the Celebrations. Criticising the conduct of an Iranian ambassador, particularly at this time, would have had broader political implications and Schmelzer's defence is telling.

The Shah was aware of the fact that the foreign delegations at the Celebrations were competing for his favour, and encouraged this competition. In a press conference held shortly after the Celebrations the Shah said to a German reporter,

You are exporting to us 10 times more than what you buy from us.
If we stopped trade with you, you would be the losers not us. We
can buy what you sell to us elsewhere.⁵¹⁶

The message was clear: you need us more than we need you. This position encouraged competition for the regime's favour and with it a good measure of flattery. A commemorative edition of *Anglo-Iranian Trade* was published by British Industrial Publicity Overseas, for example, with the rather long-winded title: 'British Industry Salutes Their Imperial Majesties Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Aryamehr Shah and the Shahbanu Farah of Iran and Their Nation on the Historic Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great: Long Live His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah Aryamehr!'⁵¹⁷ One British diplomat was struck by the 'outrageous flattery' that was the norm during this period in general,⁵¹⁸ and the Celebrations in particular saw expressions of admiration that bordered on sycophancy. The Apadana reliefs at Persepolis depict representatives from each quarter of the Persian Empire waiting to pay homage to their king, and to a certain degree the Celebrations were a 20th century manifestation of this ancient practice.

⁵¹⁵ Norbert Schmelzer, 'Reply', 27 October 1971, 2.02.28.3882, *Aanhangsel tot het Verslag van de Handelingen der Tweede Kamer*, Zitting 1971-1972, p. 479.

⁵¹⁶ 'We stand on our own feet Monarch tells world press', *Kayhan International*, 23 October 1971, p. 7.

⁵¹⁷ *Anglo-Iranian Trade*, 4:4 (London, 1971).

⁵¹⁸ John O'Regan, *From Empire to Commonwealth* (London: Radcliffe Press, 1994), p. 169.

The realisation that one's attendance could be viewed in the context of flattering the Shah in the hope of better economic and political relations was a factor in Queen Elizabeth II's refusal to attend the event. Appearing to be submissive to the Shah, particularly as Britain was going through a troubling departure from the Persian Gulf, was not palatable to the British monarchy. Denis Wright recalled that he wondered 'why should we, having all this abuse hurled at us in the press, bring our Queen out just to please the Shah?'⁵¹⁹ Despite this symbolic gesture of disapproval, the British were careful not to politicise the rejection, informing the Shah that as a general rule 'the Queen does not go on international jamborees.'⁵²⁰ Moreover, to soften the blow when the Shah's second choice, Prince Charles, declined his invitation, the Queen was encouraged to write a personal letter to the Shah since he 'will regard refusal as a personal slight.'⁵²¹ In this letter the Queen addressed the Shah as 'Sir My Brother', and wrote that she was 'deeply conscious of the disappointment' caused.⁵²² There was clearly some concern over the implications of the Queen's and the Prince's rejection for British interests in Iran.

Much has been written about the refusal of a number of significant world leaders to attend the Celebrations. One journalist wrote mockingly at the time, 'You just weren't important if you weren't invited; but you couldn't have been that important if you actually showed up.'⁵²³ Some had practical reasons for not attending. German President Gustav Heinemann had intended to go, as discussed above, but was kept away by a 'sudden – and real – eye disease',⁵²⁴ President Nixon had agreed to attend, but later declined due to security concerns⁵²⁵ and Emperor Hirohito of Japan cited old age as a reason not to attend.⁵²⁶ There were also domestic internal pressures guiding the decisions of leaders to accept or reject their invitations. For instance, the rulers of some regional powers, such as Mohammed Zahir Shah of Afghanistan, sent medium

⁵¹⁹ Wright, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 4, pp. 6-7.

⁵²⁰ Ramsbotham, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 1, p. 23.

⁵²¹ Denis Wright telegram, 9 January 1971, FCO 57/323.

⁵²² Queen Elizabeth II to the Shah, January 1971, FCO 57/323. In the handwritten version that was delivered to the Shah, the Queen merely addresses the note to 'Your Imperial Majesty', but signs the letter 'Your good friend Elizabeth'. See *Yāddāshthā-ye 'Alam*, vol. 2, pp. 203-204.

⁵²³ Jenkins, 'Iran's Birthday Party', *Newsweek*, 25 October 1971, p. 33.

⁵²⁴ Jonker report, 3 November 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵²⁵ Memorandum Henry Kissinger to President Nixon, 6 April 1971, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 121.

⁵²⁶ 'List of Heads of States and the Imperial Missions to whom instructions for invitation have been issued', FCO 248/1708.

level representatives, for fear that their attendance would embolden the fanatics in their own countries.⁵²⁷ Amidst intense criticism of the Shah and the Celebrations from opposition groups such as the Confederation of Iranian Students, backed by figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, who called for a boycott of the Celebrations, some Western governments may also have feared the political ramifications of attending.⁵²⁸ This international campaign clearly had some success. Princess Beatrix, heir to the Dutch throne, for example, declined to attend the Celebrations to avoid offending her country's socialists.⁵²⁹

It appears that only Pompidou publically declined his invitation.⁵³⁰ To the annoyance of the Dutch ambassador, Pompidou 'decided that it was more important to be too busy to attend than to accept his place, as dictated by protocol, *after* the King of Lesotho.'⁵³¹ Responding in the press, Pompidou added that he would probably be mistaken for just another French waiter anyway.⁵³² Despite the Shah reassuring Pompidou's replacement, Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas, that the 'great desert wind and the blue sky of Persepolis have swept away the alleged clouds between us and France', he was clearly annoyed by the rejection.⁵³³

There was also a degree of cajoling involved from the Iranian side. The Shah apparently sent a personal message to the Romanian president, Nicolae Ceaușescu, 'almost pleading with him to attend next year's junketings in person.'⁵³⁴ Grand Master of Ceremonies Hormoz Gharib, meanwhile, summoned the Dutch ambassador to inform him 'in fairly strong terms' that Queen Juliana was expected at the Celebrations. Gharib was not satisfied with the

⁵²⁷ SAVAK internal report, 23 Farvardin 1350/ 12 April 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 25. He sent his eldest daughter, Princess Bilqis Begum and her husband Abdul Wali Khan.

⁵²⁸ For the letter signed by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and 14 British Members of Parliament, see 'A Hungry Nation Does Not Need a 2500 Year Celebration: Appeal', in *Corruption and Struggle in Iran: A Defense Publication of the Iranian Student Association in the United States* (June 1972), pp. 8-10. The issue of internal opposition will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

⁵²⁹ Then, according to Alam, she came to Iran to apologise personally to the Shah. See Alam diary entry 9 Shahrivar 1355/ 31 August 1976, *Yaddāshthā-ye 'Alam*, vol. 6, p. 222.

⁵³⁰ In September Pompidou had received a letter from the overseas-based opposition organisation *Free Iran*, urging him not to attend the Celebrations. It is not clear whether this pressure influenced his decision, but *Free Iran* were delighted at the snub. For a reproduction of the letter see *Iran Free Press*, 1:2, October 1971, p. 8.

⁵³¹ Jonker report, 3 November 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵³² Cooper, *The Fall of Heaven* (2016), p. 170.

⁵³³ J.M. Pontaut, 'La Fête Des Fêtes', *Paris Match*, 30 October 1971, p. 63.

⁵³⁴ R.T. Eland to Drace-Francis, 1 October 1970, FCO 248/1708.

ambassador's suggestion that Princess Beatrix could go in her stead; 'the Iranians expected crowned heads.'⁵³⁵ The Shah's inability to persuade certain heads of state to attend, particularly Queen Elizabeth II, President Nixon and President Pompidou, was undoubtedly a disappointment and undermined to some extent the image he wished to promote, through the Celebrations, of himself as a serious figure on the international stage. However, these rejections should also be seen in the broader context of public opposition to the Shah's rule in the West and did not necessarily reflect the governments' position on the Shah and his regime, as evidenced by a number of the absentee heads of state visiting Iran in state visits shortly after the Celebrations, most notably President Nixon in 1972. Rumours circulated after the event that Ardeshir Zahedi was removed from his post as foreign minister partly as a result of his failure to persuade these figures to attend are unsubstantiated.⁵³⁶

To emphasise the significance of the occasion on an international level, a number of 'Cyrus the Great Committees'⁵³⁷ were set up in countries around the world, typically chaired by heads of state. When Arthur Upham Pope was charged with forming the American committee in 1960, it was hoped that Kennedy and Eisenhower would serve as patrons, an indication of the perceived international importance of the occasion even at this early stage in its development.⁵³⁸ General De Gaulle was installed as chair of the French committee, King Baudouin led the Belgian committee and General Franco acted as head of the Spanish committee.⁵³⁹ By the time the Celebrations were underway in 1971, there were 70 such committees around the world and there was even a suggestion that they could remain functioning after the event as 'Friendship Committees'.⁵⁴⁰ The regime took these committees quite seriously and British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham records that he was repeatedly pressed about the vacant role of head of the British committee. The Iranians viewed this as an illustration 'of the British Government's anti-Iranian policy.'⁵⁴¹ When Prince Philip was eventually chosen to chair the committee it was

⁵³⁵ C.D.S. Drace-Francis report, 5 October 1970, FCO 248/1708.

⁵³⁶ Intelligence Report 2035-72, Washington, May 1972, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 180.

⁵³⁷ As was the official title, see Shafa press conference, 6 July 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵³⁸ Pope to Jay Gluck, 12 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 426.

⁵³⁹ For a list of these honorary chairs, see Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration* (1971), pp. 22-24.

⁵⁴⁰ *Kayhan International* 'Cyrus Committees Forge Friendship', 28 October 1971.

⁵⁴¹ Peter Ramsbotham report, 11 October 1971, p. 4, FCO 57/323.

because 'the Iranians want a Royal personage to take part', thus underlining both the significance of these foreign committees to Iran and the willingness of foreign governments to acquiesce to Iranian demands.⁵⁴²

In the months leading up to the Celebrations Iran relayed a message to attending delegations to inform them that gifts were not expected.⁵⁴³ During other events of international significance, such as the Shah's coronation in 1967, gifts had been offered. Despite the call not to bring gifts during the Celebrations, presumably in order not to present the event as a homage-paying trip for the foreign dignitaries, some ignored the request. As already stated, the Dutch brought a gift to compensate for the fact that they did not give a present for the coronation in 1967.⁵⁴⁴ President Tito also brought a gift of a bronze statue of four figures engaged in a traditional Yugoslav dance.⁵⁴⁵ According to Denis Wright, who served as British ambassador to Iran from 1963 to 1971, there was a general understanding from anyone engaged in Iran that the Shah was ultimately the man in charge. If one sought influence in Iran, then one had to pay the Shah the occasional lip service when the opportunity presented itself.⁵⁴⁶ As the Shah's international status grew, it became more important to keep him content and the Celebrations provided many opportunities for flattery.

Another example of the international community's care not to upset the Shah can be observed in the British Foreign Office archives. The Shah had given Prince Philip and Princess Anne the gift of a three-year-old stallion from the royal stud and two Caspian horses during the Celebrations. However, European laws regarding livestock imports made it impossible to immediately take the horses to Britain. Ramsbotham wrote frantically to a number of organisations in Britain in order to find a solution.

I am concerned at this situation which could easily go sour ... once having made his [the Shah's] gesture and the gift having been accepted he could now take offence if it had to be rejected

⁵⁴² E.M. Westwood to A.L. Mayall, 4 May 1971, FCO 57/323.

⁵⁴³ Ramsbotham to A.L. Mayall, 20 February 1971, FCO 57/322.

⁵⁴⁴ Jonker to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 19 September 1970, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵⁴⁵ This statue can be seen in the Fine Art Museum at the Sa'dabad Palace in Tehran.

⁵⁴⁶ Denis Wright, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 3, pp. 10-11.

for reasons which he would not regard as insuperable in his own country.⁵⁴⁷

A solution to the problem was eventually found, but Ramsbotham's anxiety was revealing. The Celebrations were intended to announce Iran's arrival on the international scene. The efforts of the European powers to avoid causing offence suggest that this message was clearly understood. This was driven by practical considerations related to political and commercial interests. If Britain lost out on a contract, then Germany or another competitor would take its place, and thus it was in each government's interest to maintain friendly relations with the Shah.

Tent City Diplomacy

Besides the development of commercial interests, the Shah also had another motivation for inviting the world's leaders to Iran. In 1943 Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill held a congress in Tehran to discuss the opening of a second war front in Europe. Not only was the young Mohammad Reza not invited to take part in the discussion, but he was also largely ignored and not even informed of the meeting until the last moment.⁵⁴⁸ By 1971 the Shah had emerged from insignificance and now leaders from around the world flocked to Iran to pay tribute to him. The Celebrations represented a coming of age, as the Shah had finally discovered his identity and his place in the world. During his speeches throughout the festivities, the Shah was eager to stress his role as unifier. He spoke of 'understanding and friendship' and of 'loving unity with the Iranian nation',⁵⁴⁹ and at the parade on 15 October he said,

It is my ardent wish that the great cause of understanding and friendship which has brought together in one place the distinguished representatives of so many countries and nations of

⁵⁴⁷ Ramsbotham telegram, 27 October 1971 FCO 57/323.

⁵⁴⁸ Milani, *The Shah* (2011), p. 101. During these visits to Iran, the Shah was upset that Churchill in particular did not observe official protocol and pay a visit to the monarch. 'He didn't even bother to come and call on me at my residence,' said the Shah, 'although I was King of the host country.' See Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch* (1977), p. 69.

⁵⁴⁹ 'The Shahanshah's speech at the banquet on 14 October 1971', pp. 17-19, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. For full text of the speeches at the banquet and the parade, see Appendix B.

the world may inspire all the people on earth to pursue the way that leads to real prosperity and human society.⁵⁵⁰

The period of Cold War *détente* had begun just two years earlier, so when the Shah spoke about peace and goodwill, he was aware that this language was in keeping with geopolitical realities. During this Cold War lull, it was possible to carve out a new direction for Iran, one in which the Shah could play his role as unifier. Dialogue was therefore promoted at the Celebrations, with time set aside during the days at Persepolis for informal meetings and discussions, and many of these took place. South African State President Jacobus Fouché, for example, was invited to the Indonesian tent for cocktails, and similar informal meetings were held in his own tent with, among others, King Moshoeshoe II of Lesotho.⁵⁵¹

Those attending the event were made aware of the political ramifications of their visit. In his briefing for Vice-President Spiro Agnew ahead of his visit as representative of President Nixon, Henry Kissinger wrote:

Your visit to Iran is essentially an expression of our respect and friendship for the Shah. The 25th Centenary Celebrations are a symbolic assertion that Iran, under the leadership of the Shah, is assuming the full promise of its ancient heritage. Your participation in these events is intended to identify the United States with these accomplishments and the Shah's leadership.⁵⁵²

The relationship between Iran and the United States had developed during this period in such a way that Iran was no longer a subservient country, but a partner. In this context Agnew was given a list of issues to discuss with the Shah at the Celebrations, one of which was the escalating tension between India and Pakistan over the situation in East Pakistan, considered 'the subject at the top of our priority list.'⁵⁵³ Agnew was to set out the United States' position

⁵⁵⁰ 'Shahanshah's message at the Grand Parade, 15 October 1971', p. 21, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵⁵¹ H.A. Hoogendoorn to Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 21 October 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵⁵² Memorandum Kissinger to Agnew, 9 October 1971, p. 1, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 121.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*

on the issue and inform the Shah of his appreciation of anything that he 'might be able to do along these lines.'⁵⁵⁴

In order to underline his credentials, therefore, and show the United States that he was a worthy partner, the Shah attempted to mediate talks between India and Pakistan during the Celebrations. Outside of Iran such a meeting with Nikolai Podgorny, Yahya Khan and V.V. Giri in one place would have been impossible, which, according to Ramsbotham, substantiated 'the Shah's claim to be an independent world leader.'⁵⁵⁵ The Pakistani delegation considered the meeting a relative success, with the Soviets assuring them of their commitment to the preservation of Pakistan,⁵⁵⁶ although for his efforts the Shah received little more than a stern warning from Podgorny not to supply weapons to Pakistan.⁵⁵⁷ Seemingly undeterred by his failure to conclude peace talks the Shah pledged to do 'all in our power' to avert military confrontation, 'even if our preliminary efforts do not prove as fruitful as we would like them to be.'⁵⁵⁸

The Shah's intervention in this matter should not merely be seen in the context of his desire to serve American interests. He often spoke of his foreign policy objectives and achieving influence in his own region. During an extensive interview published as *The Mind of a Monarch*, he discussed his vision for an 'economic union under a common market of all Indian Ocean countries', stretching from Africa to Iran and South Asia.⁵⁵⁹ The Shah's vision for his country's role in the modern world was not confined to its relationship with the United States and the Soviet Union; he wanted to carve out his own sphere of influence. At Persepolis many of the countries that would be involved in his Indian Ocean initiative were represented, giving the Shah the chance to present himself as a respected world leader. The participation of South Africa's President Fouché was significant in this context, particularly since his invitation was viewed in South Africa as a contrast to the general international isolation

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁵ Ramsbotham report, 23 October 1971, p. 7, FCO 57/323.

⁵⁵⁶ Richard Sisson and Leo Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), fn. 4, p. 307.

⁵⁵⁷ Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* (2014), p. 61.

⁵⁵⁸ 'Shahanshah's interview', p. 11, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁵⁵⁹ Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch*, p. 27.

that the country experienced at this time.⁵⁶⁰ Another pariah state with which the Shah wished to maintain good relations was Israel. Although Israel was not officially invited so as to avoid both an Arab boycott and offending Iranian public opinion, Israeli scholars were secretly housed in a motel on the outskirts of Shiraz so that they could attend the Congress of Iranology⁵⁶¹ and David Ben-Gurion contributed a chapter on Cyrus the Great to the first volume of *Acta Iranica*, a series of books established in order to publish the proceedings of the Congress.⁵⁶² In his role of unifier, the Shah had shown himself as willing to reach out to pariah states, helping to reinitiate them into the international order.

The departure of the British from the Persian Gulf had presented Iran with an opportunity to take a leading role in regional politics, too. The emirs of each of the seven Trucial States attended the Celebrations, as did the emir of Bahrain, whose involvement as an independent head of state allowed the Shah to draw a line under his country's claims to the territory. On 16 October, during the Celebrations, Iran established diplomatic relations with Qatar, underlining the Shah's intention to play a significant part in the integration of the former British protectorates into the international community.⁵⁶³

The Shah also used the Celebrations to reach out to communist China, with which the United States had also initiated talks. From 13 until 19 April 1971 Princess Ashraf visited China for a meeting with Premier Chou En-lai. During a toast at a banquet in her honour, she raised a glass to Chairman Mao, and said that 'Personal contact such as ours here today, inevitably leads to dialogue... I know that, through this unpretentious visit, we already have taken the first step in that direction.'⁵⁶⁴ Later that month Princess Fatemeh also visited, accompanied by Leila Hoveyda, the wife of the prime minister. Fatemeh's visit coincided with the May Day celebrations and affirmed, according to the *Peking Review*, 'the atmosphere of friendship between the people of China and Iran.'⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁰ Houchang Chehabi, 'South Africa and Iran in the Apartheid Era', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 42:4 (2016), p. 694.

⁵⁶¹ Richard Frye in an interview with Shahla Haeri, Cambridge, MA, 3, 10 and 24 October 1984, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 3, p. 35.

⁵⁶² David Ben-Gurion, 'Cyrus, King of Persia', in *Acta Iranica*, vol. 1, ed. by Jacques Duchesne-guillemin (Tehran: Bibliothèque Pahlavi; Leiden: Brill, 1974).

⁵⁶³ Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2058.

⁵⁶⁴ 'Princess Ashraf Pahlavi of Iran Visits China', *Peking Review*, 14:17, 23 April 1971, p. 4. For her account of the trip, see Ashraf Pahlavi, *Faces in a Mirror: Memoirs from Exile* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1980), pp. 178-180.

⁵⁶⁵ 'Princess Fatemeh Pahlavi in Peking', *Peking Review*, 14:19, 7 May 1971, p. 30.

This effort contributed to the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, signed on 16 August 1971.⁵⁶⁶ The Chinese had intended to send the vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Kuo Mo-jo, to the Celebrations as China's representative, but he became ill on the way, so China's ambassador to Pakistan, Chang Tung, was sent in his place. On 15 October, the Chinese delegation presented a letter from the Chinese government, which read:

China's Special Envoy Kuo Mo-jo has been invited to pay a friendly visit to your country. We believe that with the joint effort of our two sides the relations between China and Iran based on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence will develop continuously, and the friendly contacts, and mutual understanding between the two peoples will be further strengthened.⁵⁶⁷

A day later, on 16 October, Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda met with the Chinese representative to discuss the development of relations between the two countries.⁵⁶⁸ In September 1972, just months after Nixon's historic visit to China, Empress Farah and Prime Minister Hoveyda led an Iranian delegation to China in order to develop relations further. Speaking on that occasion, Premier Chou En-lai noted China's presence at the Celebrations as an example of the growing friendship between the two countries.⁵⁶⁹ The Celebrations were evidently successful in helping Iran to develop relationships, expanding its global influence in the process.

The absence of negative reports from foreign dignitaries suggests that the Shah's message of 'friendship' and 'unity' was appreciated rather than merely tolerated. The event was used to show off Iran's pre-eminence, while both strengthening and expanding bilateral relations, and it appears to have

⁵⁶⁶ Parviz Mohajer, 'Chinese-Iranian Relations v. Diplomatic and Commercial Relations, 1949-90', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, V/4 (1991), pp. 438-441, available online at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/chinese-iranian-v>> (last accessed 04 April 2017); and Halliday, *Dictatorship and Development* (1979), p. 263. For text of the agreement, see 'Joint Communiqué on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Iran', *Peking Review*, 14:34, 20 August 1971, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁷ 'Iran's 2,500th Anniversary of Persian Empire Greeted', *Peking Review*, 14:43, 22 October 1971, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁶⁸ Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2058.

⁵⁶⁹ Amir Taheri, 'Ties as old as the Silk Road: Empress, Chou pledge expanded co-operation', *Kayhan International*, 23 September 1972, p. 1.

been successful. The organisers' attention to detail and dedication to making guests feel comfortable and relaxed served to further endear the Shah to his guests and contributed to the positive atmosphere that the festivities sought to foster.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter has demonstrated that beyond the pomp and ceremony, the Celebrations largely achieved their international objectives. Despite the opposition to the event from sections of the foreign media, there was an unprecedented level of interest from global business and political and cultural figures to participate. The Celebrations announced to the world the re-emergence of Iran as a fully-fledged and independent power, free from the shackles of foreign imperialism that had overshadowed its modern history up to that point. This was the narrative that the Celebrations sought to project and on the whole they did so successfully. At the centre of this political theatre was Mohammad Reza Shah, who took his place on the international stage, presenting himself as not only the main focus for Iranian nationalism but also a major political figure of the global 1970s. The Shah had evolved from an uncertain, even timid, young monarch into a strong leader, convinced of his own destiny, becoming in the words of Ramsbotham, 'an oriental de Gaulle, but without the latter's saving grace of irony and humour.'⁵⁷⁰

The Shah's appreciation of his, and indeed his country's, change in fortunes can be observed in an entry in Alam's diary from May 1973, when the Shah had received a request from Prince Philip to be elected to the governing committee of the Iranian Imperial Equestrian Society.

HIM was amused by this, commenting, 'In days gone by, an Iranian politician would have considered it a catastrophe if he'd been missed off the guest list to a British embassy cocktail party. Now it appears the boot is on the other foot; a request from the British royal family is filed away amongst insignificant trivia.'⁵⁷¹

One way in which the Shah measured the progress of his country under his rule was by his treatment by other world powers. The Celebrations were part of the

⁵⁷⁰ Ramsbotham report, 11 October 1971, p. 4, FCO 57/323.

⁵⁷¹ Alam diary entry 26 May 1973, *The Shah and I* (1991), pp. 294-295.

process by which the Shah became ever more confident in Iran's importance as a regional and global authority. 'Iran was once a great country', the Shah said, 'but fell upon difficult times. I see the celebrations as a sign to the rest of the world that Iran is again a nation to equal all others.'⁵⁷² Iran, under the Shah's leadership, would not just become a regional power, but a global force. Alam recorded in his diary the following words from the Shah: 'To be first in the Middle East is not enough. We must raise ourselves to the level of a great world power. Such a goal is by no means unattainable.'⁵⁷³

From their very origins, as we have seen through Iran's eagerness to be seen to contribute to UNESCO's agenda, the Celebrations attempted to present Iran as part of a community of nations. This remained a prominent motivation as the Celebrations evolved and acquired greater significance. The Shah wished Iran to trade with the world and stand at the forefront of negotiations over issues such as economics and military confrontation. Foreign powers saw opportunities, both political and economic, in engaging with Iran through the Celebrations, and the Shah was eager to accentuate and promote the image of Iran as a land of peace and possibilities. There has been a tendency for critics to focus on refusals by some heads of state to participate in the Celebrations as evidence that they were not taken particularly seriously. But the evidence presented here suggests that not only did foreign countries participate willingly, even eagerly – their support was fundamental in achieving the principal goals of the Celebrations, and helped to cement the central position of the Shah on the international stage.

⁵⁷² Quoted in Ehsan Naraghi, *From Palace to Prison: Inside the Iranian Revolution*, trans. by Nilou Mobasser (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), p. 19.

⁵⁷³ Alam diary entry 22 March - 3 April 1974, *The Shah and I* (1991), p. 360.

Chapter 5: Culture, Education and Academia

In the first chapter we saw the important role that culture has played in many nationalist celebrations from the 20th century onwards. For example, it was an academic who conceived the idea for Mussolini's Augustus commemoration, and exhibitions and scholarly events formed an important part of the festival programme. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations of 1971 were also conceived by a scholar, and were regarded as an occasion to highlight Iranian cultural contributions to the world, allowing them to be commemorated and appreciated by both Iranians and the international community. There was much to appreciate in this regard. 'After all', the Shah said in an interview conducted shortly before the Celebrations,

apart from the great warrior-statesman Cyrus, who bequeathed to civilization its first humanitarian code, we contributed to it, also, the prophet Zoroaster, the scientist-philosopher Avicenna, the mathematician-poet Omar Khayyam, the astronomer Biruni, the alchemist Rhazes and the poets Ferdowsi, Sa'di, Hafez and Rumi. Throughout the centuries Persia has stood as a bridge in geographical, historical and cultural exchanges between the great civilizations of Asia and Europe.⁵⁷⁴

Since the times of Cyrus, according to the narrative promoted by the Celebrations, Iran had contributed to the world in culture, science and humanities, and although the Achaemenids were celebrated as the epitome of Persian grandeur, they were not celebrated in isolation. In Iran cultural events formed the majority of the programme for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and by the time they took place in 1971, hundreds of works had been published, and exhibitions and scholarly conferences organised. Academics from around the world contributed in their own countries through publications and lectures, and many of the leading Iranologists were invited to attend official events in Iran during the Celebrations. This included their participation in the Second

⁵⁷⁴ Quoted in Zaven N. Davidian, *Iran in the Service of World Peace: On the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Celebration of the Founding of the Iranian Empire* (Tehran: Davidian, 1971), p. 28.

International Congress of Iranology which was part of the official programme in Shiraz in October 1971.

This scholarly activity was partly stimulated by the nationalist agenda of the Pahlavi modernists, which sought to enforce the Pahlavi nationalist narrative by providing clear scholarly links between the past and the present. This chapter will show that the Celebrations were part of a cultural movement that was initiated by a number of academics and political figures, most importantly Shojaeddin Shafa, who in his role as the Shah's cultural counsellor promoted projects that sought to increase awareness of Iranian culture and civilisation. Throughout the 1960s a number of cultural initiatives were launched, which will be described in order to shed light upon the cultural policies that came to have a major influence on the Celebrations. The chapter will ultimately show that cultural events constituted an important part of the programme of the Celebrations. It will further demonstrate the development of cultural production in Iran during this period and its political purpose.

Culture and Cultural Production in Pahlavi Iran

The budget of the Ministry of Culture and Education increased six-fold between 1925 and 1935,⁵⁷⁵ indicating the importance ascribed by Reza Shah's regime to its work. This interest in education and culture, as shown in Chapter 2, ran parallel to the Pahlavi's promotion of Ancient Persia, which sought to help to legitimise the new regime by linking it to an ancient tradition of kingship. During the 1960s and 1970s, Mohammad Reza Shah's regime also invested considerable resources in culture, academia and education. In the context of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, it was the efforts of a number of individuals that were particularly important, most notably Shojaeddin Shafa, who first pitched the idea of the Celebrations to the Shah in 1958.⁵⁷⁶ Shafa was a major force behind the drive to establish Iran's reputation internationally as culturally progressive. Richard Frye considered him to be 'a kind of cultural tsar under the Shah, who built up a kind of reputation in trying to... make Iran internationally known in the academic world, in the world of writers, in the intellectual world.'⁵⁷⁷ Shafa was also a widely respected scholar in his own right, having translated a

⁵⁷⁵ Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste"' (2004), p. 43.

⁵⁷⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁵⁷⁷ Richard Frye in an interview with Shahla Haeri, Cambridge, MA 24 October 1984, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 5, p. 31.

number of Italian and French works into Persian.⁵⁷⁸ For his translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* he was presented with a gold medal by the city of Florence in 1971, as an expression of appreciation for his 'great contribution of thought and doctrine' to the 'universality of the work and image of Dante.'⁵⁷⁹

Shafa had previously held positions in the cabinets of Mohammad Mosaddeq and Hossein Ala, before his appointment to the Imperial Court in 1957 at the instigation of Ala, who had recently become Court Minister.⁵⁸⁰ As the Shah's cultural counsellor, he had considerable influence. Throughout the 1960s he spearheaded a number of important projects that sought to bolster the image of Iran as modern, culturally aware and pioneering in international educational development. In this context, from 8 to 19 September 1965 Iran hosted a congress in Tehran as part of a UNESCO-sponsored campaign to eradicate illiteracy worldwide. In a speech presented at the end of the congress, written by Shafa, the Shah said,

The battle against the spectre of ignorance has always been one of my major concerns. The concrete results of the Unesco Congress which has just terminated its work, encourages me to launch on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Organization in this great forum a new appeal in order that all governments set about for a general mobilization of available human and material resources for the purpose of waging a final battle against ignorance. This crusade is one of the noblest and heaviest tasks that man has ever ventured upon for his own true emancipation, and for world peace.⁵⁸¹

The congress was said by UNESCO to be 'decisive and of world importance', thus substantiating Iran's claim to be a leading member of the organisation by hosting such a significant event.⁵⁸² Domestically Iran had worked towards

⁵⁷⁸ He published his first translation of Lamartine's poetry at the age of 18 and subsequently published 64 titles and 24 volumes. See Claudine Shafa, 'Bibliographical Datas' in *Yād-nāmeḥ-ye Shojā'eddin Shafā* (Paris, 2013), pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷⁹ Mayor of Florence Luciano Bausi to Shafa, 9 February 1971, Shafa Archives.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with Shojaeddin Shafa, 'Mosāhebeh-ye Chāp Nashoda-e az Shojā'eddin Shafā Darbāreh-ye: jashnā-ye dohezar o pānsad sāleh', *Rahavard*, no. 95 (2011), p. 189. The Celebrations were one of his first proposals in his position.

⁵⁸¹ Shah speech's to the Campaign to end Illiteracy, September 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁵⁸² World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, Teheran, 8-19 September 1965, Final Report, UNESCO/ED/217.

ending illiteracy by creating the Literacy Corps as part of the Shah's White Revolution. In this context Shafa founded the World Campaign Against Illiteracy, which was to be chaired by the Shah, with Princess Ashraf acting as vice-chair and Shafa as general secretary.⁵⁸³ The initiative played a central role in the Tehran Congress of 1965 and the subsequent presentation of Iran as a world-leader in the battle against illiteracy. A film was produced by the Iranian Oil Operating Companies about the work of the Literacy Corps, which was dubbed into English, French and Persian, and Shafa travelled around Europe to promote the campaign and attend film screenings.⁵⁸⁴ He gave a speech about the 1965 congress in London, arranged by the Iran Society, for instance, which was attended by hundreds who were, according to Shafa's report, so enthused that it took him an hour to answer the many questions afterwards.⁵⁸⁵

To underline and draw international attention to his dedication to the cause of ending illiteracy, the Shah pledged the equivalent of a day's budget of the Iranian armed forces to the cause, and urged other nations to make a similar pledge. Iran, he stated, had made great strides in its campaign to eradicate illiteracy within its borders and was fully prepared to extend its efforts internationally 'for the benefit of peoples everywhere.'⁵⁸⁶ In the build up to the Anniversary Celebrations, the establishment of 2,500 commemorative schools was announced, to mark the beginning of a 'cultural renaissance'. Building on the work of the Literacy Corps and the World Campaign Against Illiteracy, the schools would represent 'lighting 2,500 torches of knowledge'.⁵⁸⁷ This idea originally came from Abdolreza Ansari, who, in his role as governor of Khuzestan during the celebration for the Shah's 25th year on the throne, had encouraged people to build schools in rural areas that lacked proper educational facilities. The project was so successful that Ansari suggested to the Executive Committee that it be replicated for the Anniversary Celebrations.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸³ Sabahi, *The Literacy Corps in Pahlavi Iran* (2002), p. 157.

⁵⁸⁴ J.A. Warder to Shafa, 18 September 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁵⁸⁵ Shafa report to the Imperial Court, 18 Aban 1344/ 9 November 1965, Shah Archives.

⁵⁸⁶ 'Shah's Donation to UNESCO to Fight Illiteracy', *Karachi Morning News*, 4 May 1966, Newspaper cut out in the Shafa Archives.

⁵⁸⁷ 'Commemorative schools', *Kayhan International*, 20 March 1971.

⁵⁸⁸ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 279-280.

After deliberations with a number of officers from the Plan Organisation, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Housing and Development, Ansari concluded that the schools would cost around 30,000 tomans (\$4,000) each to build, including the cost of desks, chairs and other teaching equipment. A special account was set up at the Bank Melli where the public could donate money to build the schools. Anyone who donated 30,000 tomans would be given the opportunity to name a school. The Shahbanou bought shares in 50 schools, six of which were to be named after members of the royal family.⁵⁸⁹ Names of contributors were read out on local radio stations in order to encourage more people to participate in the programme.⁵⁹⁰ The project was designed to stimulate the participation of Iranian citizens in the festivities, and resulted in a widespread campaign that should be seen in the context of the education programmes already underway.⁵⁹¹ The construction of the schools, for example, was overseen by the deputy secretary general of the World Campaign Against Illiteracy, Farhad Ganje'i.⁵⁹² The scheme was so successful that it led to the construction of 3,200 schools across the country, far exceeding the 2,500 target.⁵⁹³ On 27 June 1971 in the village of Sohbān, the first school, which was called Cyrus the Great, was opened in a ceremony attended by Princess Ashraf.⁵⁹⁴

Shafa also played an important role in other cultural initiatives throughout the 1960s, such as the Imperial Cultural Council, an executive body that sought to direct cultural operations concerning Iranian studies worldwide. The council was established by imperial decree in December 1962 and consisted of 13 members.⁵⁹⁵ In all, the council contacted cultural centres in 62 countries⁵⁹⁶ in its

⁵⁸⁹ 'Empress buys shares towards 50 schools', *Kayhan International*, 17 April 1971.

⁵⁹⁰ Minister of Information to Central Council for the Celebrations, 21 Farvardin 1350/ 10 April 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 16-19.

⁵⁹¹ The extent to which this participation was voluntary is questionable. There were certainly some instances of forced contributions. In one reported incident students at a school in Isfahan were asked to contribute 20 rials each, and in another bazaaris were forced to pay towards the purchase of a school. See SAVAK internal reports, 27 Ordibehesht 1350/ 17 May 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 74; and 28 Ordibehesht 1350/ 18 May 1971, p. 75.

⁵⁹² 'Empress buys shares towards 50 schools' *Kayhan International*, 17 April 1971.

⁵⁹³ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 281

⁵⁹⁴ Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2022.

⁵⁹⁵ Namely, Ebrahim Pourdavoud, Sayed Hassan Taghizadeh, Mohammad Hedjazi, Ali Asghar Hekmat, Parviz Natel Khanlari, Ali Akbar Siassi, Sayed Fakhreddine Chademan, Reza Zadeh Chafagh, Issa Sadiq, Hossein Ala, Badi Ol Zaman Forouzanfar, Said Nafici and Shafa. See 'Conseil Culturel Royal De L'Iran, Sous le Haut Patronage de Sa Majeste Impériale Mohammad-Reza Chah Pahlavi', undated document, Shafa Archives, pp. 1-8.

efforts to assure 'wide collaboration on a global scale' and to maintain 'close relations with hundreds of different scientific centres and universities which carry out research in different fields related to language, literature and Iranian civilization.'⁵⁹⁷ This was seen as an important task because these international scientists 'often did not feel like they were contributing to a collective oeuvre', and as such the council sought to be the 'point of contact between the Iranologists, who in this way are kept up to date with the work of their colleagues.'⁵⁹⁸ Shafa served as secretary general of the council. In this capacity he liaised with cultural organisations around the world to gather support for the council's work, and they responded enthusiastically. The foreign secretary of the Royal Society in London, for example, responded that they were looking forward to 'co-operating' with the council as a 'sister academy'.⁵⁹⁹ This was the first government-sponsored programme that sought to take a leading role in global Iranian studies and the Anniversary Celebrations would be a part of this developing cultural movement.

The Pahlavi Library

As already noted, in the early 1960s Arthur Upham Pope made some suggestions as to how the Anniversary Celebrations should be marked. In tune with the cultural focus of the occasion, one of his propositions was for the construction of a library to be built in Tehran that would serve as a national library to rival the great libraries of the world such as the Library of Congress and the Bibliothèque Nationale of France. It should, he proposed, be called the Pahlavi Library. This suggestion was made directly to Minister of Court Hossein Ala and was immediately authorised by Shojaeddin Shafa.⁶⁰⁰ In October 1964 the Pahlavi Library was established by imperial decree for the purpose of centralising and expanding research in all aspects of the language, culture and civilisation of Iran. It was to be 'the core of all research studies' into Iranology internationally⁶⁰¹ and its ultimate goal was to gather all literature on Iran in one

⁵⁹⁶ Including: 89 academies; 79 independent institutes and faculties; 151 faculties with chairs in Persian or the languages of ancient Persia, or which offer classes related to the culture or civilization of Iran; 355 libraries; 202 museums; 129 publishing houses specialising in the publication of orientalist books; 291 scientists; and UNESCO.

⁵⁹⁷ 'Conseil Culturel Impérial', *Journal de Teheran*, 26 September 1963.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Patrick Linstead to Shafa, 10 October 1963, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁰⁰ Memo from Asadollah Behroozan, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 426.

⁶⁰¹ 'Iranian Study Center Now Being Established', *Tehran Journal*, 12 November 1964, p. 3.

place to provide ‘the vastest source of documentation on the Iranian culture and civilization, for the benefit of those who study such matters all around the world as well as in Iran itself.’⁶⁰²

The Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science’s entry for the Pahlavi Library stated that it had a ‘serious and continuous relation with all the libraries of the world which keep rare materials produced in or written about Iran.’⁶⁰³ To stress his intention that the library would be an international project, Shafa wrote to cultural organisations and individuals from around the world in order to garner support.⁶⁰⁴ In a three-page letter sent to international institutions outlining the aims of the library, Shafa wrote,

To start a close collaboration (knowing your interest in this subject as well as your being a worthy friend of the Iranian Culture) I would highly appreciate it if you would be kind enough to send me your ideas, suggestions and remarks on this subject so that we would be able to accomplish the task given to us by His Imperial Majesty the Shah’s good will and generosity.⁶⁰⁵

In response to this call for support, Shafa was inundated with letters from institutions around the world. Professor Charles Adams, Director of the University of Montreal’s Institute of Islamic Studies, for example, met with Shafa to ‘explore with him the ways in which we may co-operate with the work of the library.’⁶⁰⁶ Jacques Renoult from the Bibliothèque Mazarine in Paris responded with some practical suggestions and strongly advised against a methodical classification of documents on the shelves, ‘which would oblige you to leave unreasonable numbers of empty spaces’ and which would inevitably lead to regrouping from time to time. This, he stated, ‘would result in a useless waste of time, of fatigue in staff and considerable expenses.’⁶⁰⁷ Shafa responded with thanks for the ‘precious advice’ which he would ‘not fail to follow.’⁶⁰⁸ Felix Tauer,

⁶⁰² Shafa document on creation of Pahlavi library, undated, p. 1, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁰³ Hooshang Ebrami, ‘Iran, Libraries in’, in Allen Kent, Harold Lancour and Jay E. Daily eds., *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, vol. 13, (New York: Marcel Dekker Inc., 1975), p. 35.

⁶⁰⁴ This task was considered so important that it was written into the statute of the Pahlavi Library. See *Asāsnāmeḥ-ye Ketābkhāneh-ye Pahlavi*, undated, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁰⁵ Letter from Shafa to international cultural institutions, 24 August 1965, Shafa Archives, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁶ Charles J. Adams to Iranian ambassador to Canada, 9 February 1966, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁰⁷ Jacques Renoult to Shafa, 30 September 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁰⁸ Shafa to Renoult, 4 January 1966, Shafa Archives.

professor at the Charles University in Prague, offered to exchange his publications, or other books published in Czechoslovakia, for photocopies of periodicals published in Iran which were inaccessible in his country at that time.⁶⁰⁹ Professor Maurice Leroy at the University of Brussels also offered to send his publications⁶¹⁰ and Professor Vanden Berghe at Ghent University offered his 'complete support' and pledged to examine the project in detail upon his next trip to Tehran.⁶¹¹ Professor Gilbert Lazard of the Instiut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, wished success 'in this great enterprise, which cannot but render great services to the study of Iranian culture.'⁶¹² There are many more letters of this type in the archives of Shojaeddin Shafa, which illustrates both the enthusiasm felt about the project amongst scholars of Iran and librarians, and the general atmosphere of mutual cooperation that Shafa sought to encourage. Librarians in particular were excited at the prospect of someone setting up a world-class national library from scratch and shared with Shafa all of the mistakes and inefficiencies they would avoid if they would be given such an opportunity.

The library was to be divided into the following sections: manuscripts, with originals or photocopies of all valuable Iranian manuscripts throughout the world; historical documents, which would be a collection of all documents relating to Iran currently held in archives around the world; books, which would collect copies of every book written about Iran in all languages; reviews and publications, consisting of all articles published on Iranian culture and civilisation over the past two centuries; and the centre for scientific research under the direction of the Imperial Court.⁶¹³ The main function of the Pahlavi Library was to serve as the nodal point for Iranian studies internationally. As well as seeking to build its collection and develop strong relations with cultural institutions around the world, the library also arranged publications and financially supported academic conferences.⁶¹⁴ In order to establish its credentials as an international scholarly enterprise, the Pahlavi Library spearheaded a number of projects in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁶⁰⁹ Felix Tauer to Shafa, 29 September 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁶¹⁰ Maurice Leroy to Shafa, 20 September 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁶¹¹ L. Vanden Berghe to Shafa, 12 October 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁶¹² Gilbert Lazard to Shafa, 30 September 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁶¹³ Letter from Shafa to international cultural institutions, October 1965, Shafa Archives.

⁶¹⁴ For example the Congress of Mithraic Studies held in Manchester in 1971. For an account see Chapter 6.

Two months after the creation of the library a separate committee was established, made up of Iranian and foreign scholars who were charged with compiling a complete account of Iranian history based on the documents that the library wanted to collect. It was called the *Komiteh-ye Ta'lif-e Tārikh-e Irān*, the Committee for Authoring the History of Iran. To support this project the Council of Direction of the Pahlavi Library, consisting of a number of ministers, along with the Imperial Cultural Council, ordered an international congress of Iranology to take place in Tehran.⁶¹⁵ The purpose of the gathering was to 'exchange views, researches, experiences, ideas and suggestions on the highest level, concerning the Iranian culture and history' and invitations were sent to the 'most outstanding Iranologues' of the world.⁶¹⁶ The congress was held from 31 August until 7 September 1966, with 120 scholars from 32 countries taking part, including Arthur Upham Pope, Ann Lambton and Roman Ghirshman. The University of Tehran was borrowed for the congress and it 'wore a festive look', with flags flying in all different colours outside Ferdowsi Hall.⁶¹⁷ Attending the opening ceremony were the Shah, Shahbanou and Prime Minister Hoveyda, along with cabinet ministers and other dignitaries, emphasising the political support for the occasion. Opening the congress the Shah said, 'Our bravest and most honoured soldiers are those men and women, who during the course of thousands of years have kept the torch of knowledge burning.'⁶¹⁸ The atmosphere of scholarly cooperation that the event fostered lasted long after the conference itself finished⁶¹⁹ and at the closing of the congress an international committee was established by the Pahlavi Library, called the International Union of Iranologists, which would direct future congresses.⁶²⁰ The conference in 1966 was called the First International Congress of Iranology; the event that took place in Shiraz in 1971 during the Anniversary Celebrations would be the Second.

In the spirit of this growing tradition of academic gatherings, in which Iran played an increasingly central role, the Fifth International Congress of Iranian

⁶¹⁵ Shafa document on creation of Pahlavi Library, undated, p. 2, Shafa Archives.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁶¹⁷ 'Monarch Tells Scholars: Write Without Bias', *Tehran Journal*, 1 September 1966, p. 1.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2.

⁶¹⁹ It was at this conference, for instance, that Gherardo Gnoli first met and became friends with Ilya Gershevich. Together they would play key roles in the founding of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* in the early 1980s. 'Gherardo Gnoli, 'Ilya Gershevitch: 1914-2001', *East and West*, 51:3/4 (2001), p. 400.

⁶²⁰ 'Permanent Body To Be Set Up for Future Congresses', *Tehran Journal*, 7 September 1966.

Art and Archaeology was held in Tehran from 11 to 18 April 1968. Organised by the Asia Institute's Arthur Upham Pope, it attracted 200 scholars from nearly 30 countries and was planned by the Ministry of Culture and Art, along with the Iranian Office of Archaeology.⁶²¹ As usual at such state-organised cultural occasions, the Shah gave an inaugural address, which was followed by a speech from Minister of Culture and Art Mehrdad Pahlbod. The congress took place at the Iran Bastan Museum, was accompanied by a number of exhibitions, including one on recent discoveries at Marlik, and a number of receptions were held, one of which was hosted by Pahlbod himself.⁶²² To underscore the significance of this academic occasion on a political level, a stamp was commissioned to commemorate the congress, depicting a find from Marlik.⁶²³ The members of the congress travelled from Tehran to Isfahan and then on to Shiraz, where they took part in a series of discussions at the Pahlavi University, inaugurated with a message from the Shahbanou.⁶²⁴ The political attention this event received served to illustrate the efforts of the regime, not just in promoting Iranian culture, but playing a key role in its propagation.

One significant project which exemplifies this atmosphere of international cultural cooperation, initiated in and focused on Iran, in which Shafa was a key figure, was *Jahān-e Irānshenāsi*, World of Iranology, an encyclopaedia of Iranian studies.⁶²⁵ The initial idea for the encyclopaedia can be dated to the founding of the Imperial Cultural Council in 1963, which identified the need for such a resource.⁶²⁶ Universities and cultural institutes from around the world were asked to provide details of their programmes relating to Iran which were then translated into Persian and included in the volume.⁶²⁷ The correspondence connected to this work reveals the vast network that Shafa had built up over his years in office. Rouhollah Ramazani of the University of Virginia, for example, wrote a detailed letter to Shafa outlining his teaching experience and publication

⁶²¹ 'Archaeology Congress Opens Today', *Kayhan International*, 11 April 1968.

⁶²² Passage from *Tehran Journal*, 11 April 1968, cited in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 509.

⁶²³ Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 516.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 530.

⁶²⁵ Shojaeddin Shafa, *Jahān-e Irānshenāsi* (Tehran, 1969).

⁶²⁶ 'Conseil Culturel Impérial', *Journal de Teheran*, 26 September 1963.

⁶²⁷ The original documents on which the publication was based are contained in the Shafa archives at the Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations in Paris. The US section alone consists of three huge boxes, packed with files full of research and correspondence. To give an impression of the scale of the project, a photograph of the *Jahān-e Irānshenāsi* archives can be seen in *Yādnāmeḥ-ye Shoḡā'eddin Shafā* (2013).

history. He wrote, 'I am personally honored to know of your interest in our program as it relates to Iran and would be happy to see our teaching, research and writing activities on Iran recounted in your Encyclopedia'.⁶²⁸ Echoing Professor Ramazani's pledge of support, the chairman of the University's Department of Government and Foreign Affairs, David Jordan, also stated that he 'would be honored' to be part of the project.⁶²⁹ By all accounts, academics were very forthcoming in providing information for the publication. It is a measure of the position of Shafa within the scholarly community that he was able to command such a response. He was seen as a central figure in the cultural initiatives of the Pahlavi state and a facilitator, and scholars wrote personal notes to him requesting anything from books to conference funding.⁶³⁰ With the publication of the *World of Iranology* and the founding of the Pahlavi Library, Iran was showing itself eager to be seen as the central hub in Iranian studies worldwide, gaining ownership of scholarship and endorsing studies of their own country.

The Second International Congress of Iranology and Scholars at the Anniversary Celebrations

It was always intended that an international congress of Iranian studies would take place for the Anniversary Celebrations, as it had for the Ferdowsi commemoration in 1935, and as the event began to take shape in earnest it was decided that this congress would form an important part of the festivities. Although it was overshadowed by the events at Persepolis and received comparatively little media attention, it remained a vital part of the occasion and scholars, merely by attending, to a certain extent legitimised the Celebrations' narrative. The Iranologists from around the world who took part were treated particularly well and aside from the scholarly gathering at the Pahlavi University in Shiraz, they had their own additional programme of events that ran parallel to the programme for dignitaries.

According to the official programme, scholars from 38 countries attended the congress, not including Israelis, who were officially excluded from the

⁶²⁸ Rouhollah Ramazani to Shafa, 18 February 1970, Shafa Archives.

⁶²⁹ David Jordan to Shafa, 12 February 1970, Shafa Archives.

⁶³⁰ Ferydoon Firoozi based at a university in the United States, for example, wrote a personal letter to Shafa requesting that he send him a copy of volume containing the Shah's collection of speeches in 5,000 pages that he had been unable to attain. See Ferydoon Firoozi to Shafa, 2 February 1970, Shafa Archives.

programme, but were secretly housed in a motel on the outskirts of Shiraz.⁶³¹ The list of attendees included scholars from a wide variety of academic and geographical backgrounds. Among those who attended were Felix Parja of Spain, a Jesuit professor of Islamology and Arabic, and Director of the *Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura* in Madrid,⁶³² the great Hungarian scholar János Harmatta, who was responsible for the decipherment of the Parthian ostraca and papyri of Dura Euopos,⁶³³ and the Austrian theologian Cardinal Franz König, whose research concentrated on Iranian influence upon Judaism.⁶³⁴ Other notable attendees were Phyllis Ackerman, Persian art scholar and wife of Arthur Upham Pope, as well as Ehsan Yarshater and Henri Corbin. Scholars were also invited from countries less widely known for their tradition of Iranian studies, such as Argentina, Brazil, Greece, Syria, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Indonesia. Five Japanese archaeologists were invited, including Namio Egami from the University of Tokyo, who had led expeditions to Iran during the 1950s and 60s.⁶³⁵ Iran was represented by no fewer than 70 scholars, including Issa Sadiq, Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, Iraj Afshar and Sadeq Kia.⁶³⁶

There is little evidence that scholars were pressured into attending the event, and it actually appears as though there was a general eagerness to be part of the occasion. The British academic delegation consisted of: Richard Barnett of the British Museum; John Boyle of Manchester University; Hubert Darke and Ilya Gershevitch of Cambridge University; the former keeper of Oriental antiquities at the British Museum Basil Gray; archaeologist with the British Institute of Persian Studies John Hansman; Bernard Lewis of the School of Oriental and Asian Studies in London; Laurence Lockhart; George Morrison of Oxford University; the retired former professor of the Pahlavi University in Shiraz Reverend Norman Sharp; Director of the British Institute of Persian

⁶³¹ Richard Frye, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 3, p. 35.

⁶³² James T. Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship: Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), p. 235.

⁶³³ Zsigmond Ritook, 'The Contribution of Hungary to International Classical Scholarship', *Hungarian Studies* 12:1-2 (1997), p. 10.

⁶³⁴ X. Tremblay and N. Rastegar, 'Austria ii. Iranian Studies', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2005, available online at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/austria-ii-iranian-studies-in-2>> [accessed 07 June 2017].

⁶³⁵ See for example Namio Egami and Seiichi Masuda, *Marv-Dasht: I: the excavation at Tall-i-Bakun, 1956 and 1959* (Tokyo: The Institute for Oriental Culture the University of Tokyo, 1962). For more on the study of Iran in Japan, see Hisae Nakanishi, 'Iranian Studies in Japan', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987), pp. 131-159.

⁶³⁶ For a complete list of invited scholars, whose names appear in the official programme for the congress, see Appendix A.

Studies David Stronach; and Laurence Elwell-Sutton of Edinburgh University. These were established academics in their fields with notable publications and considerable influence. Not only is there no evidence of coercion from home governments or the Iranian regime, there is ample evidence that academics willing participants. Elwell-Sutton, for example, took the opportunity to travel to Iran with his wife and later wrote a favourable account of his experience,⁶³⁷ and Bernard Lewis declared himself 'delighted to receive an invitation'.⁶³⁸ It may even be that the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder was facilitated by Richard Barnett's eagerness to be invited to the Celebrations.⁶³⁹

Another scholar who was delighted to receive an invitation was Norman Sharp, who arrived in Iran in 1924 as an Anglican missionary, and subsequently founded churches in Yazd (1928), Shiraz (1938), Qalat (1944) and Bushehr (1944).⁶⁴⁰ Sharp was well-respected as an academic as well as a minister of the Church. In 1954 he was appointed to a lectureship in Old Persian at the University of Shiraz.⁶⁴¹ He designed the University arms and their replacement when it changed names in 1962 to become the Pahlavi University, and also the academic robes for a visit to the University by the Shah.⁶⁴² He had already contributed to the Celebrations with his book, *The Inscriptions in Old Cuneiform of the Achaemenian Emperors*, which was published in 1966⁶⁴³ with the support of his friend, the then Minister of Court Hossein Ala.⁶⁴⁴ He had also translated three of the works of Ali Sami into English for the occasion, namely *Pasargadae: The Oldest Imperial Capital of Iran*, *Persepolis* and *Shiraz*. Respect for him in Iran was such that he was invited in 1978 by the Society for the Protection of National Monuments to translate any work of his choice from Persian into English, in light of 'his archaeological attainments and translations

⁶³⁷ See Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations', (1973), pp. 20-25.

⁶³⁸ Bernard Lewis, *Notes On A Century: Reflections of a Middle East Historian* (London: Orion Books Ltd., 2013), p. 184.

⁶³⁹ For the Cylinder loan, see Chapter 4.

⁶⁴⁰ The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996, Gotch Papers, British Museum.

⁶⁴¹ Norman Sharp to Zabih Ghorban, 17 January 1984, Gotch Papers.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.* According to Sharp the design of the emblem was supposed to resemble the 'Door of Knowledge', with Old Persian cuneiform characters inscribed beneath. The words in cuneiform were 'Kharathu', meaning wisdom, and 'Arawasta', meaning activity, two qualities ascribed to Darius the Great.

⁶⁴³ Ralph Norman Sharp, *The Inscriptions in Old Persian Cuneiform of the Achaemenian Emperors* (Tehran: Central Council of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, 1966).

⁶⁴⁴ The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996, p. 16, Gotch Papers.

during his long residence in Iran.⁶⁴⁵ Writing in the preamble to this volume, Houchang Nahavandi declared himself 'sincerely appreciative of the efforts and services of this Iranologist and friend of Iran, for whom the Divine favour is sought.'⁶⁴⁶

Sharp also contributed to the Celebrations by preparing an inscription in Old Persian cuneiform on a stone tablet, cut from the original quarry of the palaces of Cyrus near Sivand, to be displayed in the Shiraz Church. The inscription read, 'God chose Cyrus, and made him king in this earth. May this land of Cyrus be always happy! Honoured be the good name of Cyrus!'⁶⁴⁷ In 1970 however, Sharp had retired back to the United Kingdom and despite his contributions to the occasion he felt that it would 'be a case of out of sight out of mind.'⁶⁴⁸ By September 1971 Sharp still had not received his invitation and wrote to his friend, Paul Gotch, 'I won't get an invitation, for there are so many the Government must ask, and there can't be room for the many who would give anything to be present.'⁶⁴⁹ His excitement was palpable in his next letter on 9 October, when he wrote:

Almost at the last moment the Persian Government have included me among their guests, and with a group of Iranologists, as they are called, I fly direct to Shiraz from Paris on October 11th in a special Iranair plane.

Of course, we cannot discount the possibility that many academics simply wanted to take advantage of a free trip to Iran and felt no connection to the ideology of the occasion whatsoever, but some were clearly pleased to be involved. In his report of the event, Elwell-Sutton makes a special reference to the scholar Gustave von Grunebaum, who, although was suffering from the illness that would shortly take his life, 'was conveyed from one event to another in a wheel-chair'.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁵ Sayyed Mohammad Taqi Mostafavi, *The Land of Pars: The Historical Monuments and the Archaeological Sites of the Province of Fars*, trans. by R.N. Sharp (Chippenham: Picton Publishing, 1978).

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ From the Gotch Papers.

⁶⁴⁸ Norman Sharp to Paul Gotch, 13 November 1970, Gotch Papers.

⁶⁴⁹ Norman Sharp to Paul Gotch, 7 September 1971, Gotch Papers.

⁶⁵⁰ Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations' (1973), p. 22.

There were, however, some notable absentees, for example Ann Lambton,⁶⁵¹ who had fallen out with the Shah over his White Revolution after drawing attention to the shortcomings of his reforms. The Shah did not appreciate these criticisms.⁶⁵² Robert Zaehner at Oxford University also rejected his invitation.⁶⁵³ Another prominent British figure who rejected his invitation was Peter Avery. His was apparently a rejection of the ideology behind the Celebrations. Speaking nearly fifteen years after the event, he said,

A lot of this flew very much in the face of Islamic tradition as well as in the face of historical accuracy. It was a party to which I was invited, but which I did not go to because I couldn't believe that it would be correct for anybody who thought of himself as a historian of Iran to support a so unhistorically, unauthentic event, in terms of history. It constituted a very grave affront to the principles of the nation... As for the P.R., it gave Iran a rather bad image abroad because a good many people did criticize it and didn't like the extravagance and didn't know what it was all about anyway. And for those of us who did know what it was about did, in fact, know who Cyrus was and what the history was and, of course, realized that it was phoney history. So I don't think it achieved very much.⁶⁵⁴

There were possibly other scholars who held such opinions, but perhaps few with the reputation at the time to press the point.

A number of scholars from other countries, too, declined their invitations. In Italy, for instance, three of the ten invited scholars turned down the request to attend. Enrico Cerulli, a scholar and diplomat who had previously served as Italian ambassador in Tehran, declined due to old age and work commitments at the *Accademia dei Lincei*, where he served as president. Giuseppe Tucci, the

⁶⁵¹ For an overview of her remarkable career see, David Morgan, 'Ann K.S. Lambton (1912-2008) and Persian Studies', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 21 (2011), pp. 99-109.

⁶⁵² K.S. McLachlan, 'Professor AKS Lambton', *The Telegraph*, 8 August 2008, available at <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/2524891/Professor-AKS-Lambton.html>> [accessed on 18 September 2016].

⁶⁵³ He had worked with Lambton in the early 1950s during the oil nationalisation crisis, so it is possible that he agreed with her. John Gurney, 'Ann Katharine Swynford Lambton', in *Bibliographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy*, XII (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 258.

⁶⁵⁴ Peter Avery in an interview with Shusha Assar Guppy, Cambridge, UK, 9 and 10 October 1985, Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies, pp. 79-81.

famous Italian archaeologist and adventurer, who headed the Italian committee for the Celebrations, personally informed Shafa that he could not attend. Finally, Gianroberto Scarcia declined because of work commitments at the University of Venice where he taught.⁶⁵⁵ There is no indication that hostility to the event played a part in any of these rejections.

It should be noted that although Peter Avery chose not to attend the event, he did contribute an article to UNESCO's special publication and alluded to one of the Celebrations' ideological principles that stressed cultural integrity in the face of foreign incursion. In the article entitled *Iran: Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 Years*, he wrote:

Seekers of the solutions to the world's problems could have no more generous and perfect hosts than the Iranians, whose courtesy is rightly proverbial and has been almost since time began; but whose long experience as guardians of civilization against the encroachment of desert sands, of rapacious enemies, of chaos and disorderliness makes them more than generous hosts.⁶⁵⁶

In this quotation Avery is careful not to endorse the philosophy behind the event, but does stress the idea of cultural continuity throughout many centuries of adversity. This is not to suggest any inconsistency on behalf of Avery, but merely to illustrate that it was difficult for academics to be completely detached from the Celebrations. There was so much happening in terms of publications, exhibitions, seminars and conferences, not to mention the main ceremonies in Iran, that there were few scholars who did not take advantage of this scholar-friendly atmosphere internationally.

In addition to their attendance at the main festivities, scholars also contributed logistically. The light and sound show at Persepolis, for instance, was developed under the supervision of Giuseppe Tucci in his role as president of IsMEO.⁶⁵⁷ The excavations at Pasargadae, led by David Stronach, whether

⁶⁵⁵ Italian Ambassador to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 Mehr 1350/ 1 October 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 319.

⁶⁵⁶ Peter Avery 'Iran: Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 Years', *The UNESCO Courier*, October 1971, p.9.

⁶⁵⁷ Javad Bushehri to Mr Karouzou, head of the Iran and Italy Cultural Association, 22 Ordibehesht 1347/ 12 May 1968, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 4-5.

deliberately or not, also helped to prepare the site for the Celebrations. In the first major publication of the excavation's findings, Stronach declared his hope that the excavation would contribute to the planned Celebrations, and as a major site for the occasion it was important that work there should be carried out.⁶⁵⁸

The Asia Institute, meanwhile, which had been founded in 1928 by Arthur Upham Pope, and had been re-established as part of the Pahlavi University in Shiraz in 1966, also contributed.⁶⁵⁹ Richard Frye, who took over as head of the institute following Pope's death in 1969, bemoaned in 1971 that the institute's budget had been plundered to fund the event and that it was 'fighting for rials now, not toumans... Everyone is working on the 2500 celebrations and it is like a sickness.'⁶⁶⁰ Frye worked alongside his Iranian colleagues to organise the Congress of Iranology that was to take place in Shiraz, and was also expected to help in other ways, such as by finding translators for dignitaries and media personalities.⁶⁶¹ Organisations such as the Asia Institute relied on the support of the Iranian government, financially and logistically, therefore their support in the Celebrations was expected.

The Western Iranologists who accepted their invitations were flown from Paris to Iran on 11 October by Aer Lingus, the Irish airline, which according to Donald Wilber, who was present as part of the American delegation, 'was hired in the scramble to find enough planes for all of the passengers.'⁶⁶² Despite the 'unsettling discovery' that the flight crew had never actually flown to the Middle East before, the flight arrived safely in Shiraz, after a short stop in Rome to pick

⁶⁵⁸ David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 173.

⁶⁵⁹ Richard Frye, 'Asia Institute', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2011, available at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asia-institute-the-1>> [accessed on 13 September 2016]. Its base was the Naranjestan, a former Qajar palace in Shiraz with 30 rooms, which it was given by Princess Ashraf's son, Prince Shahram, who also provided funds for restoration and repair. See Terence O'Donnell, 'The Naranjestan', in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), pp. 479-480.

⁶⁶⁰ Richard Frye letter to Noël Siver, 7 July 1971, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 564.

⁶⁶¹ Such as US journalist Barbara Walters. Richard Frye in an interview with Shahla Haeri, Cambridge, MA, 10 October 1984, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 3, p. 10.

⁶⁶² Donald Wilber, *Adventures in the Middle East: Excursions and Incursions* (Princeton: Darwin, 1986), p. 233. As well as attending the Congress of Iranology, Wilber contributed to the Celebrations with his publication *Four Hundred Forty-six Kings of Iran* (Shiraz: Pahlavi University, 1972).

up more scholars.⁶⁶³ The scholars were put up in university accommodation and hotels, rather than the sumptuous tent city which was reserved for political representatives. Their programme began on 12 October, with the Shah's speech to the tomb of Cyrus the Great, which effectively served to open the Celebrations. Noteworthy here is that the dignitaries staying at the tent city were not invited to this particular important event, but the foreign academics were, alongside their Iranian colleagues. Indeed, they were seated last but two in the ascending order of precedence, with only religious representatives and members of the cabinet enjoying a higher standing.⁶⁶⁴

The Congress of Iranology began on 13 October with the national anthem, followed by a message from the Shah, echoing his speech to the 1966 congress, delivered by Minister of Court Asadollah Alam.⁶⁶⁵ It read:

The worthiest of our armies have, over the millennia, been those men and women who have kept the torch of knowledge and culture alight in the face of the storms of time and passed it on to posterity with growing brilliance. True victory to us lies in the recognition of this truth, for geographical and military ascendancy is inevitably followed by regression and decline, whereas intellectual and spiritual values never perish in the face of any force.⁶⁶⁶

The speech claimed that the successes of Iran's past were due to the durability of its cultural achievements, rather than its military might. It also made clear the 'exceptional significance' of the congress, since 'the Anniversary Celebration is, above all, the celebration of Iranian history, civilization and culture.' In this vein it was

only natural that the eminent scholars who have devoted their lives to research on the various aspects of our culture and history

⁶⁶³ Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations' (1973), p. 21.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Programme: *World Congress of Iranology*, 13-15 October 1971.

⁶⁶⁶ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, 'An Excerpt from the Message of His Imperial Majesty Shahanshah Aryamehr at the Inauguration of the World Congress of Iranology', *Journal of the Regional Cultural Institute (Iran, Pakistan, Turkey)*, 4 (1971), p. 8.

take a special place in this Celebration and in the hearts of the Iranian people.⁶⁶⁷

Following the speech by Alam, Shojaeddin Shafa read out the programme, after which the Iranologists were invited to offer their best wishes for the occasion.⁶⁶⁸ The theme of the conference was 'The Continuity of Iranian Civilization and Culture' and in the following days 60 papers were presented on a wide variety of subjects, although papers focusing on the Achaemenid period received special attention. The whole event took place in the Pahlavi Auditorium of the Pahlavi University.⁶⁶⁹

The first delegate to address the Congress was the Iranian scholar and vice-chancellor of Tehran University, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, followed by Henri Corbin who discussed Islamic philosophy, and H.S. Nyberg who presented a paper titled 'History and Religion under Cyrus'.⁶⁷⁰ David Stronach presented 'Median and Achaemenid Architecture', George Cameron devoted his paper 'Cyrus and Babylonia' to an analysis of Herodotus' account of Cyrus' campaign of Babylon, and Richard Frye presented a paper entitled 'Continuity of Iranian History'.⁶⁷¹ An additional half-day was added after the congress' formal closing, in order to accommodate all of the papers. There was also a book display exhibiting a number of titles that were published for the Celebrations.⁶⁷²

The gathering was productive in the sense that it gave scholars with expertise on varied subjects and from different countries the opportunity to engage with one another. On one occasion during some free time, for example, David Stronach arranged for a group of scholars to visit a nearby archaeological site. John Hansman of the British Institute of Persian Studies had recently been excavating at Maliyan, which lay on the fertile plain of Bayda and which he proposed to be the city of Anshan.⁶⁷³ Stopped at road blocks, the group of scholars, which included Stronach, Hansman, Roman Ghirshman, Ilya Gershevitch and Richard Frye, claimed to security forces that they were a group

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 7.

⁶⁶⁸ Dandamaev, 'Préliminaire', *Acta Iranica*, vol. 1 (1974), p. 1.

⁶⁶⁹ Programme: *World Congress of Iranology*, 13-15 October 1971.

⁶⁷⁰ 'Cultural Contributions', *Iran Tribune*, November 1971, p. 14.

⁶⁷¹ For an overview of papers see Muhammad A. Dandamaev, 'International Congress of Iranists at Shiraz', in *Acta Iranica*, vol. 1, pp. 3-12.

⁶⁷² Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations' (1973), p. 21. The international shipping of the books from Iran was covered by the event organisers.

⁶⁷³ See John Hansman, 'Elamites, Aghaemenians and Anshan', *Iran*, 10 (1972), pp. 101-125.

of waiters on their way to Persepolis.⁶⁷⁴ They were allowed to pass and investigated the site together. Maliyan is now the accepted site for the city of Anshan, birthplace of Cyrus the Great.

Besides the scholarly conference, the Iranologists took part in an eventful programme of activities. In the late afternoon of 12 October, following the Glorification of Cyrus ceremony, the Iranian and international scholars, together with members of the news media, had an audience with the Shah and Shahbanou during an afternoon tea and cocktail reception at Bagh-e Eram in Shiraz. The reporter for *The New York Times* observed that,

One by one Iranologists from abroad approached the Shah, offering him scrolls and pictures as mementos of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire. He greeted each as personally as if he were in a private salon, switching easily from French to German and Persian to English.⁶⁷⁵

After this reception the Iranologists were taken to Persepolis, where they watched a *son et lumière* performance, the same performance the heads of state would later observe.⁶⁷⁶ The Iranian hosts' attention to detail on this occasion was remembered fondly by Elwell-Sutton, who wrote,

Further reminders here of the Iranian reputation for imaginative hospitality – not only the standard welcoming refreshment, but also blankets to ward off the chilly night air, and miniature bottles of brandy and whisky to keep by one in case the effects of earlier potations should wear off too soon.⁶⁷⁷

Other events included a 'splendid banquet' hosted by the governor-general of Fars, which included a display of traditional dancing.⁶⁷⁸ Following the parade at Persepolis, the Iranologists were given another fine dinner at the Darius Hotel at which, 'in contrast to the delicious Persian fare provided on other occasions, the

⁶⁷⁴ Conversation with David Stronach, 2014, cited in Steele, 'British Persian Studies and Celebrations', 2014, p. 102.

⁶⁷⁵ Carlote Curtis, 'First Party of Iran's 2,500-Year Celebration', *The New York Times*, 13 October 1971, p. 3.

⁶⁷⁶ Programme: *Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, p. 15.

⁶⁷⁷ Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations' (1973), p. 22.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

guests were confronted with a magnificent spread in the best French style'. Elwell-Sutton speculated that these may have been leftovers from the gala dinner of the previous evening, however, he concluded, 'there were no peacocks.'⁶⁷⁹ The Iranologists' schedule also took them to Tehran along with the rest of the guests on 16 October. On 18 October they were received by the Shah at the Sa'dabad Palace, where the venerable French scholar Roman Ghirshman expressed his gratitude to the Shah on behalf of the Iranologists.⁶⁸⁰ For those who were still in Iran, a day trip by plane to Isfahan was arranged on 19 October, which included another impressive meal at the Shah Abbas Hotel. On the following day, the date of departure, each Iranologist was presented with a bronze commemorative medal.⁶⁸¹

It is clear that the Iranologists enjoyed a level of prestige during the Celebrations. Although compared to the monarchs, presidents and emperors in attendance one cannot consider them VIPs per se, they were treated very well. The attendance of scholars offered the Celebrations a degree of legitimacy, but what was the academic merit of the occasion? Any gathering of academics could be considered productive, in the sense that it provides opportunities for discussion and scholarly engagement. The Congress of Iranology was no different, although it was perhaps unique because of its scale and reach, as the organisers sought out some of the most eminent scholars of the world, who between them were said to have published over 4,000 books and articles.⁶⁸² Over 1,000 research papers on Iran were collected, to be published by the Imperial Court's cultural office.⁶⁸³ According to Shafa, these were intended to be sent to research centres around the world and placed at the disposal of students and scholars.⁶⁸⁴

The event organisers were eager to ensure that the Congress of Iranology would have a long-lasting legacy. Following the congress an international committee was established on the initiative of the Imperial Court

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 23.

⁶⁸⁰ According to Shafa there were 400 Iranologists and religious representatives present at this audience. Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2059.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁸² 'Cultural Contributions', *Iran Tribune*, November 1971, p. 14.

⁶⁸³ Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005), p. 46.

⁶⁸⁴ 'Cultural Contributions', *Iran Tribune*, November 1971, p. 14. This does not appear to have happened, and the collected works are thought to have been destroyed following the revolution, lost along with some of the other important collections of the Pahlavi Library. See Farah Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love* (2004), p. 221.

with a view to publishing a number of papers from the conference. The committee, which consisted of Henri Corbin, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, Roman Ghirshman, Giuseppe Tucci and Geo Widengren, met in Tehran in 1972 in order to discuss the project. The project was executed under the title of *Acta Iranica*, the first three volumes of which contain papers presented at Shiraz and other original studies concerning Iranian history. They included papers by those who were not at the congress, such as the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee, who had also published special articles in *Kayhan International* before the Celebrations, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, and John Hinnells, who had convened a conference on Mithraic Studies earlier in 1971.⁶⁸⁵ The *Acta Iranica* series continued after the revolution and by 2015 comprised 57 volumes.

Publications in Iran

During the preparations for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, a special sub-committee was established as part of the Central Council. It was called the *Komisiyon-e Motāle'āt-e Tārikhi-ye Jashn-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān*, Historical Committee of the Imperial Celebrations, and its purpose was to direct the cultural events that took place as part of the commemoration, in a manner 'worthy of the traditions of the past.'⁶⁸⁶ By July 1966 the Historical Committee had met 309 times,⁶⁸⁷ and by September 1970, it had met 886 times, an average of almost three times a week over the four-year period.⁶⁸⁸ Even when the Anniversary Celebrations were repeatedly delayed throughout the 1960s and their future was uncertain, the Historical Committee kept meeting and authorising publications to coincide with the event. The Historical Committee was naturally connected to similar organisations, such as the Committee for Authoring the History of Iran, and various officials and academics were involved, including representatives from the Ministry of Education.⁶⁸⁹ This is important to note, since one purpose of the publications was to educate the Iranian youth and the general public on the history of Iran, or rather the Pahlavi

⁶⁸⁵ This will be discussed at length in Chapter 6.

⁶⁸⁶ Court Minister to Javad Boushehri, 9 Shahrivar 1345/ 31 August 1966, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 143.

⁶⁸⁷ Minutes of the 309th session of the Historical Council, 1 Mordad 1345/ 23 July 1966, *ibid*, pp. 140-143.

⁶⁸⁸ Minutes of the 886th session of the Historical Council, 21 Shahrivar 1349/ 12 September 1970, *ibid*, pp. 143-145.

⁶⁸⁹ Minutes of the 309th session of the Historical Council.

version of history.⁶⁹⁰ The Committee for Authoring the History of Iran, for example, counted among its members two representatives from the department of primary education, the head of publications and deputy director of the Literacy Corps, and a university secretary.⁶⁹¹ Articles published by the Historical Committee in Persian were varied and included titles such as *How to Teach Young People about the Achaemenid Period*, *Influence of Ancient Iran in the Western World*, *Iranian Movements in Early Islamic Iran*, *Music of the Sasanian Period*, and *Iranian Relations with the West During the Safavid Period*.⁶⁹² The publications and other cultural initiatives launched as part of the Celebrations should be seen in the broader context of the development of education and academia that was taking place during this period, as well as the efforts on behalf of the regime to propagate the Pahlavi state ideology.

A series of over 50 articles was published in English, in order to introduce 'various aspects of Iran's history and civilization, with emphasis on Iran today.'⁶⁹³ For instance, fifteen articles covered all the chapters of the White Revolution, and others dealt with the Order of the Red Lion and the Sun. The Historical Committee also published illustrated booklets of around 50-100 pages each on aspects of Iranian civilisation with titles such as *The Society and Civilization of the Parthians* and *The Fine Arts of Iran in the Sasanian Period*.⁶⁹⁴ These were sent to Iranian embassies and international committees for the Celebrations, and were intended to inform international readers of Iranian culture and civilisation, and of the economic development of Iran under the Shah.

⁶⁹⁰ Vice-president of the Central Council for the Celebrations to Minister of Education Dr Hedayat, 26 Dey 1344/ 16 January 1966, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁹¹ Fazl Allah Safā, 'Komiteh-ye Ta'lif-e Tārikh-e Irān', 23 Dey 1344/ 13 January 1966, Shafa Archives.

⁶⁹² 27 titles stated in, Minutes of the 886th session of the Historical Council.

⁶⁹³ 'What we Celebrate – Why we Celebrate', Article number 50 of a series of short articles published for the Celebrations, Tehran, 1971.

⁶⁹⁴ For example, Abbas Parvin, *The Society and Civilization of the Sasanians*; Abbas Parvin, *The Society and Civilization of the Parthians*; Malekzadeh Bayani, *The Fine Arts of Iran in the Sasanian Period*; Shirin Bayani, *Darius the Great*; and Shirin Bayani, *Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Central Council of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, 1971). By late 1970, 28 of these booklets had been commissioned. To give an idea of the cost, Shirin Bayani was paid 8,000 rials (approximately \$107) for her 80-page booklet *Cyrus the Great*. For a list of these booklets and costs, see 'List-e pādāsh-e nevisandegān-e maghālāt dar shorāye markaz-e jashn-e shāhanshāhi' [List of fees for writers of articles], undated, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 263-265.

Publications became an important tool through which to articulate the philosophy of the Celebrations to the Iranian population. For example, 500 copies of a booklet entitled *Shāhanshāh va Irāniān* (The Shah and Iranians), which was published for the Celebrations, were sent to the library of the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, for the use of students.⁶⁹⁵ Teachers from the Order of the Red Lion and Sun were sent to the provinces to teach locals about the importance of the Celebrations and the principles of the White Revolution.⁶⁹⁶ In the months leading up to the event a weekly newsletter was published by the Central Committee in order to inform readers about the Celebrations. These newsletters included information regarding things such as the weaving of the carpets produced for guests and details of members of foreign committees.⁶⁹⁷

Some of the principal academic publications for the Celebrations in Iran were arranged in part by members of the aforementioned cultural organisations. Said Naficy, for example, a former professor of Persian literature who served on the Historical Council, contributed to the University of Tehran's *Historical Atlas of Iran*.⁶⁹⁸ The project began when the Celebrations were first announced in the 1960s and accelerated to completion when the exact date for the occasion was confirmed.⁶⁹⁹ Among other books published by the University of Tehran was the catalogue of an exhibition arranged at the university's library for the Celebrations.⁷⁰⁰ Other universities in Iran also contributed to the Celebrations through publications. The University of Tabriz, for example, had a committee of professors that arranged publications for the occasion. Some of these were translated into other languages, such as *Le Rôle de l'Azarbaïdjan au Cours de XXV Siècles D'histoire de L'empire D'Iran*, which was donated to the committee in 1965 and translated to coincide with the Celebrations in 1971.⁷⁰¹ The

⁶⁹⁵ Minister of Arts and Culture to the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 5 Aban 1350/ 27 October 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 344.

⁶⁹⁶ SAVAK internal report, 30 Farvardin 1350/ 19 April 1971, *ibid*, p. 36

⁶⁹⁷ *Haftahnāmeḥ-ye Komiteh-ye Etela'āt va Enteshārāt-e Jashn-e Dohezar o Pānsadomin Sāl-e Bonyāngozāri-ye Shāhanshāhi*, no. 12, 7 Shahrivar 1350/ 29 August 1971.

⁶⁹⁸ Another contributor to this volume was Mohammad Esma'il Rezvani, one of the five members of the Committee for Authoring the History of Iran.

⁶⁹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, in the foreword to *Atlas-e Tārikhi-ye Irān* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1971).

⁷⁰⁰ Muhammad Shirvani, *Namāyishgāh-e Noskhaha va Asnād-e Khati* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1972).

⁷⁰¹ Manoutchehr Mortazavi, *Le rôle de l'Azarbaïdjan au cours de XXV siècles d'histoire de l'empire d'Iran*, trans. by Mohammad Gharavi (Tabriz: University of Tabriz, 1971).

University of Mashhad published the proceedings of a conference that took place there from 11 until 16 September 1971.⁷⁰²

Works published on the occasion outside of universities included a volume of masterpieces of Kamal al-Mulk and Behzad,⁷⁰³ a collection of 12 articles relating to Iranian history,⁷⁰⁴ a book on 2,500 years of history, culture and art in Iran⁷⁰⁵ and a pictorial survey of 'the glories of ancient Persia and the progress of modern Iran' entitled *The Land of Kings*.⁷⁰⁶ Works were not confined to historical and cultural studies and books were published on a wide range of subjects. Among these books was one on agriculture,⁷⁰⁷ and Zaven Davidian's *Iran in the Service of World Peace*.⁷⁰⁸ One publication that was being arranged when Ansari became involved in the Central Committee for the Celebrations in September 1970, was the reproduction of the *Baysonghori Shahnameh*, a manuscript from the 15th century, preserved in the Imperial Library in Tehran.⁷⁰⁹ Only a limited number were printed and the book was intended to be offered as a gift to guests attending the ceremonies in Iran as a souvenir.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰² Hamid Zarrinkub ed., *Majmu' a-ye Sukhanrāniha-ye Dovvomin Kongreh-ye Tahqiqāt-e Irāni, Mashhad, 11 tā 16 Shahrivar māh 1350* (Mashhad: University of Mashhad, 1973).

⁷⁰³ *Asār-e Kamāl al-Mulk va Behzād* (Tehran: Shurā-ye Markazi-ye Jashn-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān [Central Council for the Celebrations] 1350/1971). This is a slim volume printed with Persian, English and French text.

⁷⁰⁴ *12 Maqāleh: ba monāsebat-e bozorgdāsht-e jashn-e dohezār o pānsadomin sāl-e bonyāngozāri-ye shāhanshāhi-ye irān* (Tehran, 1971).

⁷⁰⁵ Mohammad Javad Bihruzi, *Taqvim-e Tārikhi Farhangi Honari-ye 2500 Saleh-ye Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān* (Tehran: 1971).

⁷⁰⁶ Taverdi and Massoudi eds, *The Land of Kings* (1971).

⁷⁰⁷ *Rāhnāmā-ye Mo'sesāt-e Keshāvarzi va Dāmparvari-ye Novin-e Irān* (Tehran, 1971). Four more volumes were intended to be published on agriculture, including one on the history of agriculture from the Achaemenid to Pahlavi period. See letter Gholam Hossein Massoumi to Central Council for the Celebrations, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 101-103.

⁷⁰⁸ Davidian, *Iran in the Service of World Peace* (1971).

⁷⁰⁹ Basil Gray introduction and commentary, *An Album of Miniatures and Illuminations from the Baysonghori Shahnameh of Ferdowsi* (Tehran: Central Council of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, 1971). The volume was produced at a cost to the Central Council for the Celebrations of 10,448,960 rials (approximately \$140,000), nearly half of which was reimbursed by the Imperial Organisation for Social Services. See kholāseh-ye dariyāfti [Summary of Receipts], 21 August 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 386-388.

⁷¹⁰ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2017), p. 281. Despite the obvious intention to produce a fine work, the quality of the reproduction has been criticised by art historians. Instead of taking high-quality photographs of the original and presenting them, the publishers had water-colour copies made on the basis of photographs. The British Museum's Basil Gray composed the introduction and commentary, but it appears that he was not aware of the procedure followed for the reproductions, or was perhaps misled by his patrons when he wrote that they were 'reproduced in facsimile from the original.' See Robert Hillenbrand, 'Exploring a Neglected Masterpiece: The Gulistan *Shahnama* of Baysunghur', *Iranian Studies*, 43:1, 2010, p. 107.

One of the ways in which the Central Council for the Celebrations was able to acquire such widespread support throughout the country was by encouraging the founding of regional committees. Activities organised by these provincial committees typically included the erection of statues⁷¹¹ and commemorative plaques,⁷¹² exhibitions, parades, parties and other cultural events.⁷¹³ Additionally, negotiations were held with the minority Zoroastrian, Jewish, Armenian and Assyrian communities in order to encourage them to take part in the festivities.⁷¹⁴ In response to this call for support, the Jewish community in Hamadan restored and expanded the site of Esther's tomb in the city for the occasion.⁷¹⁵ Regional committees also prepared publications. The committee of Hamedan published a work entitled *Naqsh-e Hamedān dar Tārikh-e Dohezar o Pānsad Sāleh-ye Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān* (the role of Hamedan in the 2500 year history of imperial Iran), the committee of Kerman published *Yādi az Gozashteh-ye Irān* (Remembering Iran's past) and the Tehran committee published a work on cooperatives entitled *Bahsi Darbāreh-ye Sherkathā-ye Tāvuni*.⁷¹⁶

The organisers also sought to reach out to the general public through the media of cinema and television. Reza Ghotbi, head of National Iranian Radio and Television, served on the Executive Committee and arranged the live screening of the festivities around Iran and the world. Mehrdad Pahlbod, Minister of Arts and Culture, who also served on the Committee, commissioned the production of the Orson Welles-narrated and Farrokh Golestan-produced film *Flames of Persia* (1972). This production was the official film of the

⁷¹¹ For example, a statue of the Shahbanou was constructed in a public park in Shiraz. Anonymous report, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 108.

⁷¹² Displays of the 12 points of the White Revolution were set up in towns and villages across the country.

⁷¹³ Some of these events were funded by local governments and some by private individuals and organisations. In Khorasan, for instance, there was a suggestion that taxes could be increased for a limited period of time to fund local festivities, Amir Mottaqi to Javad Bushehri, 29 Aban 1348/ 20 November 1969, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 154.

⁷¹⁴ 'Sorat-e majles komisiyon-e barnāme va tashrifāt' [parliamentary report of commission for programme and protocol], 12 Aban 1347/ 3 November 1968, *ibid*, p. 151.

⁷¹⁵ Mokhtari, *In the Lion's Shadow* (2011), p. 127. Inside and outside the tomb was put in a state of thorough repair and a tourist centre was constructed. Other contributions from the Jewish Council for the Celebrations included: illumination and decoration of synagogues around the country, with special prayers held there during the principal ceremonies; a special wreath laid at the tomb of Reza Shah; music and dance performances; and the expansion and development of hospitals, schools and colleges. See Jewish Council for the Celebrations to Javad Bushehri, 23 Khordad 1349/ 13 June 1970, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 192-194.

⁷¹⁶ Head of the Committee of Historical Studies, Khān Bābā Biāni, to Javad Bushehri, 2 Khordad 1348/ 23 May 1969, *ibid*, pp. 67-70.

Celebrations and presented a glorified account of the occasion, as one might expect. It was widely distributed by Iranian embassies in foreign countries and was shown over a one-week period in over 60 Tehran cinema houses.⁷¹⁷ Another film released internationally around this time was *Tales from a Book of Kings* (1974), which was produced by Time-Life Inc. in the United States, and was based on poems of the *Shahnameh*. The film ends with a caption thanking the Iranian ambassador in Washington and was declared to be 'in commemoration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great and the First Declaration of Human Rights.'⁷¹⁸ A wide variety of media and cultural tools were used to promote the key tenets of the Celebrations and the Pahlavi state ideology.⁷¹⁹

Conclusion

While the commemorative aspects of the Anniversary Celebrations were concluded within three days, the cultural aspects of the event were longer lasting. As this chapter has shown, the Celebrations were part of a concerted effort on behalf of the Pahlavi regime to improve education and scholarship in Iran. Iran did not merely seek to be a partner to the Iranologists of the world, but it sought to be a leader. During the First International Congress of Iranology in 1967, for example, each panel of specialists was purposefully chaired by an Iranian scholar.⁷²⁰ Through these events Iran was eager to show that it could be the central hub of Iranian studies worldwide, producing academics who could work alongside their international counterparts. When Richard Frye spoke to the Shah about the fourth volume of the Cambridge History of Iran, for instance, the

⁷¹⁷ Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941-1978* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 139.

⁷¹⁸ Hamid Naficy, 'Nonfiction Fiction: Documentaries on Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 12:3/4 (1979), p. 229.

⁷¹⁹ There were talks with foreign film studios about producing a film about Cyrus the Great. See Javad Bushehri to Amir Abbas Hoveyda, 27 Mordad 1348/ 18 August 1969, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 85-86. The idea to produce a film about Cyrus the Great was enthusiastically promoted by Arthur Upham Pope, who wrote in a letter in 1960, 'I suppose the possibility of a general moving picture of the birth and early history of the Achaemenid Empire has been discussed. There are immense possibilities and an enterprising company could do something almost as impressive as *Ben Hur* for one-quarter of the price, and it would be a marked contribution to the culture of our time.' In the letter Pope goes on to make some suggestions as to how the film could be carried out: 'The interest for a while should concentrate on the boyhood and education of young Cyrus, his feats of horsemanship, his being taught to use the bow and speak the truth. One might devise some George Washington-and-the-cherry-tree episode that would show Cyrus resolutely standing up for the truth contrary to inclination or advantage.' See Pope to H. Amir-Ebrahimi, 12 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), pp. 430-432.

⁷²⁰ Text of address to the Congress of Iranology, 1967, Shafa Archives.

Shah expressed his delight that there were Iranian contributors, unlike in previous editions which were dominated by non-Iranian scholars.⁷²¹

This was an effort that began before the Celebrations and continued afterwards. Another International Congress of Iranology was held in Tehran in September 1972 and each year thereafter, and many other conferences took place in the years that followed. The production of books to commemorate special occasions in Iran was also a tradition that began before the Celebrations. In 1967, for example, as part of the coronation celebrations, the *Zafar Nameh* (Record of Conquests), originally written by the court poet of Nader Shah, was published by the Malek Library of Iran.⁷²² The tradition continued after 1971. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the coronation of Reza Shah in 1976, the Pahlavi Commemorative Reprint Series was launched, comprising 50 titles in 63 volumes of rare and important books on various aspects of Iranian culture and history, some of which had been out of print for centuries. It included volumes in Persian, English, German, French, Italian, Latin, Arabic and Russian, and included varied works such as Sir Harford Brydges-Jones' *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia in the Years 1807-11*, Ernst Herzfeld's *Iran in the Ancient West*, and Sir John Chardin's *Le Couronnement De Soleiman*. Through the establishment of numerous committees throughout the 1960s that sought to improve understanding of Iranian culture and civilisation, the Pahlavi regime expressed its dedication to culture and academia.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Pahlavi regime used a wide variety of means to promote knowledge of Iranian culture and civilisation. This had a very clear political purpose, as the Shah's regime sought to promote the central themes of the Pahlavi ideology, based on the strength of the monarchical institution and the continuity and uniqueness of Iranian culture over many centuries. This effort constituted a cultural movement that encouraged the participation of academics both international and domestic. The success of this enterprise was facilitated by Shojaeddin Shafa, who used his position as the Shah's cultural counsellor to build up a vast network of contacts around the

⁷²¹ Richard Frye, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 5, p. 17.

⁷²² The Director of the library sent four copies to the UK, two of which were given to the British Museum and the Bodleian Library. Report from the British Embassy Tehran, 5 December 1967, FO 248/1637.

world, which included individuals and institutions. While some of the commemorative events of the Celebrations were transient, the cultural activities were extensive and had long-term benefits. The primary purpose of such work was to bolster the ideological fabric of the Pahlavi state, but in many cases they also served a genuine scholarly purpose, developing understanding of Iranian culture and civilisation, not just domestically, but internationally too. The extent to which these efforts paid off will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: International Cultural Activity

When Abdolreza Ansari became involved with the organisation of the Anniversary Celebrations in September 1970, he noted that the purpose of the occasion was to stimulate the 'reawakening of the history, civilization, and culture of Iran and creating awareness among the peoples of the world.' The previous two chapters have dealt with official participation in the Celebrations in Iran and the focus on culture and scholarship, but this chapter will discuss the international cultural operation. Often this cultural activity served a political purpose and many academics and cultural institutions, as this chapter will show, were eager to take advantage of the attention that the Celebrations inspired.

Culture can play an important role in international relations and the Celebrations presented many opportunities for states around the world to express their friendship with Iran through cultural activities. During the Celebrations exhibitions were held in museums around the world dedicated to aspects of Iranian civilisation. According to published figures there were 143 exhibitions, 326 congresses, seminars and other academic proceedings, 131 books on various aspects of Iranian civilisation and culture and 37 artistic events held, including poetry readings and ballet, theatre and classical music performances.⁷²³ These events, as will be shown in this chapter, fed into the principal theme of the Celebrations, which stressed over 2,500 years of Iranian cultural integrity in the face of multiple foreign incursions and showed an awareness of Iran's state ideology as well as an appreciation of Iranian culture. Meanwhile, Iranian engagement with established cultural institutions from around the world served to strengthen the Shah's internationalist policies which were at the centre of the Celebrations. By placing Iran within a global cultural and historical context, and by ensuring cooperation with major global institutions, Iran was asserting its position as a significant part of the international community; not merely an economic power, but also civilised and appreciative of the Western intellectual tradition.

Previous chapters have shown that UNESCO played a part in the initial conception of the Anniversary Celebrations and remained a supporter of the

⁷²³ 'Payām-e shāhanshāh āryāmehr, dar tārikh sabt shod', *Rastākhiz*, 19 Mehr 2535 (1355)/ 11 October 1976, p. 12.

event throughout. Shojaeddin Shafa, in his role as cultural counsellor to the Imperial Court, was able to build up a vast international network of institutions and individuals engaged in Iranian studies, and he was duly appointed the head of a separate sub-committee directing international operations. What happened internationally for the Celebrations will be explored in the following chapter. We will see that the focus of the international committees for the Celebrations was primarily cultural. Exhibitions and academic events were organised for many nationalist celebrations in the 20th century, but what made the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations unique was the sheer scale of the international operation.

Exhibitions, Conferences and International Committees

The Pahlavi regime was keenly aware of the usefulness of culture in strengthening bilateral relations and in creating awareness of Iran worldwide. At the opening of an exhibition entitled *Seven Thousand Years of Art in Iran* in Washington in 1965, the Shah said,

This exhibition is undoubtedly the best cultural ambassador we have ever sent to our North American friends. This messenger of culture, I am sure, will be instrumental in establishing spiritual understanding between our two nations and in bringing us closer together.⁷²⁴

Other states were also aware of the good publicity that these events could bring. For example, in 1961 the State Department recommended that Mrs Kennedy should fly to Paris to see the same exhibition, arguing that the publicity generated,

would be highly favourable to us in Iran, whose orientation and destiny are of great importance to us, and in the entire Arab world, especially if the trip were presented solely in the context of Mrs Kennedy's interest in art and history, and not of the cold war.⁷²⁵

⁷²⁴ Quoted in 'A Royal Visit to the United States', *Persian Panorama: Publication of the Imperial Embassy of Iran*, London, 1:3 (1965), p. 62.

⁷²⁵ Quoted in Sabahi, *The Literacy Corps in Pahlavi Iran* (2002), p. 22.

The exhibition was, incidentally, organised in conjunction with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, which were at this point planned for 1961. In the accompanying volume, President Charles De Gaulle declared France 'proud' to arrange this 'human and national testimonial' in the year of the planned festivities.⁷²⁶ There was some discussion about dedicating a similar exhibition in the Netherlands to the Celebrations in 1962, but the Dutch organisers felt that this would be problematic, since it began to emerge around this time that the Celebrations would be postponed.⁷²⁷ Conversely, in Britain an exhibition on the *Turkomen of Iran* in 1971-1972 was listed as being organised as part of the British contribution to the Celebrations, even though that particular event had nothing whatsoever to do with the festivities.⁷²⁸ There was clearly considerable political capital to be gained in arranging these types of cultural activities and the Celebrations presented many opportunities.

The planning of cultural events thus became the principal way in which foreign countries contributed to the Celebrations. From very early on Shojaeddin Shafa was working with cultural institutes from around the world, promoting the Celebrations and encouraging them to take part. Even in the long periods of uncertainty during the 1960s when there was no fixed plan for the Celebrations, Shafa was promoting them around the world as an opportunity to develop understanding of Iranian culture. On 19 June 1964, for example, Shafa attended a dinner in his honour in Rome, at which Professor Giuseppe Tucci expressed his appreciation for Shafa and his interest in 'any initiative relating to cultural exchanges between Iran and Italy.' The Italian scholars who were present also used the opportunity to publically pledge their support for the Anniversary Celebrations.⁷²⁹ Indeed, as stated in Chapter 3, UNESCO explicitly encouraged member states to engage with the Celebrations on a cultural level and until around 1970 when it became clear that foreign dignitaries would be attending, the Celebrations were intended to be primarily a cultural occasion.

The international committees, which were established from the early 1960s, typically consisted of business leaders, political figures and academics.

⁷²⁶ *Sept mille ans d'art en Iran*, Musée du Petit Palais (Paris, 1961).

⁷²⁷ Dutch Ambassador H.J. Levelt to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tehran, 13 September 1962, MinBuZa 2.05.118/14175.

⁷²⁸ Peter Andrews, *The Turkoman of Iran* (Kendal: Titus Wilson and Son, 1971).

⁷²⁹ Report of dinner in Rome, 19 June 1964, Shafa Archives.

For example, the original French committee included Minister of Cultural Affairs André Malraux and Minister of Foreign Affairs Maurice Couve de Murville, alongside renowned scholars Henri Massé and Roman Ghirshman, with Jacques Jaujard, famous for preserving the Louvre's collections during the Second World War, acting as president.⁷³⁰ Among the members of the British committee were Lord Hartley Shawcross, lead barrister at the Nuremburg trials, media tycoon Vere Harmsworth, chairman of BP David Steel, former ambassadors to Iran Sir Denis Wright and Sir Roger Stevens, alongside academics including Sir Max Mallowan, John Boyle and Bernard Lewis.⁷³¹ The German committee consisted of Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt, Minister of Foreign Affairs Walter Scheel and President Gustav Heinemann, along with Director of the Oriental Seminars at the University of Wurzburg Professor Wilhelm Eilers and Director of the University Library in Hamburg Dr H Braun.⁷³²

The Italian committee consisted of 50 members serving in an honorary capacity, with 15 of those serving on the executive committee. This executive committee was headed by Professor Giuseppe Tucci and nine of the remaining fourteen were also scholars, highlighting the significance of scholarship to the committee.⁷³³ The Pakistani committee contained the heads of all major universities and various government ministers, and consisted of a central committee, as well as separate committees for the provinces of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, the North-West Frontier and the provincial government of East Pakistan.⁷³⁴ Programmes organised by these international committees were primarily cultural, yet often served a political agenda, as will be made evident.⁷³⁵

Despite the international attention the Celebrations received, some committees appear to have suffered from lack of leadership. Early in 1970

⁷³⁰ '2,500ème Anniversaire de la Fondation de l'Etat Perse par Cyrus-le-Grand: Comite Francais', Shafa Archives.

⁷³¹ Amir Khosrow Afshar to Denis Greenhill, 'The United Kingdom Committee of Cyrus the Great', 28 September 1971, FCO 17/1528.

⁷³² Listed in Wilhelm Eilers ed., *Festgabe Deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (Stuttgart: Hochwacht Druck, 1971).

⁷³³ 'Comite Italien pour la Celebration de Cyrus', undated, Shafa Archives.

⁷³⁴ *Haftahnāmeḥ-ye Komiteh-ye Etela'āt va Enteshārāt-e Jashn-e Dohezar o Pānsadomin Sāl-e Bonyāngozāri-ye Shāhanshāhi*, no. 12, 7 Shahrivar 1350/ 29 August 1971, p. 6-7.

⁷³⁵ Shafa's chronicle of the Pahlavi dynasty records the establishment of many committees in the months leading up the Celebrations, indicative of the importance the regime ascribed to them. See Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi* (1976), pp. 2005-2060.

Shafa travelled around Europe to discover the progress being made internationally with regards to the Celebrations. He concluded that although countries had been quick to establish committees, since that time 'little positive work has been done.' Although Shafa found, through 'personal acquaintance with members of committees in most countries' that academics had shown 'great interest and willingness to participate', they suffered from a lack of central direction.⁷³⁶ To overcome these problems, it was proposed that the Imperial Cultural Council would take on more of a leading role in the organisation of the international cultural operation. It should be remembered that from the time the Celebrations were first announced, they had been postponed three times. It might have been difficult to maintain enthusiasm for the occasion for ten years. In spite of these problems, by October 1971 each committee had put together a commemoration for the Celebrations.

Programmes arranged abroad by the international Cyrus the Great committees included exhibitions, publications, parades, academic conferences and much more. For example, in Pakistan along with street parades lauding the Shah⁷³⁷ an illustrated catalogue was published entitled *Iran and Pakistan: The Story of a Cultural Relationship through the Ages*.⁷³⁸ The Canadian committee, headed by Jean-Paul Deschatelets, President of the Senate, organised a week of cultural activities in June 1971, which was initiated by the Shahbanou during her visit to Canada that month.⁷³⁹ There was a special series of talks arranged by the Polish Oriental Society at the University of Warsaw⁷⁴⁰ and among the exhibitions arranged around the world was one on 2,500 years of Iranian coinage at the National Gallery in Prague,⁷⁴¹ one at the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels that ran from 10-19 December 1971, entitled *De Iraanse*

⁷³⁶ Shojaeddin Shafa to Asadollah Alam, 8 Khordad 1349/ 29 May 1970, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), pp. 156-159.

⁷³⁷ Richard Escritt to Richard Fell, 2 November 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁷³⁸ Ahmad Nabi Khan, *Iran and Pakistan: The Story of a Cultural Relationship through the Ages* (Karachi: National Publishing House, 1971).

⁷³⁹ See introduction to Adams ed., *Iranian Civilization and Culture* (1973).

⁷⁴⁰ See Bogdan Skladanek, 'The Structure of the Persian State', in *Acta Iranica*, vol. 1 (1974) pp. 117.

⁷⁴¹ Jarmila Stěpková, *2500 let íránského mincovnictví* (V Praze: Narodni galerie, 1971).

Kunst in de Belgische Verzamelingen (Iranian Art in Belgian Collections),⁷⁴² and an exhibition on early Iranian art at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.⁷⁴³

At the 28th International Congress of Orientalists at Canberra, Australia, in January 1971, congress members were invited to give the Celebrations 'all their support in the cultural domain by giving lectures and organizing exhibitions in their own countries.'⁷⁴⁴ Academics were encouraged to organise events dedicated to the Anniversary Celebrations, and many did. The Canadian committee, for example, sponsored a conference on Iranian Civilization and Culture at the University of Toronto, organised by Professors Roger Savory and Charles Adams.⁷⁴⁵ From 27 to 30 September in Leningrad there was a conference on Iranian history and culture, and other such academic events were held in Moscow and other cities in the USSR.⁷⁴⁶ At least two conferences were held in India; in New Delhi⁷⁴⁷ and in Bombay.⁷⁴⁸ A series of special lectures was held at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia on Iranian history and culture along with a series of publications on the subject,⁷⁴⁹ and the University of Tunis established a chair of Persian language to coincide with the Celebrations.⁷⁵⁰

These were scholarly events, yet with a clear political agenda. For example, in the forewords of the publication of a German academic conference on Iranian history entitled *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (A Commemorative Publication of German Iranologists for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations of Iran), President Gustav Heinemann stressed the importance of German contributions to the field of Iranian studies and the ambassador to Germany, Hossein-Ali Loghman-Adham, echoed the claim that 'it has always been the German scholars who have done the pioneering work in

⁷⁴² Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, *De Iraanse Kunst in de Belgische Verzamelingen* (Bruxelles: Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, 1971).

⁷⁴³ Musée de l'Homme, *Iran: Hommes du vent, gens de terre* (Paris: Musée de l'Homme, 1971).

⁷⁴⁴ Quoted in Shafa, *Facts about The Celebration* (1971) p. 21.

⁷⁴⁵ Adams ed., *Iranian Civilization and Culture* (1973).

⁷⁴⁶ Dandamaev, 'Préliminaire', in *Acta Iranica*, vol. 1 (1974), pp. 1-2.

⁷⁴⁷ Ram, Malik and S. Balu Rao eds., *Indo-Iran: Papers Presented at the Congress of Iranologists and Indologists, New Delhi, On the Occasion of the 25th Millennium of the Founding of Monarchy in Iran, 4-6 October, 1971* (New Delhi: Indo-Iran Society, 1974).

⁷⁴⁸ *Kurus: Memorial Volume: Essays on Indology and Indo-Iran Relations in Memory of Cyrus Celebration Held in the City of Bombay on 2500th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Persian Empire* (Bombay: The House, 1974).

⁷⁴⁹ Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), p. 2057.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2056.

the area of Iranian Studies.⁷⁵¹ Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt, also writing in the preamble to the work, said:

The work that you have in front of you bears testimony to the open-minded interest of the German Iran scholars in the past and present of the Iranian Empire. They have thereby made an important contribution to the deepening of our understanding of the history of Iran and its development into a modern state. For our Iranian friends, this work can serve at the same time as a demonstration of the respect we have for their country, and as an expression of our will to maintain and stimulate the traditional German-Iranian friendship.⁷⁵²

Similarly, the proceedings of the congress in New Delhi included messages from President V.V. Giri, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Iranian Minister of Culture Mehrdad Pahlbod, who stated that India with its 'longest and sincere' relations with Iran, 'has a right and proper place to celebrate this occasion with great gusto and zeal.'⁷⁵³ An exhibition in Pakistan was said to be a 'symbol of the bonds of love and affection which have existed between the people of Pakistan and Iran through the ages, and which continue to grow closer and stronger day by day.'⁷⁵⁴

In the Netherlands a ceremony was held at the Hall of Knights in The Hague on 14 October to coincide with the main festivities in Iran. Professor Arie Kampman delivered a lecture on Cyrus the Great to the 600 guests, which included Queen Juliana, Princess Beatrix and Prince Claus, along with the Iranian ambassador and the ambassadors to the Netherlands of 40 other countries. Queen Juliana was presented with a special edition of the Society Holland-Iran journal *Persica*, and a film was shown about Iran chosen by the *Maison de L'Iran*.⁷⁵⁵ The event was an interesting synthesis of cultural and political activity, as well as royal ceremony, and it is a measure of the growing

⁷⁵¹ Eilers ed., *Festgabe Deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (1971), p. viii.

⁷⁵² *Ibid*, vii.

⁷⁵³ See foreword to Ram and Rao eds., *Indo-Iran* (1974).

⁷⁵⁴ Mumtaz Hasan, in the foreword to Mohammad Ashraf, *Persian Manuscripts in the National Museum of Pakistan at Karachi* (Karachi, 1971).

⁷⁵⁵ 'Report on the activities of the Working Committee of the Cyrus the Great Committee in the Netherlands: June - December 1971', pp. 1-3, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

international influence of Iran that it was able to inspire such high-level political interest.

Britain was also a keen participant. Among the events held there was a lecture by Max Mallowan to the Iran Society about Cyrus the Great,⁷⁵⁶ and a seminar on Iran at Beveridge Hall in London, with talks by the Iranian ambassador at UNESCO Fazlollah Reza, John Boyle of the University of Manchester and art historian Basil Gray.⁷⁵⁷ One seminar at the University of London was hosted by the Royal Asiatic Society, with its president in the chair.⁷⁵⁸ Exhibitions also took place at the British Museum and the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.⁷⁵⁹ Writing in the preamble to the British Museum's exhibition that ran from 29 October 1971 until 30 January 1972, Sir John Wolfenden, the Museum's director, stated:

This present exhibition is offered to His Imperial Majesty The Shahanshah and his people as the British Museum's contribution to this historic occasion... We hope that it will be taken as illustrating some of the events in Persia's long history and the achievements of her most illustrious rulers in the execution of their kingly office and in the fostering of learning and the arts.⁷⁶⁰

The British committee also wrote to the Bodleian Library in Oxford to invite it to hold a special exhibition, but was rejected since the library would be hosting the Sixth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology the following year.⁷⁶¹ The BBC arranged a poetry competition in which people were invited to submit poems based on the theme of 'Iran's Cultural Heritage', as part of a Festival of Poetry to mark the Anniversary Celebrations. The winners of the competition, Iranian poets Ahmad Kamal and Mehdi Hamidi, were invited to

⁷⁵⁶ Subsequently published by the British Institute of Persian Studies and as a chapter of the Cambridge History of Iran, see Max Mallowan, 'Cyrus the Great', *Iran*, 10 (1972), pp. 1-17; and Max Mallowan, 'Cyrus the Great' in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 2, ed. by Ilya Gershevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 392-419.

⁷⁵⁷ 'List of events in the United Kingdom and Ireland in celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great', 28 September 1971, FCO 17/1528.

⁷⁵⁸ 'Anniversary Meeting', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2 (1972) p. 183.

⁷⁵⁹ 'List of events in the United Kingdom and Ireland', 28 September 1971, FCO 17/1528.

⁷⁶⁰ Sir John Wolfenden in Ralph Pinder-Wilson, *Royal Persia: A Commemoration of Cyrus the Great and His Successors* (London: British Museum, 1971), p. iii.

⁷⁶¹ Robert Shackleton to Robin Campbell, 24 May 1971, FCO 17/1528.

Britain at the behest of the BBC on a 10-day trip in order to read their poems on air.⁷⁶²

The most extensive programme of exhibitions and events was held in the United States. In writing to the Iranian embassy in Washington in 1960, the renowned Iran expert Arthur Upham Pope argued that,

it is of outstanding importance that the presentation to the American people of this occasion should stress the fact that it is not merely an episode in Persian history, but a very great event in the history of civilization.⁷⁶³

In order to achieve this, Pope was charged with forming the American committee,⁷⁶⁴ which was eventually chaired by First Lady Pat Nixon, and had more than 200 members in total, including all ministers and governors, and more than 100 cultural and artistic personalities.⁷⁶⁵ It was the largest of any international committee and Shafa noted that the 'enthusiasm with which the Americans participated in the Celebrations was unprecedented'.⁷⁶⁶ The exhibitions held were numerous and contributing museums included The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which displayed miniatures from Shah Tahmasp's *Shahnameh*; The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which gave a display of Iranian dishes, tiles and textiles; Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, which presented Iranian handicrafts; The Philadelphia Museum of Art, which presented its collection of Iranian carpets and other Islamic art; The Museum of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, which held a special exhibition on Iranian civilisation; The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, which displayed its collection of ancient Iranian statues and sculptures; the M.H. de Young Museum in San Francisco, which exhibited art from the Islamic period; The Detroit Institute of Arts, which exhibited its collection of Persian miniatures; and The Seattle Art Museum in Washington State, which displayed its collection of Iranian textiles, handicrafts and vessels.⁷⁶⁷ The Corning Museum of Glass in

⁷⁶² Letter BBC Persian Programme Organiser John Dunn to British Embassy, Tehran, 27 September 1971, FCO 17/1528.

⁷⁶³ Arthur Upham Pope to Amir Ebrahimi, 4 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 427.

⁷⁶⁴ Pope to Jay Gluck, 12 December 1960, *ibid.*, p. 426.

⁷⁶⁵ Shafa interview, 'jashnhā-ye dohezar o pānsad sāleh' (2011), p. 191.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

New York held an exhibition in the spring and summer of 1972 in honour of the Celebrations, entitled *A Tribute to Persia: Persian Glass*⁷⁶⁸ and the Textile Museum in Washington held one entitled *From Persia's Ancient Looms*.⁷⁶⁹ It appears that any museum that owned any Iranian artefacts was encouraged to host a special exhibition at this time.

Events with Persian food and music were also arranged in various cities across the United States, which were called Persepolis Nights. The State of Utah even named 22 July 1971 'Iran Day', in a motion which was passed in the Senate.⁷⁷⁰ Other events took place at universities across the country. At New York State University, for example, an eight-week programme of activities was launched which included lectures, slide shows, discussions and films on Iranian history and culture.⁷⁷¹ The Iranian Embassy in Washington was eager to stress its approval of these cultural contributions. Writing a letter to the University of Pennsylvania to congratulate it on its publication of a series of articles on Iranian archaeology, Ambassador Aslan Afshar stated that the 'outstanding publication... will play a leading role in the United States commemoration' of the Celebrations. He further stated his wish that the Celebrations would 'renew and reaffirm the great friendship between Iran and the United States.'⁷⁷² The Iranian Embassy, for its part, donated Persian language textbooks to universities with special Persian language courses, such as Princeton, Chicago, Pennsylvania and Texas.⁷⁷³ As a gesture of goodwill, Ambassador Afshar was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Utah, as well as a key to the city of Los Angeles, Tehran's sister city.⁷⁷⁴ At the October festivities in Iran, the mayor of Tehran, Gholamreza Nikpay, accepted a gold medallion from the mayor of Los Angeles, Sam Yorty, bearing the image of the Cyrus the Great and the official emblems of Iran and the United States.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁶⁸ *A Tribute to Persia: Persian Glass* (Corning: Corning Museum of Glass, 1972).

⁷⁶⁹ *From Persia's Ancient Looms: An exhibition in honor of the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, 23 January-30 September 1972, under the patronage of His Excellency, the Ambassador of Iran and Mrs. Aslan Afshar (Washington D.C.: Textile Museum, 1972).

⁷⁷⁰ Shafa interview, 'jashnhā-ye dohezar o pānsad sāleh' (2011), pp. 191.

⁷⁷¹ 'Centenary fires world interest', *Kayhan International*, 3 April 1971, p. 3.

⁷⁷² Letter Aslan Afshar to Froelich G. Rainey, 27 July 1971, in *Expedition*, 13:3-4 (August 1971), p. 3.

⁷⁷³ Shafa interview, 'jashnhā-ye dohezar o pānsad sāleh' (2011), pp. 191.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁵ 'The Shahyad Monument', *Iran Tribune*, p. 42.

These exhibitions did not necessarily promote the message of the Anniversary Celebrations, which stressed 2,500 years of unbroken continuation of monarchy, but they did propagate the idea of Iran as a distinct cultural space. Most of these exhibitions were arranged by institutions with the support of their governments, however Iran sometimes offered support. The Iranian government itself organised an exhibition in Montreal, which included precious items from the National Museum of Iran, the Imperial Library, the Jewellery Museum, and from private collections.⁷⁷⁶ Expenses for the exhibition, which amounted to nearly \$680,000, including transport costs and the preparation of the site, were borne by Iran. An Iranian, Ali Akbar Dibaj, was chosen to oversee the mission.⁷⁷⁷

The Iranians were also keen to loan items from their collections to other exhibitions, including one at the Hermitage in Leningrad,⁷⁷⁸ and a special quota of items was arranged for any European committee that intended to organise an exhibition on Iranian fine arts and handicrafts. Items would first be sent to the headquarters of the European committees for the Celebrations at the *Maison de L'Iran* in Paris, and distributed from there.⁷⁷⁹ The Ministry of Culture and Arts prepared a slideshow of 37,200 slides in 60 series, of monuments and artefacts of Ancient Iran, to be distributed to Iranian Embassies around the world.⁷⁸⁰ Mehrdad Pahlbod stated that the aim was to help students abroad understand the Celebrations and Iranian history.⁷⁸¹ The Iranian embassy in Washington launched a publication, entitled *Vox Persica*, to inform American readers about Iranian culture and civilisation.⁷⁸²

One interesting case of Iranian support of activities abroad was the Congress of Mithraic Studies held in Manchester from 13 to 20 July 1971. It had long been planned by John Hinnells and Professor Sir Harold Bailey, yet almost at the last minute Shojaeddin Shafa, who had become aware of the plans

⁷⁷⁶ Mahmud Kashfiyān to Minister of Economy, 1 Ordibehesht 1350/ 20 April 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 38; Mehdi Boushehri to Mehrdad Pahlbod, 2 Ordibehesht 1350/ 21 April 1971, *ibid*, pp. 40-41.

⁷⁷⁷ Abdolreza Ansari to Ardeshir Zahedi, 6 Ordibehesht 1350/ 25 April 1971, *ibid*, p. 47.

⁷⁷⁸ SAVAK internal report, 21 Ordibehesht 1350/ 11 May 1971, *ibid*, pp. 59-60.

⁷⁷⁹ Abdolreza Ansari to Houshang Ansary, 1 Tir 1350/ 22 June 1971, *ibid*, p. 117.

⁷⁸⁰ Mehrdad Pahlbod to Ministry of Information, 7 Shahrivar 1350/ 29 August 1971, *ibid*, p. 227.

⁷⁸¹ Pahlbod to Ardeshir Zahedi, 27 Mordad 1350/ 18 August 1971, *ibid*, pp. 213-214.

⁷⁸² Shafa interview, 'jashnhā-ye dohezar o pānsad sāleh' (2011), pp. 191-193.

through Richard Frye, offered Iranian support.⁷⁸³ This support included funding trips for the delegates to go to Mithraic sites on Hadrian's Wall and two receptions during the conference, plus a grant for the publication of the proceedings through the University of Manchester Press.⁷⁸⁴ The sole conditions for the funding were that the Iranian ambassador, Amir Khosrow Afshar, be invited, and that the proceedings be dedicated to the Shahbanou as part of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, both of which the organisers were happy to go along with.⁷⁸⁵ Hinnells recorded his gratitude in the conference proceedings:

It is my personal pleasure to record formally the deep gratitude of all involved in the First Congress to the Imperial Pahlavi Library for bestowing upon that Congress the honour of official incorporation into the Twenty-fifth Centenary Celebrations of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great... Without such support the venture could not have proceeded as it did or have achieved whatever success it did.⁷⁸⁶

With the success of the first congress, the organisers were invited to convene the second congress in Tehran in September 1975 under the patronage of the Shahbanou, who personally addressed the members of the congress and received them at the Imperial Residence.⁷⁸⁷ The Imperial Court even funded the publication of the *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, which ran successfully until the revolution. Critics of the Celebrations might suppose that any promotion of Ancient Persia would seek to strengthen the regime's ideological connection to Cyrus the Great's empire, however this was clearly not always the case. What this episode makes clear is that the Celebrations were used as an opportunity to engage with and support cultural and academic initiatives around the world, whatever period of Iranian history they were dedicated to.

Alongside participation in their own countries, there was considerable interest from some governments in arranging events inside Iran during the

⁷⁸³ Personal Correspondence with John Hinnells, December 2013, cited in Steele, 'British Persian Studies and Celebrations', 2014, p. 104.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ John Hinnells in the introduction to *Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, ed. by John Hinnells (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1975), pp. xiii-xiv.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁷ Ugo Bianchi, 'The Second International Congress of Mithraic Studies, Tehran, September 1975', *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, 1:1, p. 77.

Celebrations. There were preliminary discussions by the Dutch Government to have the Concertgebouw Orchestra perform in Iran, and the Berliner Symphony Orchestra and Vienna Symphony Orchestra were also suggested by their respective governments.⁷⁸⁸ A more obscure request was made directly to the Dutch Embassy in Tehran by The Hague Balloon Club for the 'largest Dutch balloon' to travel to Iran during its tour of Asia in 1971. The letter continued:

As the Shah is preparing a celebration, it could be a unique opportunity for your relations, for television reporters, and the photographic press to experience an ascent in the large round Dutch ship.⁷⁸⁹

The ambassador, unsurprisingly perhaps, responded that it would probably not be possible for any balloon flights to take place in Iran during the Celebrations.⁷⁹⁰ In general, foreign contributions to the programme were kept to a minimum, with a small number of exceptions. For instance, in April 1969 the Protocol Department of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited army musical bands to participate in the festivities.⁷⁹¹ As a result a number of foreign military groups performed at the opening of the Shahyad Monument and at the inauguration of the Aryamahr Stadium.⁷⁹² It appears that were it not for some logistical and financial limitations then the Celebrations might have been implemented on a much larger scale.

Participation was, in part, driven by competition and each foreign committee tried hard to make a noteworthy contribution that stressed its dedication to Iran. The Germans, as already mentioned, emphasised the importance of their unique contributions to Iranian studies. The Dutch were also eager to stress that the type of event that took place at the Hall of Knights formed a 'unique contribution to the commemoration outside Iran.'⁷⁹³ Pakistan declared a national holiday to mark the Anniversary Celebrations, symbolising

⁷⁸⁸ Head of Bureau of General Information and Events, Ms. S Dörr, to Dutch ambassador in Tehran, 1 April 1970, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554; and C.D.S. Drace-Francis, British Embassy, Tehran, to M.L. Dooley, Cultural Relations Department, Foreign Office, 15 October 1970, FCO 248/1708.

⁷⁸⁹ J. Boesman-Vorrz, Foundation of Scientific and Sportive International Balloonflight, to Dutch Embassy in Tehran, 23 July 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁷⁹⁰ Jonker to Balloon Club of The Hague, 3 August 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁷⁹¹ Protocol Department of the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Dutch Embassy Tehran, 30 April 1969, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁷⁹² See Chapter 3.

⁷⁹³ 'Report on the activities of the Working Committee', p 3, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

its friendly relations with Iran,⁷⁹⁴ while the Italian committee named a street in Rome after Cyrus the Great.⁷⁹⁵ A number of countries, including Belgium, Italy, Oman, the UAE, Turkey and Tunisia, produced special commemorative stamps to mark the occasion. The government of South Africa inaugurated the Reza Shah Museum in Johannesburg on 13 October to coincide with the main festivities in Iran.⁷⁹⁶ In the Vatican a conference was held on the subject of 'Cyrus the Great and 25 centuries of Iranian civilisation', attended by around 500 cardinals and political figures.⁷⁹⁷ In Rabat a programme of Iranian music and dancing was organised,⁷⁹⁸ and in Indonesia a competition was held inviting participants to compose poems and songs about Cyrus the Great and the Celebrations.⁷⁹⁹ It is clear that there was something to gain by making a contribution to the Celebrations, the more enthusiastic and imaginative the better.

The British Council Contribution

A clear example of the politicisation of cultural activity can be observed in the contribution of the British Council to the Celebrations. The British Council was founded in 1934 by the British Foreign Office, with the aim of countering German and Italian propaganda through its own programme of cultural activities abroad.⁸⁰⁰ The stated purpose of the Council was to promote British language and culture overseas in order to develop 'closer cultural relations between the United Kingdom and other countries, for the purpose of benefitting the British Commonwealth of nations.'⁸⁰¹ The British Council has a rather distinct status; its primary source of funding is the Foreign Office, yet it is deemed autonomous on an operational level. The perceived independence of the organisation is important to how it functions. As Robert Phillipson has noted, 'The ideological significance of the notion of autonomy is that it serves to strengthen the myth

⁷⁹⁴ Houchang Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005), p. 45.

⁷⁹⁵ 'Centenary', *Kayhan International*, 5 June 1971. The street in Rome is in the EUR district and is called Via Ciro Il Grande. Brazil also pledged to name a major street after Iran and an 'important school' after Cyrus the Great. See *The Echo of Iran*, 27 July 1971, p. 1.

⁷⁹⁶ Shafa, *Gāhnāmeḥ-ye Panjāh Sāl-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Pahlavi*, vol. 5 (1976), pp. 2054-2055.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 2046.

⁷⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2047.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2044. There were two prizes of 75,000 Indonesian rupees (around \$190).

⁸⁰⁰ Maryam Borjian, 'The Rise and Fall of a Partnership: The British Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran (2001-2009)', *Journal of Iranian Studies*, 44:4 (2011), p. 545.

⁸⁰¹ Annual Report 1940-1941, quoted in Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 138-139.

that the Council's work is non-political.⁸⁰² In spite of the claim of self-sufficiency, the Council simply could not function 'unless it was attuned to the needs of government and to relevant sectors of private business.'⁸⁰³

The primary focus of the British Council has been to influence local populations through the promotion of the English language. Sir Reader Bullard, British ambassador to Tehran during the Second World War, wrote that promoting English 'give[s] us contact with the younger generation and an opportunity to influence them in a pro-British direction.'⁸⁰⁴ Though the Council was primarily a cultural organisation, it remained closely tied, particularly through direct funding, to the Foreign Office and, as such, there was a clear political dimension to its activities. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations provided a good opportunity for the Council to advance British cultural and political interests in Iran; an opportunity that it was eager to take advantage of.

The British Council had intended to send the London Symphony Orchestra to perform during the festivities. The composer Sir Arthur Bliss had initially accepted a commission of \$1,000 from Iran to compose a special piece for the Celebrations, but pulled out due to old age and lack of inspiration.⁸⁰⁵ The Oil Consortium contributed £2,500 to the proposed concert, but the British Council was unable to afford to pay the orchestra the 'customary fee' of £6,000. Ambassador Denis Wright wrote to Iranian Minister of Culture and Arts Mehrdad Pahlbod, asking if Iran would pay this fee.⁸⁰⁶ Pahlbod responded that while Iran was willing to support foreign performers while staying in Iran, 'payment of the fees... is not possible.'⁸⁰⁷ He did, however offer to bring the orchestra to Iran at a future date to perform at the Rudaki Hall.

In the lead up to the Celebrations the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Arts invited several countries to organise exhibitions in Iran as part of the occasion. It was decided that the British Council would arrange two exhibitions, including one of the work of Henry Moore, which toured the main centres of the Council before the Celebrations, 'so that it would not be overshadowed by the actual

⁸⁰² Ibid, p. 142.

⁸⁰³ Ibid, p. 143.

⁸⁰⁴ Quoted in Sreberny and Torfeh, *Persian Service* (2014), p. 45.

⁸⁰⁵ Report from C.D.S. Drace-Francis, 22 October 1970, FCO 248/1708.

⁸⁰⁶ Denis Wright to Mehrdad Pahlbod, 7 August 1970, FCO 248/1708.

⁸⁰⁷ Pahlbod to Wright, 19 August 1970, FCO 248/1708.

celebrations in October.⁸⁰⁸ Henry Moore was chosen as a subject for the exhibition because apart from a few museums in Tehran, 'little was known about the facilities for showing original works of art in Iran.'⁸⁰⁹ Despite a 'most successful'⁸¹⁰ opening two weeks in Tehran, from 5 until 23 May, the rest of the tour, in Isfahan (12 to 24 June) and Shiraz (23 August to 4 September) suffered from 'dismally low' attendance figures.⁸¹¹ There was clearly little enthusiasm for Henry Moore's art in Iran and one report describes the guests as 'baffled'⁸¹² by the works on display.⁸¹³

The Council's second exhibition was *British Contributions to Persian Studies*, which opened at the Iran Bastan Museum on 19 October 1971, and thereafter toured the country until spring 1972. The opening of the exhibition took place during the Celebrations and was made memorable by an address by Isa Sadiq, who 'evoked memories of E.G. Browne and other noted British scholars.'⁸¹⁴ To have Sadiq speak at the opening of the event offered it legitimacy. As an educator, he helped to establish Tehran University in 1935 and Tabriz University in 1947, was involved in the renovation of Shiraz University in 1964, served as Minister of Education for six terms and held a lifetime appointment to the Iranian Senate.⁸¹⁵ In addition, he was a distinguished scholar, having worked at Cambridge University during the First World War, under the supervision of Browne.⁸¹⁶

The exhibition itself consisted of a series of 50 panels charting the contributions Britain had made to the study of Iran over the past 400 years.⁸¹⁷ It included panels on: numismatics; travel, history and the pioneer archaeologists; and ancient history and modern archaeology. It also included sections on academic institutions in Britain, namely those at Cambridge, Oxford,

⁸⁰⁸ FAAC (72) 1, 1971, p.8, BW 49/31.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid, p. 9.

⁸¹¹ Ibid.

⁸¹² Ibid.

⁸¹³ After Iran it moved to Istanbul where attendance figures were much higher, though still rather low by Istanbul standards. Ibid, p. 10. The Australian government also proposed to hold an exhibition in Iran on the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook as part of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. See Report from J.G. Bruton, 1971, BW 49/31.

⁸¹⁴ David Stronach, 'Director's Report November 1st 1970 to October 31st 1971', *Iran*, 10 (1972), p. xi.

⁸¹⁵ Mottahadeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (1987), p. 64.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid, p. 55.

⁸¹⁷ Stronach, 'Director's Report', *Iran*, 10 (1972), p. xi.

Manchester, Durham, Edinburgh and SOAS. A book was published in conjunction with the British Institute of Persian Studies to accompany the exhibition, which included articles by Sir Max Mallowan, David Stronach, David Blow, Basil Gray and Gavin Hambly.⁸¹⁸ The propaganda purposes of such a publication were clear and in harmony with the Council's *raison d'être*.

Along with the main centres of the Council, the exhibition also travelled to Ahwaz. It was opened there on 11 March 1972 by the British Council Deputy Representative and the Director of Management Services of the Iranian Oil Exploration and Production Company. Also in attendance was the Governor-General of Khuzestan province.⁸¹⁹ Ahwaz was expanding rapidly during this period, benefiting from the expansion of the Iranian oil industry, and the British Council had identified it as a potential location for the establishment of a new Council centre. The population of Ahwaz was around 300,000, yet was expected to reach half a million within a matter of years and within a decade was expected to overtake Tabriz as the second most populous city in Iran.⁸²⁰ With growing foreign investment in Khuzestan province, the merits of advancing the English language in the region were obvious. In this context, the *British Contributions to Persian Studies* exhibition sought to endear the local political establishment to the idea of a new Council centre, developing relationships that would facilitate the operation.

How successful were these exhibitions in realising the political and cultural objectives of the British Council? The showing of original British art in the Henry Moore exhibition certainly fitted within the framework of the dissemination of British culture, although the local population's appreciation of it was somewhat underwhelming. In spite of this, the Shahbanou, at the opening of the exhibition in Tehran, did purchase one Henry Moore piece and her attendance ensured enthusiastic publicity in the local media.⁸²¹ The *British Contributions to Persian Studies* exhibition appears to have been more successful overall and was certainly more in tune with what other countries

⁸¹⁸ Max Mallowan et al., *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1971). In 1942, during the British Council's formative years in Iran, Arthur Arberry had also written a book entitled *British Contributions to Persian Studies*, published by the Council. See Arthur J Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (London: The British Council, 1942).

⁸¹⁹ Report on visit to Ahwaz by Deputy Representative, 10-12 March 1972, BW 49/31.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸²¹ FAAC (72) 1, p. 9, BW 49/31. The piece is called the 'Working Model for Oval with Points' and is currently held at the Museum for Contemporary Art in Tehran.

were doing. Italy, for example, arranged a similar touring exhibition in 1971, consisting of a photographic display of Italian excavations and restorations in Iran.⁸²² Ramsbotham's 1972 report on the activities of the Council stressed that it had been 'particularly important for the British Council's reputation that some special activity should be mounted... to mark the 2500th Anniversary of the Persian Monarchy by Cyrus the Great.'⁸²³ He goes on to say that both exhibitions were 'a distinct success' and recommended similar events in Iran in the future. It is clear that the British Council was able to attract a degree of interest from high-profile figures for the exhibitions, but despite Ramsbotham's assertion that they were 'a distinct success', it is probable that this success lay in the political capital gained, rather than their popularity with the Iranian public.

Academic Publications

Despite the apparent political aspect of the cultural activities arranged in conjunction with the Celebrations, there was also a sincere scholarly motivation, which should not be discounted. Books and special editions of journals were published around the world in a number of languages. Publications included conference proceedings, such as the ones already mentioned in Canada, India and Germany, museum programmes, scholarly studies and general histories. These included, for example, Banri Namikawa's Japanese publication *The Legacy of Cyrus the Great*,⁸²⁴ Jayad Haidari's edited volume on literature entitled *Iran: In Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*,⁸²⁵ a bibliography of books in Turkish on Iran, published in Ankara⁸²⁶ and a number of publications in Portuguese.⁸²⁷

⁸²² 'IsMEO Activities', *East and West* (1972), p. 390.

⁸²³ Peter Ramsbotham letter to Rt Hon Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 25 July 1972, BW 49/31.

⁸²⁴ Banri Namikawa, *The Legacy of Cyrus the Great: On the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire* (Tokyo: Tokyo International Publishers, 1971).

⁸²⁵ Jayad Haidari, *Iran: In Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (New York: St. John's University, 1971).

⁸²⁶ *Türkiye'de Basılmış Farsça Eserler, Çeviriler ve İran'la İlgili Yayınlar Bibliyografyası* (Ankara, 1971).

⁸²⁷ They include the following five books published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation: Luís de Matos, *Das relações entre Portugal e a Pérsia, 1500-1758: catálogo bibliográfico da exposição comemorativa do XXV centenário de accommodatie monarquia no Irão* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972); [Exhibition programme] *Portugal e a Pérsia: exposição integrada no âmbito das comemorações do 2.500.o aniversário da fundação da monarquia no Irão* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972); Roberto Gulbenkian ed. and trans., *L'ambassade en Perse de Luís Pereira de Lacerda et des pères portugais de l'ordre de Saint-Augustin, Belchior dos Anjos et Huilherme de Santo Agostinho 1604-1605* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972); Jean Aubin, *L'ambassade de Gregório Pereira Fidalgo à la cour de Châh Soltân-Hossey, 1696-1697* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1971); Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *Un voyageur portugais en Perse au début du XVIIe siècle: Nicolau de Orta*

Further publications included S.A. Imam's *Historical and Cultural Relations Between Iran and Ceylon*, published in Sri Lanka, S. Okasha's *Iranian Arts*, published in Egypt, and a series of articles by Finnish scholars published under the title *Damavand*.⁸²⁸

Cultural organisations arranged their own publications, such as Terre D'Europe's *Iran*,⁸²⁹ which included a chapter by Louis Vanden Berghe entitled 'Cyrus le Grand et la Rayonnement de la Civilisation Iranienne', and UNESCO's *Iran: Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 years*, which included a chapter by Peter Avery.⁸³⁰ Academics were also encouraged to contribute outside of these special publications. The Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO), for instance, invited scholars to enter papers into a competition, with a \$4,000 prize for the best submission, to be judged by its Board of Examiners, as part of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.⁸³¹ As a result of this effort, a number of works published by the Italian Committee in conjunction with IsMEO emerged, for instance Bausani's *L'Iran e la sua Tradizione Millenaria*⁸³² and Giuseppe Tucci's *Ciro Il Grande*.⁸³³ Academics were seemingly eager to engage with the event, whether motivated by political or purely scholarly factors. Carlo Paoloni, in a publication on the sacred fires of Ancient Persia, declared that his motivation for the publication was directly a result of,

the decision of the Iranian nation, to celebrate in October 1971 the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, with the noble intention to spread this great celebration to all regions of the world, calling on the participation of all forces who love the beauty and the greatness of the past of

Rebelo. Traduction française de Simone Biberfeld (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972).

⁸²⁸ 'Publications: A Lasting Monument', *Kayhan International*, 13 October, 1971, p. 3.

⁸²⁹ 'Iran', *Terre D'Europe*, 12:40-41, October – December, 1971.

⁸³⁰ Peter Avery et al., 'Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 Years', *The UNESCO Courier*, October 1971.

⁸³¹ Giuseppe Tucci, 'Celebration of the 25th Centenary of Cyrus the Great: International Competition', Rome, November 1964 [poster], Shafa Archives.

⁸³² Alessandro Bausani, *L'Iran e la sua Tradizione Millenaria* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1971).

⁸³³ Giuseppe Tucci, *Ciro Il Grande* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1971).

the Iranian nation, thus opening a passage to Peace and International Friendship.⁸³⁴

There may be a temptation to see such a dedication and dismiss the work as a sort of pseudo-scholarship, but despite the flamboyant dedication, the publication contains no further mention of the Celebrations, or its historical context. The content does not intend to glorify the image of Cyrus the Great, or draw any similarities between the ancient king and the present shah. It was apparently scholarship for the sake of scholarship and the Celebrations provided many opportunities for academics to publicise their work.

Other works did appear to use scholarship to promote the ideology that the regime was promoting at the Celebrations. In an article on the concept of monarchy in classical Persian poetry, contained within an Indian publication, B.M. Gai writes of the 'justice and generosity of the Iranian monarchs' and concludes his piece with the following passage:

In the benevolent rule of the present ruler of Iran, Shahanshah Aryamehr Muhammad Reza Pahlawi, who has followed the healthy and progressive rule of his late father, we find happy reminiscences of the glorious rulers of the Sassanid Iran, of whom Firdawsi has sung eloquently in his *Shahnama*.⁸³⁵

Despite this, the volume contains no further mention of the Shah. The preface of the volume illustrates the place of the Celebrations within the broader context of the cultural policies of the late Pahlavi period:

Since its inception the [Indo-Iran] Society has carried on its work with zeal and vigour and has succeeded in enlisting the cooperation of the intelligentsia of this country. The Cultural Department of the Imperial Embassy of Iran had also done some spade work in this direction and wished to organise a function where scholars of various disciplines could gather together to talk on Indo-Iranian relations through the ages.

⁸³⁴ Carlo Paoloni, *I Fuochi Sacri Dell'Antica Persia* (Milan: Stampato A Cura Dell'Autore, 1971), p. viii. The work is only tangentially related to Iranian culture and history. It is more a geological survey of natural gas resources in Iran throughout history.

⁸³⁵ B.M. Gai, 'Concept of Monarchy in Ancient and Medieval Iran as gleaned from Classical Persian Poetry', in *Indo-Iran* (1974), pp. 19-20.

Then came the occasion of the Celebrations of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Monarchy in Iran. The Indo-Iran Society came forward to organise a Congress of Iranologists and Indologists to commemorate the occasion in a befitting manner.⁸³⁶

From the early 1960s the Pahlavi regime had placed emphasis on education and culture, domestically and internationally. Much of this had a political focus, whether used as a tool in international diplomacy or to encourage Iranians to identify with the monarchy as a historical source of national unity. As the passage above indicates, much of the scholarship for the Celebrations abroad, in the form of publications, conferences and exhibitions, contributed to projects already underway and the Celebrations provided extra impetus and exposure.

Conclusion

The aim of the Celebrations, as stated by Abdolreza Ansari at the beginning of this chapter, was, to initiate a 'reawakening of the history, civilization, and culture of Iran and creating awareness among the peoples of the world.' Did it achieve this goal? While the events at Persepolis, shown on television sets around the world, drew attention to the ancient heritage of Iran, the exhibitions, conferences and publications provided greater exposure to Iran's history and culture in line with the promotional efforts of the regime. In his 1983 publication *Ancient Persia*, J.M. Cook wrote, 'In the last ten years or so, thanks partly to the interest aroused by the 2,500 year anniversary of Cyrus the Great and the publication of the Persepolis Fortification tablets, the modern literature on the Achaemenids has doubled itself.'⁸³⁷ The publication of the Fortification Tablets, incidentally, came initially in the form of Richard Hallock's groundbreaking article contributing to volume two of the *Cambridge History of Iran*, first published in 1971 'as a token of what is to come, to mark an anniversary unique in the history of the course of which the Board were set up to survey.'⁸³⁸

Alongside the publications that were officially declared to have been published as part of the Celebrations, many authors and publishers were keen

⁸³⁶ B.H. Zaidi, *Indo-Iran* (1974), p. xiii.

⁸³⁷ Cook, *Ancient Persia* (1983), p. iii.

⁸³⁸ Ilya Gershevitch, quote in his preface to Richard Hallock, 'The Evidence of the Persepolis Tablets', *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 2, pre-printed chapter (Cambridge: Middle East Centre, 1971).

to take advantage of the publicity generated and released, translated, or re-printed their own books on Iran.⁸³⁹ Jean Perrot, who was one of the Iranologists present in 1971, wrote in the introduction to his 2013 publication *The Palace of Darius at Susa*, that the Celebrations sparked a renewed interest in Achaemenid archaeology, which allowed for the resurgence in investigation at Susa, bringing the city to life 'in all its greatness.'⁸⁴⁰ It is clear that the Celebrations made a significant contribution to the field of Iranian studies, not merely through the projection of Persepolis and Pasargadae on television screens across the globe, but also through the extensive and far-reaching cultural programmes organised by cultural institutions from around the world.

This chapter has shown that despite the political motivations of the international activity, it also had real cultural and scholarly merit. The British Council used the Celebrations to promote Britain in Iran, stressing its scholarly contribution to understanding of Iranian civilisation, but also promoting modern British art. This cultural activity also indicated, through the Council's participation in the Celebrations, its support of the regime. The holding of exhibitions and conferences around the world, as well as the publication of books, served to highlight friendly governments' support for the principal message of the Celebrations, as promoted by the Shah's regime.

Writing in a letter to the Imperial Court in June 1971, Shojaeddin Shafa declared that a comprehensive list of cultural programmes would be made available to all foreign embassies, committees, cultural centres and media outlets around the world. Shafa stated his belief that the supplied list proved the Celebrations to be the 'largest and most extensive global operation in the service of culture and art that the world has seen to date.' Any criticisms of the Celebrations, he said, therefore, were 'unfounded, malicious and stupid in every sense.'⁸⁴¹ While it is clear that some of the cultural programmes initiated served a political agenda, they also contributed to the promotion of Iranian culture, which was the purpose of the international operation. This work carried out by Shafa throughout the 1960s in his role in the Imperial Court, explored in

⁸³⁹ For example, Roger Stevens, *The Land of the Great Sophy* (London: Methuen, 1971); Alessandro Bausani, *The Persians*, trans. by J. B. Donne (London: Elek Books Ltd., 1971); Ali Dashti, *In Search of Omar Khayyam*, trans. by Laurence Elwell-Sutton (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971).

⁸⁴⁰ Perrot, *The Palace of Darius at Susa* (2013), p. xii.

⁸⁴¹ Shojaeddin Shafa to Asadollah Alam, 5 Tir 1350/ 26 June 1971, Shafa Archives.

Chapter 5, laid the groundwork for the extraordinary cultural operation that was set in motion for the Anniversary Celebrations. As noted in Chapter 4, the emergence of Iran as a powerful player on the international scene meant that states were eager to develop closer relations with the Shah's government. Shafa took advantage of this position and was able to ensure that the cultural aspects of the event found international participation on a large scale. The culture of international collaboration was to play an important part in the development of other projects initiated by the Pahlavi regime throughout the 1970s. Meanwhile, the promotion of Iranian culture had material benefits, as will be made clear later, in Chapter 8, which will explore the development of the tourism sector in the period of the Celebrations.

Chapter 7: Criticising the Celebrations

During the lead up to the Celebrations they were criticised in Iran and internationally for their over-reliance on foreign services, alleged corruption, expense and ideological incongruity. They were criticised by students in Iran and abroad, as well as by the Shah's political opponents, most significantly Khomeini. As this chapter will show, however, these criticisms are questionable and were directed more at the Shah himself than at the Anniversary Celebrations. Khomeini saw the Celebrations as part of the Pahlavi strategy to discredit the traditional Islamic class, which was true to a certain degree. However, his opposition to the Shah can be traced back to the time before his exile in 1963, and his criticism should be seen in this context rather than as a spontaneous outburst at the event itself. Other critics, such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad, objected to the glorification of Iran when large parts of the population were poverty-stricken, and his *Gharbzadegi* reflected dissatisfaction with the increasing Western influence on Iranian society. Traditionalists and the religious class identified with this message and objected to the Celebrations on these grounds. This chapter will examine opposition to the Celebrations and consider to what extent the criticisms were valid; and discuss how these criticisms reflected a changing social and political environment.

So far the thesis has shown that the principal purpose of the Celebrations was to reinforce the Pahlavi state ideology, built around the institution of monarchy in Iran, Iran's Aryan roots and the glory of Iran's pre-Islamic past. This chapter will explore how the Shah's opponents responded to this message. The critics of the Celebrations received considerable exposure in the press both in Iran and worldwide, and the tendency of the regime to shrug off these criticisms rather than robustly tackle them for a sustained period contributed to the prevailing negative impression of the event. Of course, that is not to say that some of the criticisms were not valid, but the regime had the resources to challenge them and could have done more to promote a positive view of the occasion. Viewed in this light, the Pahlavi presentation of the Celebrations was severely damaged by what must be considered a public relations failure on behalf of the regime. Since the majority of this thesis so far has outlined the attempts of the regime to promote the state ideology based

around the strength of the throne in the context of the annals of Iranian history, it is important to understand that though foreign states were willing to acknowledge this narrative, as has been shown in previous chapters, the message was not received positively by parts of the Iranian population, despite the efforts of the regime.

Clerical Opposition

In a SAVAK report from 1 September 1971 it was argued that religion was the biggest motivating factor in opposing the Celebrations and an order was issued to use all available means to tackle this threat.⁸⁴² The most significant critic of the Celebrations was Khomeini, who felt that the event flew in the face of Iran's Islamic tradition. The Celebrations presented the pre-Islamic empires as the essence of the Iranian character, a view that Khomeini believed was dangerous to the future of the ulema's standing in Iran. His concern was justified. Shojaeddin Shafa later admitted that one of the goals of the Celebrations was to remove support for the religious factions and encourage Iranians to relate to the monarchy rather than Islam as the source of their national identity.⁸⁴³ This clash of ambitions between the Pahlavi modernists and the ulema should not, however, be considered to have its roots in the Celebrations. Instead the Celebrations provided a focal point for long-standing grievances that galvanised many of the Shah's political opponents, particularly Khomeini.

In Iran's recent history, Islam has been a constant and vocal critic of political authority, and has been able to rouse popular support. This was evident during the late Qajar period, notably during the protest over the Tobacco Concession (1891-92) and during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11).⁸⁴⁴ The mullahs' ability to draw widespread support came, in large part, from their popularity among the traditional bazaari class. This support base remained loyal throughout the 20th century. During the early Pahlavi period Reza Shah introduced a number of reforms that sought to modernise Iran, posing a direct challenge to the ulema. Such policies included the outlawing of traditional dress

⁸⁴² SAVAK internal report, 10 Shahrivar 1350/ 1 September 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 237-238.

⁸⁴³ Milani quotes Shafa as saying that one of the goals of the Celebrations was to 'accentuate the pre-Islamic imperial grandeur of Persia to the detriment of its Islamic component'. Milani, *The Shah* (2011), p. 324.

⁸⁴⁴ For the ulema in the Constitutional Revolution see Matteo Farzaneh, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Clerical Leadership of Khurasani* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2015).

for all other than state-recognised clergymen in preference for Western clothing, and the banning of the veil for women. These policies led to protests in Mashhad in 1935 during which hundreds of protesters were massacred at the Imam Reza shrine by troops with machine guns.⁸⁴⁵ Reza Shah attempted to replicate the modernising efforts of Atatürk in Iran, though he failed in his efforts to declare Iran a republic. His nationalist ideology took its inspiration from Ancient Iran, which was also unsettling for the traditional classes, who identified more with Islam. The Reza Shah period thus marked 'an end to the age-old conceptions of Shia realm that was built on an alliance between the shahs and the ulema.'⁸⁴⁶

Reza Shah's fall in 1941 gave rise to the restoration and expansion of the religious expression that had been suppressed under his rule.⁸⁴⁷ In the open social space created by this power vacuum, modernist ideas were challenged by the resurgent religious class. In 1946 Ahmad Kasravi, an anti-clerical modernist intellectual, was assassinated by the *Fedayan-e Islam*. Two years earlier Khomeini had urged the ulema to rise against the ideas perpetrated by people such as Kasravi.⁸⁴⁸ In the political turmoil of the following decades, religious organisations were able to mobilise popular and often radical support. The attempted assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah by a gunman posing as a reporter for an Islamic publication and Prime Minister Ali Razmara's assassination at the hands of the *Fedayan-e Islam*, demonstrate the emergence of militant Islam during this period. Moreover, Islam served as an alternative provider of identity to the narrative perpetuated by the regime and the modernist intellectuals.

As Mohammed Reza Shah consolidated his power into the 1960s, the modernisation efforts of the Reza Shah years continued. The modernisation of Iran, coupled with the regime's heightened interest in pre-Islamic history, was seen as an attempt to marginalise the religious institutions. The riots of 1963, which ultimately resulted in the deportation of Ayatollah Khomeini were a key episode in this period of growing animosity between the royal house and

⁸⁴⁵ Michael Axworthy, *Iran: Empire of the Mind* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 227.

⁸⁴⁶ Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 42.

⁸⁴⁷ Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat* (2002), pp. 191-192.

⁸⁴⁸ Keddie, *Modern Iran* (2003), p. 191.

sections of the ulema. The protests were a reaction against the Shah's land reforms that were introduced as part of his White Revolution and would threaten the ulema's land holdings, as well as the law granting women the right to vote. They were led by Khomeini and supported by a coalition of bazaaris and clerics.⁸⁴⁹ Alam, who was serving as prime minister at the time, with characteristic assertiveness crushed the rebellion, giving the mullahs 'the screwing they'd been asking for.'⁸⁵⁰ There is little doubt that Alam considered the mullahs permanently pacified.⁸⁵¹ However, although the situation culminated in the deportation of Khomeini, the Shah failed to sever Khomeini's ties to the Iranian masses, and exile made him into a sort of martyr, a suitable figurehead for political opposition against the Shah, while placing him beyond the Shah's reach.⁸⁵²

It was unsurprising that Khomeini would take the opportunity to use the negative publicity generated by the Celebrations to express his opposition to the Shah. In the months leading up to the Celebrations they were condemned by Khomeini from exile in Iraq, and he wrote to foreign leaders to urge them not to attend. In a speech on 13 October at Najaf, Khomeini questioned the very essence of the monarchy and encouraged protest against the Anniversary Celebrations:

It is the duty of the Muslim people of Iran to refrain from participation in this illegitimate festival, to engage in passive struggle against it, to remain indoors during the days of the festival, and to express by any means possible their disgust and aversion for anyone who contributed to the organization or celebration of the festival. Let the festival organizers know that they are despised by the Islamic community and by all alert peoples throughout the world, that they are hated by all lovers of

⁸⁴⁹ Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 62.

⁸⁵⁰ Alam diary entry 22 January 1973, *The Shah and I* (1991), p. 279.

⁸⁵¹ He later said to the US Ambassador, 'The only possible way they could make a comeback would be if HIM were rendered powerless and you and the British promoted the clergy as a bulwark against communism.' Alam diary entry 11 November 1972, *ibid*, p. 255.

⁸⁵² Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah* (1980), p. 193.

freedom and that Islam and the Muslims are repelled by the very notion of monarchy.⁸⁵³

Khomeini's tone had changed from 1962, when he wrote a letter to the Shah advising him to 'think and reflect a little, to ponder about where this is leading you, to learn a lesson from the experience of your father.'⁸⁵⁴ Unlike in 1962, Khomeini was not protesting against a reform, he was posing a direct challenge to the monarchical institution. While the Shah pointed to the monarchy as the source of Iranian grandeur, Khomeini angrily retorted,

The crimes of the Kings of Iran have blackened the pages of history... Even those who were reputed to be "good" were vile and cruel... Islam is fundamentally opposed to the whole notion of monarchy...⁸⁵⁵

While many clerics still publically supported the monarchy, Khomeini's pronouncements from Najaf certainly resonated with many clerics and students in Iran.

Khomeini publically announced his desire for the overthrow of the monarchy for the first time and for this reason some have pointed to this period as pivotal in the revolutionary movement.⁸⁵⁶ He had, however, expressed his distaste for monarchy before. In a speech on 22 June 1971 he stated that 'king of kings is the vilest of words', and that sovereignty belongs to God alone,⁸⁵⁷ but a year earlier, his *Velāyat-e Faqih* was published, which called for the establishment of political rule by a cleric, a theological treatise fundamentally at odds with the monarchical institution in Iran. It is unlikely that the event at Persepolis in itself would be enough to force Khomeini to reassess his theological convictions, but rather it seems that he was waiting for an opportunity to attack the regime. Khomeini was a shrewd and calculated opponent who was attentive to the political mood of the Iranian population. The

⁸⁵³ Ruhollah Khomeini, 'The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islam', Speech at Najaf, 13 October 1971, in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. by Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1981), pp. 200-208.

⁸⁵⁴ Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran* (2013), p. 63.

⁸⁵⁵ Quoted in Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (1987), p. 328.

⁸⁵⁶ David Menashri, 'Shi'ite Leadership: In the Shadow of Conflicting Ideologies', *Iranian Studies*, 13:1/4 (1980), p. 129.

⁸⁵⁷ Said Arjomand, 'Traditionalism in Twentieth-century Iran', in *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, ed. by Said Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 223.

Celebrations should not, therefore, be seen as a turning point in Khomeini's thinking, but rather as a point at which he took advantage of the negative perception of the Celebrations and of the global spotlight shone on Iran to consolidate opposition against the Shah.

Khomeini's denigration of the Celebrations reached a large audience in Iran. His speeches and letters were broadcast on the Persian language section of Baghdad radio and were subsequently distributed in Iran, and his followers urged Iranians to mobilize and fight against the regime.⁸⁵⁸ Student opposition pamphlets distributed on university campuses outlined Khomeini's ideas and helped to cement his position as a key opposition figure against the Shah. In order to stop the distribution of tapes, SAVAK ordered the arrest of people involved and more stringent border controls.⁸⁵⁹ In spite of these efforts, Khomeini's speeches against the Celebrations were still transmitted in Iran in Persian through Iraqi radio stations. One SAVAK agent reported overhearing an ice cream seller listening to reports from Iraq criticising the Shah and the Celebrations.⁸⁶⁰

In Najaf, students at the madrasas were warned that participation in the Celebrations would result in having their scholarships cut and being considered an enemy.⁸⁶¹ After a service at Hedayat Mosque in Tehran after the Celebrations, led by Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani, a number of people criticised the Shahyad tower, calling it a 'Bahai symbol'⁸⁶² and arguing that 'it is wrong for this faith to have so much power in an Islamic country.'⁸⁶³ Students had planned to protest in Tehran over the issue, but were persuaded not to by their peers as this would lead to a police crackdown.⁸⁶⁴ It was evidently not merely Khomeini who objected to the event, and many protesters in Iran were clearly encouraged by his vocal opposition.

It was not only the ulema that expressed opposition to the Celebrations. The influential Islamic philosopher Ali Shariati, considered by many to be an

⁸⁵⁸ SAVAK special bulletin, 29 Tir 1350/ 20 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 157.

⁸⁵⁹ SAVAK internal report, 20 Mordad 1350/ 11 August 1971, *ibid*, pp. 193-194.

⁸⁶⁰ SAVAK internal report, 26 Mordad 1350/ 17 August 1971, *ibid*, p. 212.

⁸⁶¹ SAVAK internal report, 16 Mordad 1350/ 7 August 1971, *ibid*, pp. 142-143.

⁸⁶² This was a reference to the faith of the architect Hossein Amanat, who designed the monument.

⁸⁶³ SAVAK internal report, 11 Aban 1350/ 2 November 1971, *ibid*, pp. 350-352.

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

important ideologue of the revolution,⁸⁶⁵ also objected to the regime's appropriation of pre-Islamic history. 'Our people do not find their roots in these civilizations', he wrote in *The Return to Ourselves*. 'Our people remember nothing from this distant past and do not care to learn about pre-Islamic civilizations.'⁸⁶⁶ Shariati gave a series of lectures around the time of the Celebrations that included thinly veiled criticisms of the occasion. One such lecture entitled *On the Plight of the Oppressed* was clearly aimed at the Shah's appropriation of ancient civilisation, his oppression of his people and his arrogance. Addressing a fictional slave who built the pyramids, he wrote:

My friend, you have left this world, but we are carrying the loads for the great civilization, clear victories, and heroic works. They came to our homes at the farms and forced us, as beasts, to build their graves. If we could not carry the stones or complete the task, we were put into the walls with the stones! Others took the pride and credit for the work that we did. No mention had ever been made of our contributions.⁸⁶⁷

The inference here is that the Shah and the historic system he represented took all of the 'pride and credit' for the blood and toil of the people. Instead of 2,500 years of glorious monarchical tradition in Iran, Shariati spoke of 5,000 years of 'deprivation, injustice, class discrimination and repression.'⁸⁶⁸

Another well-known figure who opposed the Celebrations in its early stages was Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who wrote in his *Gharbzadegi*, published in 1962, of the hypocrisy of Iran to celebrate its monarchical tradition while its people were struggling to survive and the country was over-reliant on foreign capital.⁸⁶⁹ He also resented the regime's 'mania for showing off in front of strangers, for competing in boasting vaingloriously and stupidly of Cyrus and Darius'.⁸⁷⁰ Many

⁸⁶⁵ See, for example, Erband Abrahamian, 'Ali Shari'ati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution', *MERIP Reports*, 102 (1982), pp. 24-28.

⁸⁶⁶ Quoted in Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (1987), p. 331.

⁸⁶⁷ Ali Shariati, *On the Plight of the Oppressed People*, online at <<http://www.al-islam.org/articles/plight-oppressed-people-ali-shariati>> [accessed 17 March 2017].

⁸⁶⁸ Ali Rahnema, 'Ali Shariati: Teacher, Preacher, Rebel', in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. by Ali Rahnema (London: Zed Books, 1994), p. 235.

⁸⁶⁹ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued by the West (Gharbzadegi)*, trans. by Paul Sprachman (New York: Caravan Books, 1981), p. 51.

⁸⁷⁰ Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (2009), p. 312.

intellectuals with him were unconvinced by what they perceived as the regime's self-orientalising exploitation of its ancient history.

Another opponent was the Qajar Prince Mozaffar Firouz, the great, great grandson of Abbas Mirza, who had held positions in Iran such as minister of labour and ambassador to the USSR before his exile to Paris in 1948. He lamented the nature of the Celebrations in a 150-page book entitled *L'Iran face à l'imposture de l'histoire*.

While we welcome with pleasure the glorification of the great Iranian and Aryan people and the contribution which they have made to civilization and humanity, we think that the entire conception which was suggested to us is based on a fundamental historical error, and we regret that millions of dollars from an underdeveloped country, a poor and needy nation, will be wasted on celebrations which have nothing to do with historical facts and the true interests and traditions of the Iranian people.⁸⁷¹

Not only were the Celebrations inappropriate for a country whose population was 'poor and needy', Firouz also objected to the concept of celebrating just 2,500 years of history. The number 2,500, according to Firouz, has 'no national significance or historical justification whatsoever, as the history of Iran, of the people and monarchy is much older.'⁸⁷² As Khomeini criticised the Celebrations for looking too far into the past and neglecting the Islamic period, Firouz criticised them for not stretching far enough into Iran's ancient past. There was also a political subtext to Firouz's cynical analysis of the Celebrations, since he clearly detested the Shah. Indeed, according to the historian Cyrus Ghani, his ultimate desire was to see the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty.⁸⁷³

Student and Militant Opposition

On 14 October 1971, the day of the gala dinner at Persepolis, a bomb exploded at the Iranian consulate in San Francisco, in an apparent protest against the events that were taking place in Iran. Although there were no fatalities, the blast was so powerful that it shattered windows several blocks away, injured four

⁸⁷¹ Mozaffar Firouz, *L'Iran face à l'imposture de l'histoire* (Paris: L'Herne, 1971), p. 15.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁷³ Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the West: A Critical Bibliography* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1987), pp. 131-132.

people and caused one million dollars' worth of damage.⁸⁷⁴ As a result security was increased at Iranian official premises in the United States, where demonstrations were expected during the days of the Celebrations.⁸⁷⁵ The day following the blast a march took place in San Francisco organised by the Confederation of Iranian Students.⁸⁷⁶ Over the course of two hours the protesters walked from the Federal Building on Golden Gate Avenue to the damaged Iranian consulate. They held up signs that read 'a hungry nation does not need a 2500-year celebration' and many wore brown paper bags on their heads in order to shield their identities from SAVAK spies. One protester was heard to refer to the Celebrations as an 'extravagant orgy'.⁸⁷⁷ Student activists in the United States also attempted to disrupt academic events held at campuses in conjunction with the Celebrations. An article appeared in *The Stanford Daily*, for example, calling on students to join a planned protest at a conference at Stanford University against 'Iran's oil-rich butcher king'.⁸⁷⁸

Similar protests occurred in other cities of the United States and in Europe, and the campaign from the Confederation of Iranian Students against the occasion attracted support from scientists and political activists from around the world. A letter signed by figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and 14 British Members of Parliament referred to the 'oppression and misery to which the Iranian masses have been subjected', and argued that the regime's focus on its Aryan roots was 'an ideology borrowed and propagated by the Pahlavi Dynasty from Hitler's Germany'. The letter called for an international boycott of the Celebrations:

participation in effect, would be tantamount to sanctioning all the crimes and oppression with which the Iranian monarchy is associated in the last 25 centuries; it would as well be an approval

⁸⁷⁴ Christopher Hewitt, *Political Violence and Terrorism in Modern America: A Chronology* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2005), p. 85.

⁸⁷⁵ Telegram 189359 from the Department of State to the US Delegation to the 25th Centenary Celebration in Shiraz, Iran, 15 October 1971, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969–1972, doc. 150.

⁸⁷⁶ The Confederation of Iranian Students was an opposition group against the Shah's regime. It was formed in the early 1960s by representatives from West Germany, the United Kingdom and France as the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe.

⁸⁷⁷ 'Iranian émigrés in masked protests against Shah's regime', *San Francisco Examiner*, 16 October 1971.

⁸⁷⁸ 'Shah Celebrates Monarchy while Iranians Suffer', *The Stanford Daily*, 160:16, 18 October 1971.

of the countless financial expenses directly or indirectly imposed on a people, a large majority of whom are deprived of most elementary needs for a human and dignified survival.⁸⁷⁹

The Popular Front for the Liberation of the Arab Gulf, a Marxist and Arab nationalist revolutionary organisation based in the Persian Gulf Arab states, also offered their support for the campaign against the Celebrations and the 'oppressive regime which has subjected the Iranian people to the misery of humiliation, poverty, and under-development'.⁸⁸⁰ A publication of the Committee for Free Iran, an opposition organisation based in Washington D.C., stated,

Instead of bringing glory to the Persian Empire as it marks 2500 years of history, the Shah has created a land in which human lives have less value than the flies that disturb a growing number of political corpses, and natural resources are squandered and given away to provide fleeting pleasure for the royal family and the fawning favourites of his court.⁸⁸¹

The French communist newspaper *L'Humanité* also contrasted the 'appalling and inhumane poverty of the masses' in Iran to the lavishness of the Celebrations.⁸⁸²

There was indeed poverty in Iran and large disparities in wealth existed between the urban middle class and the poor rural communities. All over the country people from all circles spoke of their disillusionment with the high cost of the Celebrations, which they speculated to be as much as 20 billion rials (approximately \$135 million). Some even suggested that the heavy financial burden on the Fars region, which had suffered from drought, meant that people living outside of the city did not have water or bread, and led to farmers and nomads losing their livestock.⁸⁸³ There was also some grumbling amongst the bazaaris over increases in their tax, which they linked to the high government

⁸⁷⁹ 'A Hungry Nation Does Not Need a 2500 Year Celebration: Appeal', in *Corruption and Struggle in Iran: A Defense Publication of the Iranian Student Association in the United States* (June 1972), pp. 8-10.

⁸⁸⁰ Press-release from the Executive Committee for the Dhofar Liberation Front, *ibid*, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁸¹ *Iran Free Press*, 1:2, October 1971, p. 4.

⁸⁸² SAVAK special bulletin, 29 Tir 1350/ 20 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 158-159.

⁸⁸³ SAVAK internal report, 16 Farvardin 1350/ 5 April 1971, *ibid*, pp. 9-10. Other SAVAK reports express similar frustrations, see reports from 9 Khordad 1350/ 30 May 1971, p. 85; and 7 Tir 1350/ 28 June 1971, pp. 125-126.

spending associated with the Celebrations.⁸⁸⁴ Against this backdrop many people found it difficult to feel any enthusiasm for the upcoming festivities.

The security services were eager that voices of dissent were muted. In April and May 1971 student protests were, in the words of Ambassador Ramsbotham, 'ruthlessly crushed' by the security forces.⁸⁸⁵ These protests occurred on the campuses of Tehran University and Aryamehr University, where hundreds of students demonstrated while shouting slogans against the Celebrations and the Shah. In both instances the authorities deployed riot police, who arrested hundreds of students from each campus.⁸⁸⁶ The excessive response to these disturbances only added to students' disillusionment with the regime. Despite the crackdown, in the weeks prior to the event students at various universities were still distributing pamphlets criticising the Shah and the Celebrations, with titles such as *Jashn-e Zed-e Mardomi-ye Shāh* (The Shah's Celebration Against the People).⁸⁸⁷ Protest leaflets were distributed at a technical college in Tabriz, calling for students to refrain from participation in the Celebrations and not to decorate the campus for the occasion.⁸⁸⁸ One SAVAK report suggested that the students in Iran were influenced by students who had recently returned from the West, where they had been exposed to rebellious ideas.⁸⁸⁹

Figures on numbers of political prisoners during the Pahlavi period tend to be exaggerated in foreign media, and the reporting on the crackdown during the Celebrations was no exception. Indeed, reports in the foreign media on the conduct of SAVAK sometimes resorted to outright sensationalism. According to one account there were 10,000 arrests and writers were forbidden from publishing so they would not be able to express their criticisms of the Celebrations.⁸⁹⁰ A report appeared in *Time* which argued that SAVAK, 'by ironic coincidence, arrested exactly 2,500 potential troublemakers.'⁸⁹¹ Amnesty

⁸⁸⁴ SAVAK internal report, 9 Mordad 1350/ 31 July 1971, *ibid*, pp. 181-182.

⁸⁸⁵ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 3, FCO 17/1529.

⁸⁸⁶ Airgram 136 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 'Student Disturbances at Universities in Tehran', 10 May 1971, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 126.

⁸⁸⁷ SAVAK internal report, 8 Mehr 1350/ 30 September 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 315.

⁸⁸⁸ SAVAK internal report, 5 Mehr 1350/ 27 September 1971, *ibid*, pp. 301-303.

⁸⁸⁹ SAVAK internal report, 2 Mordad 1350/ 24 July 1971, *ibid*, p. 165.

⁸⁹⁰ Baraheni, *Crowned Cannibals* (1977), p. 100.

⁸⁹¹ *Time Magazine*, 25 October 1971, newspaper cut out in *Corruption and Struggle in Iran* (1972), p. 28.

International believed the numbers of arrests to be between 1,000 and 4,000,⁸⁹² though the organisation was later criticised for accepting inflated figures for political prisoners directly from opposition organisations without appropriate scrutiny.⁸⁹³ Abdolreza Ansari, citing General Nasiri, suggests a more conservative number, saying that 1,500 suspects were monitored during the Celebrations, and a smaller number of them subsequently detained.⁸⁹⁴ Whatever the real number of detainees, the crackdown on protests did little to dispel the criticisms of Iran's human rights record internationally. In early 1972 in the United States Congressman Parren James Mitchell wrote a letter to the Iranian ambassador, Amir Aslan Afshar, expressing concerns for the over 100 Iranians arrested during the Celebrations who were, he believed, being tried in secret military courts.⁸⁹⁵ More appeals followed, some addressed directly to Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda.⁸⁹⁶

During this period the threat from militant organisations in Iran was high. An attack on a military outpost in the village of Siahkal, by a radical Marxist-Leninist urban guerrilla group named *Fedayan-e Khalq* (Martyrs for the Masses) on 8 February 1971, ushered in a new phase of opposition to the Shah's regime. Moreover, and alarmingly for the security services, the group made it one of their principal objectives to disrupt the Celebrations.⁸⁹⁷ Around the time of the festivities US Ambassador Douglas MacArthur was almost kidnapped by gunmen who ambushed his limousine, and a plan to kidnap the British ambassador, Peter Ramsbotham, was also uncovered.⁸⁹⁸ More attempted kidnappings prompted an increase in security, as the Dutch ambassador explained in a report in early October:

Considering the two recent failed kidnapping attempts of Eghbal followed by the very recent almost successful kidnapping in the

⁸⁹² Press Statement from Amnesty International, 2 November 1971, *ibid*, p. 13.

⁸⁹³ See Cooper, *The Fall of Heaven* (2016), p. 237.

⁸⁹⁴ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 279.

⁸⁹⁵ Letter Parren James Mitchell to Amir Aslan Afshar, 24 February 1972, in *Corruption and Struggle in Iran* (1972), p. 22.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 17-26.

⁸⁹⁷ Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians*, vol. 1 (2008), p. 100.

⁸⁹⁸ Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, London, UK, 18 October 1985, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, tape 1, p. 28.

centre of Tehran of the son of princess Ashraf the security measures have become extreme.⁸⁹⁹

SAVAK later claimed that 60 members of the Iranian Liberation Organisation were charged with plotting to carry out kidnappings during the Celebrations.⁹⁰⁰ Moreover, a plan by the Islamic militant organisation *Mojahedin-e Khalq* to blow up Tehran's main power station in order to disrupt the Celebrations was also foiled.⁹⁰¹ The increased threat from violent organisations undoubtedly concerned the regime's security services, and explains why security measures were stepped up throughout the country.

In the period leading up to the Celebrations the country was in lockdown. Some tourists even faced difficulty in gaining access during the week of the festivities and no one was to be given entry or transit visas. Ramsbotham noted that in particular 'Young student or hippy types will obviously have great difficulty securing Iranian visas during this period as intention seems to be to refuse entry to any possible trouble makers.'⁹⁰² The issue of security was discussed amongst the international community, which would be sending their representatives to Iran, at the highest level. President Nixon, for example, was said to have accepted his invitation at first, only to withdraw later due to the 'major problems' of 'security and logistics'⁹⁰³ and security concerns were raised by other states, including Australia.⁹⁰⁴ Security services around the world were undoubtedly aware of Iraqi support for militant activists who opposed the Shah and of their intention to disrupt the occasion. Indeed, a State Department report noted the intensification during the first three months of 1971 of the violent activities of 'externally directed and supported subversive elements'.⁹⁰⁵ This is supported by SAVAK reports, which note that Iraq was supporting groups that intended to sabotage the Celebrations.⁹⁰⁶ With the eyes of the world on Iran any

⁸⁹⁹ Jonker report, 5 October 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁹⁰⁰ Telegram 331 From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, January 17, 1972, footnote 1, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 16.

⁹⁰¹ Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: The Life of the Ayatollah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 164.

⁹⁰² Ramsbotham dispatch to London, 5 October 1971, FCO 17/1528.

⁹⁰³ Memorandum Henry Kissinger to President Nixon, 6 April 1971, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 121.

⁹⁰⁴ Telegram no. 591 from Douglas-Home to Tehran, 12 October, FCO 57/323.

⁹⁰⁵ Telegram 2495 From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 12 May 1971, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, doc. 127.

⁹⁰⁶ SAVAK internal report, 29 Shahrivar 1350/ 20 September 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 287-289.

disruption could cause huge embarrassment and dispel the impression that was promoted through the Celebrations of Iran as a land of peace and opportunity. The severity of the actions of the security services in Iran should, therefore, be considered with an understanding of the heightened threat from militants and radical political activists in this period.

Security concerns led to the exclusion of large numbers of Iranian citizens from the Celebrations. Festivities did occur in cities, towns and villages all around the country, however during the most high-profile events, such as the gala dinner, the commemoration at Pasargadae and the parade at Persepolis, ordinary Iranians were absent, able to observe only from their television screens. This was contrary to the advice of Arthur Upham Pope, who made the following suggestion in 1960:

Of course there should not be a single person in Persia during this period who does not have the message of this significant event dramatically brought home to him. It can be a tremendous creator of morale and intense loyalty to the country and of a resolute home to build a future adequate to the promise of its beginnings.⁹⁰⁷

To achieve this, he suggested that the military parade should travel to a number of cities across Iran, giving everyone the chance to partake in the festivities. Instead, the security forces turned the area around Persepolis into something akin to a 'maximum security prison',⁹⁰⁸ sealed off with troops from the gendarmerie, the airborne division and the Imperial Guards.⁹⁰⁹ Even to diplomats staying in Shiraz it was virtually impossible to gain access to what seemed like an 'impregnable fortress'.⁹¹⁰ There were, however, 2,000 seats reserved at the parade for private Iranian citizens, over half of whom were already in Shiraz, and a further 800 who would fly to Shiraz from Tehran on the day of the event.⁹¹¹ Given the logistical and security concerns, it was perhaps felt that any more than that would be difficult.

⁹⁰⁷ Arthur Upham Pope to Amir Ebrahimi, 4 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996), p. 429.

⁹⁰⁸ Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 October 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁹⁰⁹ Ramsbotham to Foreign Office, 26 September 1971, FCO 17/1528.

⁹¹⁰ Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 October 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

⁹¹¹ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), pp. 275-276.

With the state of high alert, it is understandable that the organisers of the event, in particular the head of SAVAK, General Nematollah Nasiri, who was 'personally responsible'⁹¹² for security measures, were reluctant to take any chances. This, however, left many Iranians feeling left out at the expense of foreigners, for whom the Celebrations were not a matter of national pride. One person said,

We, the people, knew nothing of it. We paid for it. It was in our name but we could not get within a mile of it. Literally. The road was blocked by soldiers – real soldiers, not walk-on operetta parts.⁹¹³

The vast sums of money spent had been justified on the basis that they would benefit the Iranian people, but many felt excluded. They saw images of foreigners eating a splendid dinner of French food, paid for, as they believed, by state funds. To the regime the stringent security measures were necessary, but its over-zealous approach contributed to discontent. The Economist Intelligence Unit, an independent analytical body, stated that it was 'a comment on the stability of the regime that its opponents were able to mobilise so little support at such a crucial time.'⁹¹⁴ It was perhaps rather a comment on the ruthless efficiency of the security forces that such opposition stayed silent.

Corruption and the Pahlavis

Rumours of corruption damaged the reputation of the Celebrations. During one meeting of the Executive Committee, Shojaeddin Shafa delivered a report on his recent trip to Europe, detailing the harsh criticism in the European press of the contracts signed with Jansen and Maxim. When he finished his report, the Shahbanou complained that the corruption and malpractice of a few were damaging the reputation of the Executive Committee.⁹¹⁵ Incensed, Alam, who was responsible for the contracts, withdrew from the meeting, threatening to resign.⁹¹⁶ There is no direct evidence linking Alam with corruption, but there were clearly people who believed the rumours and the issue was raised even

⁹¹² Ramsbotham to Foreign Office, 26 September 1971, FCO 17/1528. Emphasis was added by Ramsbotham.

⁹¹³ Quoted in Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979), p. 25.

⁹¹⁴ 'Economic Review: Iran', *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, London, 4 (1971), p. 7.

⁹¹⁵ Milani, *Eminent Persians*, vol. 1, (2008), p. 55.

⁹¹⁶ Ansari, *The Shah's Iran* (2016), p. 268.

among the organising committee. Not only were the Celebrations considered wasteful, but the already rich and powerful were believed to be benefitting from the wastefulness. This was not a criticism merely of the Celebrations, but of a political culture in which power and money could buy influence. Whenever a lot of money was spent on a project, many people assumed that pockets were being lined. Rumours of corruption therefore contributed to dissatisfaction and, as Ramsbotham noted, 'although it was only the students who protested publicly, muttered criticism of the expense could be heard from almost every quarter.'⁹¹⁷

Meanwhile, local and foreign journalists continued to focus their reports on the extravagance of the occasion. In the face of the student protests of early 1971, which clearly showed popular dissatisfaction with the purported high cost of the Celebrations, reports appeared in the local press boasting of the spending. *Kayhan*, for example, ran the story in June 1971 that a British firm had won an \$864,000 contract to install decorative lights in Tehran and Shiraz.⁹¹⁸ The regime promoted this luxury expenditure as indicative of its success and was eager to show off these aspects of the event to the local and foreign media, but this only led to more rumour and conjecture. One student speculated that the lights from Mehrabad Airport to 24 Esfand Square alone cost one million tomans (approximately \$135,000) and was the source of people's unhappiness.⁹¹⁹ An opposition radio station stoked the anger of Iranians by suggesting that 'poor people's taxes have been poured into the pockets of the English firm.'⁹²⁰

From a public relations perspective, the Pahlavi regime simply did not do enough to counter the disapproval of the high cost of the Celebrations, even if some of it could have easily been justified in the context of Iran's economic development and the reported costs were exaggerated. British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham recognised both the positive aspects of the Celebrations and the regime's failure to present them convincingly, as they adopted the (unsuccessful) strategy of trying to divert attention away from any talk of expenditures.

⁹¹⁷ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 3, FCO 17/1529.

⁹¹⁸ 'Decorations', *Kayhan International*, 5 June 1971.

⁹¹⁹ SAVAK internal report, 28 Tir 1350/ 19 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 151.

⁹²⁰ SAVAK special bulletin, 29 Tir 1350/ 20 July 1971, *ibid*, p. 156.

Even the luxury expenditure on the tent city (the “Claridges in the desert” aspect, pounced upon by the foreign press) was justified as necessary to attract foreign tourists and investment, although the Shah and the Empress tried to divert attention from it.⁹²¹

The construction of the tent city was widely presented in the media as a waste of money, but it formed part of a strategy to develop tourism infrastructure and attract foreign tourists to Iran. This strategy was ultimately successful and benefitted Iran’s economy, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Rather than make that case strongly in the media and tackle the criticism directly, the regime tended to distance itself from it and refuse to address any subjects of criticism. But with such vast resources and influence in the media, how did the Pahlavi regime allow the negative perception of the Celebrations to endure? One passage from Alam’s diaries from October 1972, one year after the Celebrations, sheds some light on this.

Asked HMQ at the airport whether I might take the Crown Prince to the premiere of the film documentary about last year’s monarchy celebrations, telling her that HIM had already approved the suggestion. ‘For goodness sake, please leave me alone’, she said, ‘I want our names to be utterly disassociated from those ghastly celebrations.’⁹²²

The Pahlavis grew tired of the media condemnation and, rather than fight it, sought to remove themselves from the discussion completely. The Shahbanou could not have been clearer and in the years following the occasion there are relatively few references to the Celebrations in the literature on Pahlavi Iran, certainly in state-commissioned literature. There were funds set aside in the budget of the Executive Committee for the publication of a volume outlining the full details of the events that took place in Iran and around the world. The publication would involve information on financial contributions and an acknowledgement of the positive effects of the Celebrations on Iranian cultural studies and industries. The Committee was, however, disbanded shortly after the Celebrations and its members went back to their normal jobs, so there was perhaps little enthusiasm for the project. The money that was set aside for the

⁹²¹ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, pp. 5-6, FCO 17/1529.

⁹²² Alam diary entry 10 October 1972, *The Shah and I* (1991), pp. 245-246.

publication went to repairing a mosque in Qom instead.⁹²³ Rather than spend too much time defending the Celebrations, they were swept under the carpet.

In October 1972 a ceremony was held at Pasargadae to mark the First Anniversary of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. A wreath was laid at the tomb of Cyrus the Great by Alam in a ceremony reminiscent of the one held one year earlier, followed by the broadcasting of the Shah's speech to the ancient king. Alam was accompanied by cabinet ministers, military officers and civilian officials. Principal venues for the commemoration were the Shahyad Tower and Rudaki Hall in Tehran, and schools, factories and national institutions around the country, while cinema houses arranged special film screenings.⁹²⁴ An exhibition was held in Tehran, arranged by the Imperial Court and the Ministry of Culture, detailing all of the publications from 47 countries that had been released to coincide with the Celebrations. It was intended to run for just four days, but Alam declared it 'too wonderful', for such a short run, and insisted that it stay open for two more weeks.⁹²⁵ The commemoration was modest in comparison with the festivities the previous year and did not receive much media attention. The Shah evidently did not consider it particularly important and went to Russia on a state visit while it was being held. The anniversary of the Celebrations was intended to become an annual holiday, but after one year this plan was abandoned. Presumably there was little interest and the regime shifted its focus on to the next celebration, the 50th Anniversary of the Pahlavi Dynasty, which was held in 1976.

Conclusion

As has been shown, the wide exposure the Celebrations received gave the regime's opponents an opportunity to rally resistance against them and, by extension, the regime itself. The emergence of armed guerrillas in northern Iran at the beginning of 1971, meanwhile, is evidence of the radicalisation of some of the groups opposed to the Shah that had been forced underground. In his report on the Celebrations, Peter Ramsbotham noted the historical context of the protests.

⁹²³ Conversation with Abdolreza Ansari, February 2016.

⁹²⁴ SAVAK to Head of State Police, 20 Mehr 1351/ 12 October 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 392.

⁹²⁵ 'Country Marks Anniversary of Celebrations', *Kayhan International*, 21 October 1972, p. 3.

Unlike the Coronation, which had been a popular occasion, little criticised, the preparations for the 25th centenary aroused some bitter opposition... But it would be wrong to assume that the centenary extravaganza was alone responsible for provoking the increased discontent with the regime which has been evident over the past year... Since 1967 there has been a sense of growing disillusionment and frustration, which the students first expressed in the bus riots of February 1970, long before the celebrations became a burning issue. Undoubtedly the celebrations offered opponents of the Shah a perfect target on which to focus popular discontent.⁹²⁶

It is easy to take a simplified view of the hostility to the Celebrations, but those engaged in Iran at the time understood the complexities of political opposition. There were some valid criticisms of the Celebrations, but there was also a general trend, as Ramsbotham noted, of 'growing disillusionment and frustration' developing in this period. The Celebrations provided a convenient focal point, but were not the sole reason for popular discontent. Jahangir Amuzegar observed that during the Pahlavi period in general, 'the opposition had a systematic and elaborate plan for discrediting him [the Shah] and the regime where the impact was greatest', but the regime, in contrast, had no such organised and efficient public relations mechanism in place. The effectiveness of the opposition against the Shah was, therefore, 'partly the result of the wide gap in competence and sophistication between his own poor public relations' apparatus and that of his enemies.'⁹²⁷ Perception of the Celebrations even today is overwhelmingly negative, indicative of the effectiveness of the opposition to them. It is the victor who writes the history, it is said. In today's Iran the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations are referred to as *bazm-e ahriman*, the devil's feast.

Khomeini's opposition to the Celebrations through his speeches from Najaf, which were relayed into Iran by radio and in written reproductions, and subsequently quoted in opposition pamphlets distributed around universities,

⁹²⁶ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 3, FCO 17/1529.

⁹²⁷ Jahangir Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution: The Pahlavis' Triumph and Tragedy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 226.

made him a figurehead of opposition to the Shah's rule. Khomeini attacked the Pahlavi historical narrative, the ideology of Pahlavism and by extension the very legitimacy of the Pahlavi regime itself, which the Celebrations were supposed to enforce. In a sense, the clerical opposition to the Celebrations constituted a clash of narratives, with one side promoting the idea that Iranian kingship had brought success and glory to the country, and the other side arguing that Iranian kings had enslaved the people, bringing them misery and destitution. This view was most clearly expressed by Khomeini, but as this chapter has shown, opposing narratives were also promoted by other influential figures such as Shariati, while students in Qom objected to the Shahyad monument in Tehran which they considered to be an un-Islamic symbol.

Meanwhile, the regime did not do enough to counter the negative perception of the Celebrations and rather than attempt to answer the concerns of protesters with a positive message, they locked them up and adopted more rigorous security measures. This left many Iranians feeling angry at being left out. They were largely excluded from the principal ceremonies in Persepolis and Pasargadae, and in their place were foreigners, experiencing the Shah's sumptuous hospitality at the supposed cost to the national budget. The regime would justify such spending as contributing to Iran's economic development by encouraging international investment and inspiring foreign tourists to visit Iran, but these arguments failed to pacify the regime's detractors. Ali Ansari has written that the Pahlavi regime tended to prioritise Iran over Iranians themselves, a criticism that could be levelled against the organisers of the Anniversary Celebrations.⁹²⁸ It is clear that domestically the regime took for granted the passivity of its citizens and while individual acts of dissent were met with ruthless efficiency by the security forces, the underlying causes of discontent were not given much scrutiny.

⁹²⁸ Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 175.

Chapter 8: The Iranian Economy and the Celebrations

As the previous chapter has shown, one of the primary criticisms of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations was that they were too costly. The presentation of the Celebrations as lavish and wasteful has largely gone unchallenged since the time of the occasion in 1971. Critics, international and domestic, at the time commented on the unsuitability of Iran to hold such an event while some of its people still lived in abject poverty. A report from the *Washington Daily News* called the Celebrations a ‘vain, pompous, vulgar show of wealth’⁹²⁹ and *Newsweek* wrote that the event was ‘a mixture of pomp and pomposity, of regal splendor and petty carping.’⁹³⁰ The Iranian Liberation Front, a foreign-based organisation opposed to the Shah, declared that ‘the Puppet regime wants to have the most expensive celebration in human history’.⁹³¹ According to Andrew Scott Cooper, reports such as these ‘presented a devastating portrait of conditions inside Iran and helped define the Shah as a corrupt, cruel dictator.’⁹³² The Celebrations have become such a crucial part of the characterisation of the extravagance of the Pahlavi court that they are considered beyond vindication. Even more favourable accounts in the secondary literature conclude that they were overpriced and ultimately counterproductive.

The heightened media attention introduced an element of sensationalism to the event, particularly with regard to the cost, that has persisted to this day. In a recent interview Bani Sadr, former president of the Islamic Republic, said that the Celebrations had cost \$200 million, ‘but I don’t have the exact figures in front of me’, he added. In the same television programme a Swiss waiter declared confidently that the equivalent of the annual budget of Switzerland had been spent on the occasion. In fact, depending on which source one reads, the estimated cost of the Celebrations fluctuates from the official figure of \$16.8 million stated by Asadollah Alam at the time, to \$300 million, \$1 billion,⁹³³ and even \$4 billion.⁹³⁴ One of the purposes of this chapter is to evaluate these

⁹²⁹ ‘Fun in the Sand: 2500 year celebration’, *Washington Daily News*, 16 October 1971.

⁹³⁰ Jenkins, ‘Iran’s Birthday Party’, *Newsweek*, 25 October 1971, p. 33.

⁹³¹ SAVAK special bulletin, 29 Tir 1350/ 20 July 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, p. 161.

⁹³² Cooper, *The Fall of Heaven* (2016), p. 197.

⁹³³ ‘Het zeer rijke, zeer arme Perzië’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 1 October 1971.

⁹³⁴ ‘Opponent van Sjah krijgt geen pas’, *Trouw*, 12 October 1971.

claims and offer a more sober analysis of the spending associated with the Celebrations.

When evaluating the success of the Celebrations, in terms of meeting the objectives set out by the organisers at the outset, their economic effects should be considered. It is the purpose of the following chapter, therefore, to examine the economic aspects of the Celebrations, taking into consideration the costs associated with the event and the potential benefits of such spending. The year that the Celebrations took place was named Cyrus the Great Year, and many of the projects completed during this year were attributed directly to the Celebrations. So what do we mean when we talk about the cost of the Celebrations? Do we include the building of roads and schools, dams and airports associated with this modernisation effort, or do we merely refer to the tent city and the entertaining of heads of state? If we are to consider certain spending as investment, designed to improve infrastructure and industries, then the question of how much was spent has to be considered in a different light. This chapter will show that the Celebrations and the country's development programmes, outlined in the Plan Organisation's Fourth Plan, were intertwined. One sector that benefitted particularly from the Celebrations was tourism, which saw a sharp increase in foreign currency earnings in the years after 1971. This was, as we will see, a direct result of the investment into this sector as part of the Anniversary Celebrations, as well as the international publicity generated by the principal ceremonies in Pasargadae and Persepolis.

The Plan Organisation and the Celebrations

In the late 1940s it was decided that Iran's economic planning should be carried out by a new government agency. This agency, named *Sāzemān-e Barnāmeḥ*, the Plan Organisation, was established in 1949. It was designed to be semi-autonomous, thus removing it from the 'soggy mess', as Khodadad Farmanfarmian termed it, of the Iranian government bureaucracy and it had its own finances earmarked, which it had the authority to dispense as it saw fit.⁹³⁵ For example, all of the country's oil revenues were set aside for the First Plan (1949-1955), which, due to the oil nationalisation crisis in the early 1950s,

⁹³⁵ Khodadad Farmanfarmian, quoted in Frances Bostock and Geoffrey Jones, *Planning and Power in Iran: Ebteḥaj and Economic Development Under the Shah* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 97.

ultimately led to a halt in its progress.⁹³⁶ Abdolhassan Ebtehaj, who headed the Plan Organisation from 1954 until 1959, explained the rationale behind such government planning efforts:

Some degree of national planning is essential to the high rate of investment that is required if undeveloped countries are to break the vicious circle of poverty and stagnation. The government must be planner. But the government will only be an originator of new activities, the chief engine of growth, a major source of innovation, and a large scale enterpriser to the extent that private investors and businesses fail to recognize, or to exploit their myriad opportunities for expansion.⁹³⁷

In other words, private businesses held the key to Iran's economic development, but it should be the responsibility of the government to create a sophisticated plan. The Third Plan (1962-1968) was the first real comprehensive development plan and oversaw more directly productive results.⁹³⁸ Its principal objective was to achieve a minimum Gross National Product (GNP) growth of six percent, which it exceeded by two to three percent.⁹³⁹

The Fourth Plan (1968-1973), which covered the period of the Celebrations, sought to increase GNP at an average annual rate of around nine percent. One of the ways in which it would achieve these results was through industrial development, by 'gradually increasing the importance of industry, raising the productivity of capital, and using advanced techniques of production.'⁹⁴⁰ To help it accomplish this goal, 92 percent of the \$10.8 billion assigned to the Fourth Plan was financed domestically, primarily through oil revenues.⁹⁴¹ When we discuss the high costs associated with the Celebrations, it must be understood that much of what was spent fell under the remit of the Fourth Plan. Of course, the Plan Organisation was also one of the consultative

⁹³⁶ F Daftary, 'Barnāma-Rizi', *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1988), available online at <<http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/barnama-rizi-planning>> [accessed 2 February 2017].

⁹³⁷ Speaking at a conference in San Francisco in 1961. Quoted in Bostock and Jones, *Planning and Power in Iran* (2013), p. 93.

⁹³⁸ Farhad Daftary, 'Development and Planning in Iran: A Historical Survey', *Iranian Studies*, 6:4 (1973), p. 196.

⁹³⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 206.

⁹⁴¹ F Daftary, 'Barnama-Riza', *Encyclopedia Iranica* (1988).

bodies involved in the organisation of the Anniversary Celebrations from the late 1950s.⁹⁴²

As the 1960s progressed it became clear that the Celebrations would be part of the Plan Organisation's strategy to develop key infrastructures in order to enlarge Iran's potential for development, ultimately to the benefit of the country. In his Now Ruz message, Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda pointed out that the budget for 1350 (1971-1972) was the biggest yet, made possible through the recent increase in the price of oil.⁹⁴³ To take advantage of the momentum generated, many projects overseen by the Plan Organisation were accelerated so that they could coincide with Cyrus the Great Year. Among the many projects completed during this year were six dams across the country (named Darius the Great, Cyrus the Great, Aras, Shah Abbas Kabir, Shapur I and Sangarsavar)⁹⁴⁴ and a number of television stations, notably in Kurdistan, Baluchistan and Khorasan.⁹⁴⁵ These television stations were a part of a larger \$225 million project of national telecommunications, which was established in this year and which sought to also provide 14,000 kilometres of transmission lines.⁹⁴⁶ The Ministry of Co-operatives and Rural Affairs announced the establishment of 2,500 co-operatives throughout the country, which would be inaugurated during the Celebrations.⁹⁴⁷ This scheme can be linked to both the third phase of the land reform programme initiated as part of the White Revolution, and the Fourth Plan.⁹⁴⁸ At a meeting of the Iran Novin party on 5 May 1971, Hoveyda, answering criticisms of the spending associated with the Celebrations, argued that without them 'many projects, among others the steel factory (in Isfahan) would not have been finished'.⁹⁴⁹ Many of these projects were already underway, but the Celebrations provided an extra impetus to finish

⁹⁴² Report by Shojaeddin Shafa, 24 Esfand 1337/ 15 March 1959, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 1, pp. 1-5.

⁹⁴³ '1350 named Cyrus the Great Year', *Kayhan International*, 27 March 1971.

⁹⁴⁴ *Iran '71: A Survey of the Iranian Economy* (1971), p. 123.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 114.

⁹⁴⁶ Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch* (1977), p. 21.

⁹⁴⁷ 'Ministry to establish 2500 co-ops during 1350', *Kayhan International*, 22 May 1971.

⁹⁴⁸ For an evaluation of the land reform programme and the establishment of co-operatives, see Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution* (1991), pp. 183-188.

⁹⁴⁹ Jonker to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2 June 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. The steel factory was part of a \$450 million complex. See *Oil and the Economy of Iran* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1972), p. 3.

them. In effect, as the Shah argued, during the Cyrus the Great Year, due to the increase in productivity, 'nearly a whole year's extra work was performed'.⁹⁵⁰

Much attention has been paid to the foreign businesses that benefitted from the Celebrations, most notably the French. However, Iranian companies also profited from both the exposure generated and from lucrative contracts directly associated with the occasion. Iran Air, for example, was declared the 'Airline of the Celebrations' and used the event to promote itself as a competitive global airline, and Iranian construction companies were involved in many of the building projects. For example, a company called Pre-Fab Inc. supplied the pre-cast concrete benches for the Aryamehr Stadium, which was directly funded by the Plan Organisation.⁹⁵¹

One important industry that benefitted the most from the Celebrations was tourism. The positive effect on this sector was not merely a convenient by-product; it was part of an overall strategy to develop a potentially lucrative industry that would bring foreign capital to Iran and create jobs for the local population. The sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae have always held an allure for travellers to Iran. Despite this, there was no real infrastructure in place to deal with any significant number of tourists visiting the country. In the case of Persepolis, there were no roads of good enough quality linking the site with Shiraz, making the 70 kilometre journey inconvenient and uncomfortable. The 135 kilometre journey from Shiraz to Pasargadae was even more uncomfortable. Furthermore, there was a general shortage of hotels in the region. The Celebrations were thus intended to act as a catalyst to help the Fars region in particular⁹⁵² and the country in general to achieve its potential.⁹⁵³

⁹⁵⁰ Karanjia, *The Mind of a Monarch* (1977), p. 21.

⁹⁵¹ *Iran '71: A Survey of the Iranian Economy* (1971), p. 92.

⁹⁵² As early as 1959 the Central Council was urged to have regular contact with the governor of Fars. See report of meeting at Sa' dabad, 9 Tir 1338/ 1 July 1959, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁵³ It has been alleged that the idea to hold a national event in Iran was first suggested to then Prime Minister Asadollah Alam by the chairman of the Israeli Government Tourist Association, Teddy Kollek, who would later become mayor of Jerusalem. He argued that the site around Persepolis should first be developed with hotels, roads and new vehicles, then an event should be organised to attract visitors. Kollek apparently never imagined that his suggestion would result in such a huge nationalist spectacle. See Cynthia Helms, *An Ambassador's Wife in Iran* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1981), pp. 67-68. Another source suggests that the Celebrations were inspired by an Israeli scholarly event to mark the liberation of the Jews by Cyrus the Great. See Naraghi, *From Palace to Prison* (1994), pp. 26-27.

Tourism

In the 1950s there had been fewer than 2,000 tourists visiting Iran per year, a figure that gradually increased throughout the decade to reach around 50,000 by 1962. In that year Asadollah Alam, who was then prime minister, noting the potential of this industry, announced a 200 million rial plan for tourism promotion, and in early 1965 the Iranian National Tourist Organisation (INTO) was set up to direct the development of the sector.⁹⁵⁴ The organisation invited foreign experts to Iran who suggested rather optimistically that within ten years the tourism sector should be able to compete with the oil sector as a source of national revenue.⁹⁵⁵ From March 1966 to March 1967, the number of visitors increased from 181,498 to 211,824.⁹⁵⁶ The Economic Review of 1348 (1969-1970) recorded that by then numbers were up to 300,000.⁹⁵⁷ Over a third of these foreign visitors arrived from Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Arab world, with another third from the more lucrative markets of United States and Western Europe.⁹⁵⁸ It was the latter group that INTO sought to attract in greater numbers.

By 1971 the tourism industry was generating \$43 million per year, making it the country's fourth largest industry, behind carpets and raw cotton, in terms of foreign currency earnings.⁹⁵⁹ There were clear indications that tourism would soon overtake the other non-petroleum based industries. Between 1344 (1965-1966) and 1349 (1970-1971), for instance, the value of exports from carpets rose from \$45.4 million to \$53.9 million, an increase of 19 percent, and earnings from raw cotton increased by 13 percent. During the same five-year period earnings from tourism saw a 113 percent increase. The tourism industry was also important as a creator of employment. In 1349 the industry directly employed 23,030 people, with a further 266,200 people employed in

⁹⁵⁴ *Economic Review of the Year 1346: 21 March 1967 – 20 March 1968* (Tehran: The Bank of Iran and the Middle East, 1968), pp. 125-126.

⁹⁵⁵ 'L'organisation nationale du tourisme iranien veille au développement de l'équipement hôtelier', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 1965, p. 33.

⁹⁵⁶ *Economic Review of the Year 1346* (1968), pp. 125-126.

⁹⁵⁷ *Economic Review of the Year 1348: 21 March 1969 to 20 March 1970* (Tehran: The Bank of Iran and the Middle East, 1970), p. 81

⁹⁵⁸ *Economic Review of the Year 1349: 21 March 1970 to 20 March 1971* (Tehran: The Bank of Iran and the Middle East, 1971), p. 82.

⁹⁵⁹ 'Iranian Tourist Industry Strongly Benefits from Anniversary Celebrations', Foreign Relations Department, Ministry of Information, Tehran, 1972, p. 2.

construction related to tourism, and 44,381 in restaurants.⁹⁶⁰ A pamphlet published by INTO shortly after the Celebrations stated,

the industry is still on the threshold of its large potential... Preparations for the 2500th Anniversary Celebration accelerated those developments to the point where Iran now feels ready to invite the world to her doorstep. The immediate goal is to raise tourist income above the famous Persian carpet and highly valued Persian cotton to take second place behind the export earnings of Iran's massive oil exports... the country is preparing itself for a mass tourist invasion.⁹⁶¹

It was clear that there was potential for the tourism industry to expand and the Celebrations provided material opportunities, as well as considerable exposure, of which the organisers were eager to take advantage.

Significant investments in tourism and transport infrastructure included the asphaltting of roads, amounting to around \$40 million,⁹⁶² which had been discussed by the organisers of the Celebrations as being of considerable importance to the occasion as early as 1961.⁹⁶³ Other significant developments in transport infrastructure included the completion of airports at Abadan, Sanandaj, Kerman, Hamadan, Tabriz, Isfahan and Mashhad, as well as the expansion of the Mehrabad Airport in Tehran and the Shiraz Airport,⁹⁶⁴ and the inauguration of the railway line between Iran and Turkey.⁹⁶⁵ A number of tourism pamphlets were published in conjunction with the Celebrations, including at least one on Isfahan,⁹⁶⁶ one on Fars⁹⁶⁷ and other general

⁹⁶⁰ Eckart Ehlers, 'Some Geographic and Socio-Economic Aspects of Tourism in Iran', *Sonderdruck aus ORIENT*, vol. 15, no. 3, September 1974, p. 103.

⁹⁶¹ 'Iranian Tourist Industry Strongly Benefits from Anniversary Celebrations', 1972, pp. 2-6.

⁹⁶² *Iran '71: A Survey of the Iranian Economy* (1971), p. 105.

⁹⁶³ Record of a meeting of the Celebrations Committee, 24 Mehr 1340/ 16 October 1961, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 1, pp. 232-233.

⁹⁶⁴ *Iran '71: A Survey of the Iranian Economy* (1971), p. 103.

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 111.

⁹⁶⁶ Tourism pamphlet: *Isfahan* (Tehran: Iran National Tourist Organization, 1971).

⁹⁶⁷ Aziz Hatami, *Persepolis, Pasargadae and Nagsh-e Rostam: Presentation on the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Achaemenian Dynasty* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1966). There are a number of references to other tourism pamphlets and books, published in English, French and Persian. See, for example, letter Amir Moez to Abdolreza Ansari, 11 Khordad 1350/ 31 May 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 88.

pamphlets on Iran, including one published by Iran Air.⁹⁶⁸ Other books were published abroad for the occasion which sought to increase international exposure of Iran's ancient heritage, in many cases funded by the Central Council, such as *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom*,⁹⁶⁹ *Iran of the Master Builders*,⁹⁷⁰ and the Japanese photographer Banri Namikawa's *Iran*,⁹⁷¹ which included photographs from the parade at Persepolis. The equipment for a light and sound show was installed at the ruins of Persepolis, making the ancient Achaemenid city only the fourth major tourist attraction in the world to have such a feature.⁹⁷²

The construction of hotels was also considered as a long-term investment for Iran's tourism infrastructure. The economic report for 1348 (1969-1970) announced the building of a 10-storey hotel in Shiraz at a cost of 500 million rials (\$6.7 million), for example, and the earlier 1346 (1967-1968) report makes it explicitly clear that such spending should be viewed in the context of the Fourth Development Plan.⁹⁷³ There were three hotels initiated during the Celebrations that were built with the October festivities in mind: the 160-room Cyrus Hotel in Shiraz; the 180-room Darius Hotel in Persepolis; and the 13-storey Inter-Continental in Tehran with over 400 rooms. These were collaborative efforts in which INTO had a majority interest. For example, the Inter-Continental cost \$13 million, with INTO providing 50 percent of the capital. Equal parts of the remaining 50 percent came from the Inter-Continental Corporation and an individual investor, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.⁹⁷⁴ Although the hotels were built initially to deal with the guests arriving to take part in the Celebrations, particularly the two in Fars, their construction should be viewed also in the context of the Fourth Plan.

⁹⁶⁸ Tourism pamphlet: *The 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire* (Tehran: Iran Air, 1971).

⁹⁶⁹ Roman Ghirshman, Vladamir Minorsky and Ramesh Sanghvi, *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom* (London: Orient Commerce Establishment, 1971). Also published in other languages, including French, Russian and English. This was paid for by the Central Council for 47,616,720 rials, approximately \$635,000. Kholāseh-ye dariyāfti [summary of receipts], 30 Mordad 1351/ 21 August 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 386-388.

⁹⁷⁰ Henri Stierlin, *Iran of the Master Builders: 2500 Years of Architecture* (Geneva: Editions Sigma, 1971). Published in a number of languages including French, English and German.

⁹⁷¹ Banri Namikawa, *Iran* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd, 1975).

⁹⁷² The others being the Colosseum in Rome, Balbec in Lebanon and the Palais de Versailles. See *Outline of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Central Council of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, 1971), p. 8.

⁹⁷³ Economic Review 1348, p. 82; and Economic Review 1346, p. 126.

⁹⁷⁴ 'New Hotels', *Iran Tribune*, November 1971, p. 46.

The tent city too was handed over to the tourist organisation and was intended to be turned into luxury accommodation, 'a sort of Club Méditerranée for millionaires prepared to pay for the joys of sleeping in the same bed as Princess Grace.'⁹⁷⁵ Shortly after the Celebrations, it was rented out for 'a princely sum' for the annual Bal des Petits Lits Blancs and more such events were expected.⁹⁷⁶ In 1972 INTO wrote a booklet on tourism investment opportunities in Iran, in which it advertised the tent city:

Near Persepolis is a complex of approximately 50 structures which were designed to house visiting heads of state during the celebrations of the 2,500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire, along with the dining and recreation facilities. The buildings are in the form of tents, to evoke the exotic ambience of the country, but in fact they are permanent structures equipped with all modern facilities. This complex could be converted into a unique and appealing ultra-luxury tourist facility and is available to any well-established hoteliers who wish to do so.⁹⁷⁷

In a letter to Alam after the Celebrations, however, Farzaneh outlined the difficulties in finding investors for the tents and in the end it appears that plans to turn them into permanent accommodation were put on hold.⁹⁷⁸ The potential of the site was noticed even after the revolution. As late as 2001, the director of the Fars Province Cultural Heritage Organisation proposed to revive the tent city as luxury accommodation.⁹⁷⁹ Unsurprisingly perhaps, this idea came to nothing. The fact that today, nearly 50 years after the Celebrations took place, the metal frames of the tents are still standing, indicates that they were built to last.⁹⁸⁰ The lights installed at the ruins of Persepolis for the purpose of the *son*

⁹⁷⁵ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 4, FCO 17/1529.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁹⁷⁷ *Tourism: Investment Opportunities in Iran* (Tehran: Iranian National Tourist Organization Research and Planning Department, February 1972), p. 11.

⁹⁷⁸ See Cyrus Farzaneh to Alam, 26 Ordibehesht 1351/ 16 May 1972, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), pp. 183-185. According to the letter, Iran Air, Pan American, Intercontinental and Hilton declined the opportunity to invest in the tents. Club Méditerranée offered to take control of the tents, but would only rent them out to guests for \$3 a night, so INTO rejected the offer. A number of other options were explored, including turning the tents into a museum or country club and putting them up for general sale to the Iranian public.

⁹⁷⁹ Jason Burke, 'Shah's opulent tent city awaits rebirth in desert', *The Observer*, 9 September 2001.

⁹⁸⁰ See Figures 6-8.

et lumière also still function today, and one can see a light show there during the summer months.

There was a clear and demonstrable effort on behalf of the Celebrations' organisers to promote tourism in Iran, which was made explicit in the months leading up to the event. Responding to criticism of the building projects in Fars province, the Shahbanou said to a reporter in Europe, 'we would have had to do that at some point anyway, and now we've had to do it a bit quicker. In time the tourists will bring us back the money.'⁹⁸¹ This shows that at least this part of the money spent on the Celebrations was intended to be invested. The fact that the head of INTO, Cyrus Farzaneh, was involved in one of the committees for the Celebrations, demonstrates the importance of tourism for the occasion.⁹⁸² In a report on the projected effects of the Celebrations on the tourism industry, Farzaneh stated that the '2500th Anniversary Celebration may well be regarded as one of the most rewarding tourist promotion developments of the 20th century.'⁹⁸³

The growth of the tourism industry in the immediate period following the Celebrations was considerable. According to official figures, in 1972 there were 415,000 tourists visiting Iran, over 100,000 more than in 1970.⁹⁸⁴ These tourists spent up to \$60 million in the country, representing 14 percent of the total foreign currency earnings for that year.⁹⁸⁵ These figures steadily increased throughout the 1970s into the Fifth Development Plan. By 1975 the number of tourists had increased to 628,000, reaching 690,550 by 1977, with an increase in earnings over the two year period from \$123 million to \$152 million.⁹⁸⁶ The 10 percent increase in tourist numbers alongside a 24 percent increase in generated income during this period suggests a degree of success from INTO in attracting wealthier visitors, as well as effectively harnessing the industry's

⁹⁸¹ Naomi Barry, 'Feest in Persepolis, reclame zonder te betalen' (Party in Persepolis: advertisement without paying), *Haagsche Courant*, 25 September 1971, p. 7.

⁹⁸² Shafa to Jonker, 28 January 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. This particular letter states Cyrus Farzaneh as a member of the Executive Committee, but according to Abdolreza Ansari he was not involved in the Committee. It is unclear as to why Shafa included him in his list, but it does indicate that he was involved in some capacity at the time. He is listed on a number of occasions as attending meetings.

⁹⁸³ 'Iranian Tourist Industry Strongly Benefits from Anniversary Celebrations', 1972, p. 2.

⁹⁸⁴ *Summary of the Fifth National Development Plan: 1973-1978* (Tehran: Plan and Budget Organization, 1973), p. 444.

⁹⁸⁵ INTO Weekly News Bulletin, 8 July 1973.

⁹⁸⁶ *Tourist Statistics of Iran: 1977* (Tehran: Ministry of Information and Tourism, 1977).

profitability. It was the aim of the Fifth Development Plan to reach the ambitious figure of 925,000 tourists by 1978, with a budget increase from four billion rials (approximately \$53.3 million) at the beginning of the Fourth Plan to 13.6 billion rials (approximately \$181.3 million).⁹⁸⁷ A later figure proposed that the tourism investment figure for the Fifth Plan would actually reach 23 billion rials⁹⁸⁸ and the number of tourists would pass one million by 1978.⁹⁸⁹ A number of initiatives contributed to the increase in the number of tourists throughout the 1970s, including for example the introduction of visa-free travel for many countries.⁹⁹⁰ But the initial increase of around 35 percent in tourist figures from 1970 to 1972 suggests that the Celebrations were successful as an exercise in tourism promotion. Moreover, the development of infrastructure, to help deal with the projected increase in tourist numbers over the following decade, reinforces the argument that a large part of the spending for the Celebrations could be considered as vital investment that ultimately came back through foreign capital.

Another benefit of the Celebrations to the local economy was that they provided jobs, particularly for manual labourers, especially in Fars province. In his report Ramsbotham argued that 'it was good for decentralisation that so much money should be spent outside the capital.' He continued,

In fact, it was fortunate for the drought-stricken province of Fars that so much money should be poured into it this year: many of the Qashqai nomads who had lost all their flocks, were employed in the celebrations instead of being left to die. Indeed, without the celebrations, Fars might have been a sorry sight.⁹⁹¹

So, although the regime was criticised for spending money on the Celebrations while people suffered from drought, the attention on the area of Fars actually helped to create employment. As the tourism figures show, the investment was not short-term and the projects that were initiated had the potential to provide jobs into the future, as well as bring foreign capital to the area. But separating

⁹⁸⁷ *Fifth National Development Plan* (1973), p. 446.

⁹⁸⁸ Approximately \$307 million. 'Iran: Approaching the Crossroads', *Euro Finance Report*, 24 November 1976, p. 219.

⁹⁸⁹ INTO Weekly News Bulletin, 30 December 1973.

⁹⁹⁰ From 1 October 1973, for instance, visas were officially abolished between Iran and Britain. INTO Weekly News Bulletin, 13 August 1973.

⁹⁹¹ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 5, FCO 17/1529.

long-term investments from spending solely for the main activities in October 1971 is difficult.

The Cost

At the time of the Celebrations a large number of Iranian citizens were living below the poverty line, which became one of the principal criticisms of the event and was the reason many international newspapers focussed their reports on the excessive spending.⁹⁹² One Dutch newspaper, for example, reported it as 'fantastic (but true)' that the Celebrations 'will cost a billion dollars in total... [which] serves only to obscure how badly Iran is actually doing... Even in the official statistics the employment rate in the country is estimated at just 29 percent.'⁹⁹³ The overseas-based opposition publication *Iran Free Press* wrote:

Men of conscience, the world over, will either laugh – or cry – at the presumptuousness of an illiterate despot who will wantonly squander \$600 million dollars to bedazzle a handful of ineffective or second rate plenipotentiaries while his own people wallow and die in their own filth just beyond the smelling distance of his opulent tables.⁹⁹⁴

As mentioned previously, estimates of the total cost of the Celebrations vary from the official figure of \$16.8 million stated by Asadollah Alam to \$4 billion.⁹⁹⁵ How can there be such a vast disparity? It is striking that in the literature on the Celebrations, few primary sources are cited as evidence of the cost of the festivities. For example, James Bill states in *The Eagle and the Lion* that the Celebrations cost \$200 million, which he admitted is a 'personal estimate based on an examination of various sources'. He does not directly cite any of these 'various sources'.⁹⁹⁶

Shortly after the Celebrations Alam gave a press conference at which he made a statement regarding the cost of the occasion. The British Foreign Office transcript of this conference underlines, in supposed disbelief, Alam's claim that

⁹⁹² See William A. Dorman and Mansour Farhang, *The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism Deference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 117-120.

⁹⁹³ 'Het zeer rijke, zeer arme Perzië', *NRC Handelsblad*, 1 October 1971.

⁹⁹⁴ 'The Shah: Poor Imitation of a Real Ruler of Iran', *Iran Free Press*, 1:2, October 1971, p. 6.

⁹⁹⁵ 'Opponent van Sjah krijgt geen pas', *Trouw*, 12 October 1971.

⁹⁹⁶ Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion* (1988), fn. 2, p. 482.

the Celebrations ‘cost no more than 16.8 million dollars.’⁹⁹⁷ He confirmed that work associated with the Fourth Plan should not be taken into account since the projects in question ‘would have been constructed in any case.’⁹⁹⁸ According to Alam, the cost of entertaining heads of state was \$2.3 million, the tents at Persepolis cost \$6.3 million, the Shahyad monument cost \$6 million and the cost of the parade, the printing of books and transport completed the spending.⁹⁹⁹ It should be noted that some of the foreign firms offered their services for free, presumably eager to showcase their wares and services at such a high-profile gathering.¹⁰⁰⁰

Regardless of the exact figure, an important consideration is who exactly was responsible for costs associated with the principal festivities in October 1971. According to reports from the regime, the private sector covered the cost of the tent city, the Maxim’s dinner,¹⁰⁰¹ as well as other costs, such as the purchase of 50 cars which were placed at the disposal of foreign heads of state and were donated to the government following the festivities.¹⁰⁰² In the months leading up to the Celebrations people were heard to say of the Shahyad Monument, for example, things such as ‘how many of Iran’s poor could be given a better existence with the money spent on that?’¹⁰⁰³ In answering this at a meeting of the Tehran Congress for the Celebrations in May 1971, Alam revealed that money had been put aside for the construction of the monument, when suddenly the private sector found out and offered to pay for the whole project.¹⁰⁰⁴ ‘Those who oppose the celebrations because of the cost, therefore,’ he stated in typically robust language, ‘cannot be considered Iranians.’¹⁰⁰⁵ The final accounts of the Central Council of the Celebrations show that funds for the Shahyad Monument were actually taken out of its budget. However, there are indications elsewhere that the private sector supported the Celebrations financially.

⁹⁹⁷ Publicity for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, 25 October 1971, FCO 17/1529.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰⁰ For example, the aforementioned hairdressers. See ‘The 2500th Anniversary of the Crown’, *Kayhan International*, 12 July 1971.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ansari, *The Shah’s Iran* (2016), p. 295.

¹⁰⁰² ‘The 2500th Anniversary of the Crown’, *Kayhan International*.

¹⁰⁰³ Jonker to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2 June 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

¹⁰⁰⁴ It was originally planned to be funded by the Tehran municipal budget, see Javad Bushehri to Fathollah Farood, Mayor of Tehran, 24 Bahman 1339/ 13 February 1961, ‘asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi’ (1998), p. 129.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Jonker to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2 June 1971, MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

Published documents from the period confirm Alam's claim that private donors covered at least some of the costs. In July 1971, for example, Alam listed donations that he had received amounting to 427,094,750 rials (approximately \$5.7 million).¹⁰⁰⁶ The extent to which these donations were 'voluntary' is questionable. The land redistribution of the White Revolution had forced former rich landowners towards the industrial sector,¹⁰⁰⁷ and there was an awareness among the new industrial rich that the regime could, at any time, make things very difficult for their businesses. In the case of the Rezai brothers in February 1971, the regime, without warning, nationalised their mines, which had an estimated worth of one billion dollars.¹⁰⁰⁸ There were obvious benefits in keeping the regime on one's side and if industrialists had been invited to pay up for a common cause, then it would have been unwise to refuse. The large number of Iranians who bought shares in the commemorative schools for the Celebrations illustrates the extent to which the rich were willing to contribute financially.¹⁰⁰⁹ There is also evidence that foreign firms contributed financially towards the official programme for the Celebrations, including British banks.¹⁰¹⁰

Though much of the spending on the Celebrations can be viewed as investment in Iran's economy, it must be stressed that this was not the case for all costs incurred, and some of the spending can only be described as extravagant. Jewellery was made for the imperial family by a French jeweller specially for the occasion, using rough diamonds from the treasury and platinum, with costs covered by the Imperial Court.¹⁰¹¹ To give an idea of how much this cost to make, when Princess Pari Sima¹⁰¹² declared her intention to attend, a tiara made from diamonds, and necklace and earrings made from diamonds and pearls were produced at a cost of 3,572,400 rials (approximately \$47,600).¹⁰¹³ Monarchies, by nature, can be expensive, and the purchase of jewellery, gifts and outfits are a part of the institution. The cost to the Imperial

¹⁰⁰⁶ Alam to Manouchehr Eghbal, 2 Mordad 1350/ 24 July 1971, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), pp. 162-163.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution* (1991), p. 181.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Milani, *Eminent Persians*, vol. 2 (2008), p. 671.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See Chapter 5.

¹⁰¹⁰ Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 4, FCO 17/1529.

¹⁰¹¹ Imperial Court to Mr Jahanshahi, President of the Central Bank, Khordad 1350/ May/June 1971, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 171.

¹⁰¹² Wife of the half-brother of the Shah, Abdolreza Pahlavi.

¹⁰¹³ Asadollah Alam to Abdolreza Ansari, 14 Tir 1350/ 5 July 1971 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 172.

Court for this particular occasion, given that all of the imperial family were present as representatives of the monarchy, was considerably high.

Other costs included the purchase of 19,000 commemorative medals, which were ordered from the French firm Arthus-Bertrand at a cost of nearly 200,000 francs (approximately \$36,000).¹⁰¹⁴ In addition to these special medals, commemorative coins were minted by the Central Bank in gold, silver and bronze, and were mostly offered as gifts to guests at Persepolis.¹⁰¹⁵ The cost of printing books and arranging exhibitions could also reach a considerable amount. An exhibition to Canada, for instance, cost upwards of \$677,800,¹⁰¹⁶ and the production of books was more expensive than one might imagine. The publication of the aforementioned *Persia, The Immortal Kingdom*, for example, was produced at a cost of 47,616,720 rials (approximately \$634,890)¹⁰¹⁷ and a planned publication about the Celebrations (*Yādnāmeḥ-ye Jashn-e Shāhanshāhi-ye Irān*) was estimated to cost 32 million rials (approximately \$426,700).¹⁰¹⁸

Notwithstanding the money spent on jewellery, exhibitions and books, it is clear that the often stated sum of \$300 million is misleading for a number of reasons. Firstly, as stated above, money came from different sources, including private donors. As James Buchan argues in his *Days of God*, \$300 million amounted to a third of Iran's oil revenue in 1970, so had such a sum been spent for a three-day event then 'Iran's civil servants, armed forces and public creditors could not have been paid and the country would have been bankrupt.'¹⁰¹⁹ A lot of the money spent on the Celebrations came from the existing budgets of many ministries. In a letter to Boushehri in December 1969, Alam makes this point clear. In response to a request from the Ministry of Natural Resources for a budget of 2.5 million rials for the Celebrations, and a request from the Police Force asking for 15.3 million rials to buy 100 police motorcycles for the Celebrations, Alam said that the funds should come from

¹⁰¹⁴ Hormoz Gharib to Amir Mottaqi, 6 November 1350/ 02 September 1971, *ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁰¹⁵ Mehdi Boushehri to Central Bank, 5 Ordibehesht 1350/ 24 April 1971, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, p. 46.

¹⁰¹⁶ Alam to Hoveyda, 24 Farvardin 1350/ 13 April 1971, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 171.

¹⁰¹⁷ Khalāseh-ye dariyāfti, 30 Mordad 1351/ 21 August 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 386-388.

¹⁰¹⁸ Alam to Hoveyda, undated, 1973/1974, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 188. This particular book does not appear to have been published.

¹⁰¹⁹ Buchan, *Days of God* (2013), footnote 205, p. 406.

their existing budgets. He told Boushehri to 'Please make all government agencies and ministries aware that this is a national celebration and that it is the duty of every individual to help.'¹⁰²⁰ Rather than wait for an order from the Central Council, all government and non-government agencies were advised that funding should come out of their own budgets and they should not seek extra money from the Imperial Court. Supposedly annoyed by such requests, Alam ended the letter by discouraging frequent correspondence along these lines. Funds allocated by ministries to the Celebrations were relatively modest, particularly given the large figures associated with the event. A document from December 1970, for instance, states that the Ministry of Finance had agreed to spend 30 million rials on the Celebrations the following year, around \$400,000.¹⁰²¹ One of the problems with trying to come up with a satisfactory sum for the cost of the Celebrations is that much of what was spent was covered by the budgets of different government ministries and therefore do not appear in the final accounts of the Central Council.

Secondly, some of the money spent on the Celebrations could be said to have contributed to Iran's long-term economic plan. Since tourism promotion was an important aspect of the Celebrations, anything that contributed to this exercise could, arguably, be justified as viable investment, including, for instance, the construction of the tent city. Even if the Central Council had agreed to pay for the 100 motorcycles requested in the letter to Alam cited above, this could also have been considered as investment in the police force. The ephemeral aspects of the event are often overstated in many historical accounts of the Celebrations, but by studying the available documentary evidence, we see that there was a clear focus on providing long-lasting benefits and there was comparatively little waste.

The third problem with citing such huge sums is that they do not take into account that spending was spread over a number of years. Part of the spending for the Shahyad Monument, for instance, amounting to around \$2.5 million, was

¹⁰²⁰ Alam to Boushehri, 30 Azar 1348/ 21 December 1969, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 155.

¹⁰²¹ Alam to Eghbal, December 1970, 'asnād-e mahramāneh-ye jashnhā-ye 2500 sāleh-ye shāhanshāhi' (1998), p. 161.

spread evenly over three years, from 1347 (1968-69) to 1349 (1970-71).¹⁰²² Furthermore, the accounts for the Central Council for the Celebrations show that between Mehr 1339 (September 1960) and Esfand 1349 (February 1971) the purchases of the Council amounted to 422,494,290 rials (approximately \$5.6 million), in 1350 (1971-72), 579,941,476 rials (\$7.7 million) and in 1351 (1972-73), 344,071,090 rials (\$4.6 million).¹⁰²³ There were additional expenditures on top of this, but these figures clearly show that spending was spread over a period of time. The suggestion that there was a huge strain on the economy for just one year to fund the Celebrations is misleading.

Finally, a revealing aspect of the final reports from the accounting office of the Central Council is that there is no evidence of the spending of hundreds of millions of dollars that has been widely speculated about. The largest outlays were as follows: the repair of Persepolis, with funds allocated to the Ministry of Culture and Arts, 77,062,237 rials (approximately \$1 million); catering in Isfahan, Tehran, Persepolis and Shiraz, and related costs, 217,852,489 rials (\$3 million); aviation costs including ground hospitality, allocated to the transport committee and the national airline, Iran Air, 60,214,630 (\$800,000); and costs associated with the Shahyad monument, 441,529,405 rials (\$5.9 million).¹⁰²⁴ Total costs borne by the Central Council were calculated at 1.9 billion rials (\$26 million),¹⁰²⁵ with contributions from the Imperial Court to the Council amounting to 1.3 billion rials (\$18 million).¹⁰²⁶ If hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on the Celebrations then the money certainly did not come directly from the Central Council.

¹⁰²² Hossein Amanat to Javad Boushehri, 15 Mordad 1347/ 6 August 1968, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 3, pp. 15-17.

¹⁰²³ Gozāresh-e ‘amaliyāt-e hasābdāri-ye shurā-ye markazi-ye jashn-e shāhanshāhi-ye irān az aval mehr māh 1339 leqāyat Shahrivar māh 1351 [Report of accounts of the Central Council for the Celebrations from Mehr 1339 until Shahrivar 1351, 13 Mehr 1351/ 5 October 1972], *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 389-391.

¹⁰²⁴ Kholāseh-ye dariyāfti, 30 Mordad 1351/ 21 August 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 386-388.

¹⁰²⁵ Gozāresh-e ‘amaliyāt-e hasābdāri, 13 Mehr 1351/ 5 October 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 389-391.

¹⁰²⁶ Kholāseh-ye dariyāfti, 30 Mordad 1351/ 21 August 1972, *Bazm-e Ahriman*, vol. 4, pp. 386-388. It is worth noting that 225 million rials (approximately \$3 million) were taken out of the budget of the Central Council in the late 1960s to be spent on the Coronation festivities in 1967. These do not seem to have been returned and appear in the final accounting reports as expenditure.

Conclusion

It is clear that the high sums associated with the spending on the Celebrations are misleading and are not backed up by the documentary evidence. Even the documents published by the Islamic Republic in *Bazm-e Ahriman* do not provide this information, and indeed the published accounts of the Central Council indicate that the spending was much lower than has been speculated. Moreover, spending was structured over a number of years, so the immediate strain on the economy in 1350 would have been minimal. Furthermore, this chapter has shown that a large part of the spending on the Celebrations was intended to improve parts of the economy, dispelling the idea that the event was fundamentally an expensive waste of resources.

Was the attempt to use the Celebrations to stimulate particular sectors of the economy successful? Looking at the tourism industry alone, it seems it was. The industry generated less than \$45 million per year in the three years leading up to 1971 but would generate \$152 million by 1976. As well as direct investment in the sector through the construction of hotels and development of roads, the Celebrations were extraordinarily successful at promoting Iran around the world and bringing foreigners to the country. This included the regime's promotion of the Pahlavi nationalist ideology, which drew attention to Iran's rich culture and civilisation, as well the exhibitions and special events held in countries around the world. The British ambassador, Peter Ramsbotham, who became the ambassador to the United States later in the 1970s, argued that the Celebrations 'put Persia-Iran on the map.' He continues,

When I was in the United States afterwards, people knew about it – “Oh, gee, were you at Persepolis?” They actually knew where Persia was. They never knew before. It was a successful way of putting Persia on the international map.¹⁰²⁷

If this was one of the purposes of the Celebrations, then they certainly achieved a degree of success.

It is tempting to dismiss the building projects initiated during the Celebrations as vanity projects. But although the Shahyad monument could be

¹⁰²⁷ Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Shusha Assar, Hampshire, UK, 20 January 1986, Foundation for Iranian Studies, tape 3, p. 67.

viewed as such, many of the projects were of considerable importance in the context of the programme of the Plan Organisation. In a review of the Iranian economy for the year 1349 (1970-71), the author stated,

It is significant of modern and resurgent Iran that the ephemeral elements in the celebration of this anniversary are being kept to a minimum and that His Imperial Majesty is placing great emphasis on the advancement and completion of projects of permanent value to the country.¹⁰²⁸

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that this observation was accurate, at least to a degree.

This chapter has shown that one of the purposes of the Celebrations was to stimulate the economy and encourage foreign investment. The regime is often criticised for the stringent security measures taken during the Celebrations, discussed in the previous chapter, however it was vital to present Iran as a land of stability and opportunity. The Celebrations were similar to an international sporting event, such as the Olympic Games, in that such events are essentially held to demonstrate the achievements of the host country. They require a sophisticated security apparatus, certain infrastructural improvements and considerable political clout. By demonstrating progress in these areas, Iran was asserting its place amongst the community of nations as a modern and rapidly developing country, worthy of attention and investment.

Before, during and after the Celebrations the foreign press attacked the regime for the huge costs associated with them. They quoted figures in the hundreds of millions, without providing any evidence for such claims. Because of this, it has become an accepted part of the narrative of the Celebrations that they were vastly expensive and wasteful. In fact, as this chapter has shown, the documentary evidence from the Central Council indicates that such figures are misleading. There is further evidence, as argued by Alam, that the private sector was a financial contributor to the Celebrations and also that spending was largely focused on providing lasting benefits to the country.

¹⁰²⁸ *Economic review of the year 1349* (1971), p. 83.

Conclusion

The perception of the Celebrations in the literature on Pahlavi Iran has been overwhelmingly negative since the time of the occasion in 1971 until the present day. As recently as 2017 a historian described the Celebrations as an 'unfeasibly silly party'.¹⁰²⁹ The event served as evidence of the decadence of the Pahlavi regime and the character of the Shah, who is often presented as out of touch with the population and a modern-day Oriental despot. Meanwhile, Iranian opposition figures and organisations used the worldwide attention the event received to further their political messages. The negative impression of the occasion is indicative of a public relations failure on behalf of the regime. The positive aspects of the event were demonstrable, but the regime did not sell the message convincingly. In the post-revolution period, the Celebrations became part of the revolutionary narrative in which, while many Iranians were struggling to get by, a megalomaniac Shah invited the world's elite to Iran to feast on the spoils of the people's oil wealth. The Celebrations were branded the devil's feast, and a leading cleric within the revolutionary movement, Sadeq Khalkhali, portrayed Cyrus the Great as a wicked sodomite in his publication *Korosh-e Jenāyatkār va Doroghin*, *The False and Criminal Cyrus*.¹⁰³⁰

This thesis has made the case that in fact the Celebrations stimulated cultural engagement with and economic investment in Iran, and that the organisers of the event focused their efforts on providing long-lasting benefits to Iran. The thesis has demonstrated that they were profoundly successful in these areas. The Celebrations were particularly successful at developing the tourism industry. Important developments that can be directly attributed to this effort included the construction of hotels, notably the Darius Hotel on the site of Persepolis, the repair and maintenance of ancient sites, the development of airports and the publishing of books and pamphlets on Iranian civilisation. Meanwhile the events that took place in Persepolis, Pasargadae and Tehran alongside the cultural events that took place around the world, did much to promote the idea of Iran as an appealing place to visit and in which to invest. Even the construction of the Shahyad monument could be seen as contributing

¹⁰²⁹ Christopher de Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment: The modern struggle between faith and reason* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), p. 342.

¹⁰³⁰ See Shafa interview, 'jashnhā-ye dohezār o pānsad sāleh', (2011), pp. 181-182.

to this effort. Indeed, inside the monument was a museum open to the public and the site itself became an iconic landmark in the city of Tehran. As shown in Chapter 8, the tourist figures in the years following the event grew significantly, which should be attributed directly to the attention generated by the Anniversary Celebrations.

In addition to the benefits to the tourism sector, the regime placed great emphasis on economic development and modernisation. Part of the reason for inviting the world's VIPs and media to Iran was to show off its progress in these areas in order to promote Iran internationally. In this context many projects were accelerated so that their completion could coincide with what was termed Cyrus the Great Year. Six dams were built and a number of factories were opened to coincide with this effort. The regime was also eager to stress its commitment to education and intellectual development. A number of libraries were inaugurated, scholarly events held at many of the country's top universities and 3,200 schools were opened after a successful campaign to encourage financial contributions from members of the public. Certainly some of the publications and public events held in Iran in conjunction with the Celebrations served a propaganda purpose and were intended to propagate the state ideology. But on the other hand and in a broader context, the construction of schools and the emphasis on scholarship and education should be seen as part of the Pahlavi regime's strategy for educational and social development.

On a theoretical level the Celebrations sought to legitimise the Shah's rule, in large part by promoting the Pahlavi state ideology. This ideology argued that the success of Iranian civilisation over the past 2,500 years was dependent on the monarch. By extension, the present and future success of Iran would also depend on its possessing a strong and assertive leader, with attributes similar to those of the first king of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great. The Shah has been mocked for presenting himself as a modern Cyrus, but this had a political purpose, as he attempted to attach his young Pahlavi dynasty to the great Iranian dynasties of the past. In the process the Pahlavi ideologues created a national hero out of Cyrus the Great and the Cyrus Cylinder was transformed from a standard building inscription into an international symbol of human rights. Some were not receptive to this message, and on certain occasions it was clearly taken too far, as policies such as the adoption of the

Imperial Calendar in 1976, which sought to further promote the Pahlavi nationalist ideology, merely gave the Shah's opponents another stick with which to beat him.

In the immediate period following the revolution, the Islamic regime derided Iran's ancient past, attacking the state ideology propagated by the Shah during the Celebrations. Sadeq Khalkali even allegedly led a mob to destroy Persepolis in the post-revolutionary turmoil.¹⁰³¹ Thankfully, this effort was unsuccessful. Despite this, in 1991 President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani became the first statesman of the Islamic Republic to visit Persepolis. He said, 'Standing in the middle of those wonderful centuries-old ruins, I felt the nation's dignity was all-important and must be strengthened. Our people must know that they are not without a history.'¹⁰³² Rafsanjani clearly understood the ability of the ancient ruins to inspire national fervour. Similarly, President Hassan Rouhani, elected in 2013, published a photograph of himself at Persepolis with the caption: 'Persepolis is one of the invaluable and unique remains of the ancient history of this land, which demonstrates the antiquity of the civilization, the ingenuity, the wisdom, and the management skills of the great people of Iran, as well as their monotheism.'¹⁰³³

This thesis has shown that throughout Iranian history, notably from the Safavid period onwards, the political elite in Iran have recognised the power of spectacle to strengthen their ties to the masses and legitimise their rule in the context of religion, culture or history. The Pahlavi shahs focused these spectacles particularly around Cyrus the Great and Ancient Iran. Though the Islamic Republic has rejected much of what the Pahlavis had attempted to build, this practice of honouring Ancient Iran has continued in the post-revolutionary era, notably in Tehran during the opening ceremony of the exhibition in which the Cyrus Cylinder was displayed in 2010. There President Ahmadinejad draped a keffiyeh scarf worn by the Basij over an actor dressed as Cyrus and described Cyrus as 'king of the world'. One year later, in 2011, Ahmadinejad's

¹⁰³¹ John Simpson, *A Mad World, My Masters: Tales from a Traveller's Life* (London: Pan Books, 2008), pp. 223-225.

¹⁰³² Elaine Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran Reissue* (London: The Free Press, 2000), p. 165.

¹⁰³³ Saeid Jafari, 'Cyrus the Great' enters Iranian politics', *Al-Monitor*, 2 November 2016, available at <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/11/iran-cyrus-day-commeoration-nouri-hamedani-protest.html>> [accessed 13 June 2017].

chief of staff, Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, even proposed to celebrate Nowruz at Persepolis and invite regional heads of state and monarchs.¹⁰³⁴ These acts reflect the reemergence of a Persian nationalism centred on Cyrus amongst the population, and the readiness of political figures within the Islamic Republic to alter their political ideologies to incorporate new secular and nationalist trends in order to boost their popularity.¹⁰³⁵

It is a common assertion that the Shah's presentation of himself as Cyrus' successor was delusional. While there may be truth to such claims, they sometimes overlook the success of the regime in propagating the Pahlavi national ideology which focused on the glorification of pre-Islamic Iran. Even to this day Persian language course books published by government-sponsored programmes in Iran include chapters introducing foreign learners to the Cyrus Cylinder, Darius the Great and Persepolis. The 2010 loan of the Cyrus Cylinder to Tehran and the publicity it received is indicative of the perceived significance of the artefact as an accepted symbol of Iranian pride. Today a replica of the Cylinder is displayed outside the National Museum in Tehran to mark the 2010 loan, along with a plaque calling the Cylinder a 'symbol of wisdom... freedom and justice'. The legend of Cyrus also retains political significance outside of Iran. In 2015, the Croatian Speaker of Parliament Josip Leko claimed to his Iranian counterpart, Ali Larijani, that the name Croatia is derived from the name of the ancient king Cyrus.¹⁰³⁶

In the 2010s a new annual celebration began in Iran, known as the International Day of Cyrus the Great, held on 28 October. On this day in 2016, masses of people converged around the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae, chanting slogans honouring Cyrus the Great and the Pahlavis. A senior cleric in Qom, Ayatollah Hossein Nouri-Hamedani, called the crowds 'counter-revolutionaries' and a number of people were arrested. Forty-five years earlier Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had stood in front of the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae and promised to preserve his legacy. The strength of the eventual

¹⁰³⁴ Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (2012), p. 279.

¹⁰³⁵ Pejman Abdolmohammadi, 'The Revival of Nationalism and Secularism in Modern Iran', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series*, 11 (2015), p. 18.

¹⁰³⁶ 'Cherā reyis-e majles-e koroāsi nām-e keshvarash rā beh korosh-e hakhāmaneshi rabt midahad?' [Why does the Speaker of Croatian Parliament relate the name of his country to Cyrus the Achaemenid?], BBC Persian, 4 September 2015, available at <http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran/2015/09/150904_l45_coratia_cyrus> [accessed 21 October 2018].

opposition to the Shah was such that the legitimacy the Shah sought by presenting himself as the spiritual successor to the great Achaemenid kings was not enough to prevent the revolution from bringing down his rule.

Internationally too, the efforts of the Pahlavi regime created a hero out of Cyrus the Great and the Cylinder became a universally recognised symbol of tolerance. This impression was promoted by the Pahlavi regime and reached a peak during the Anniversary Celebrations. The Cylinder became the official symbol of the Celebrations and replicas of the relic were, and are still, displayed in the United Nations buildings in New York and Geneva. In 2013 the Cylinder travelled to the United States where it appeared in five of the country's top museums, with the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York commenting that, 'The tolerance embraced by the Cylinder's text has been applauded throughout history'.¹⁰³⁷ In addition, on 4 July 2017 a sculpture representing the Cyrus Cylinder was unveiled in Los Angeles, symbolising how 'Los Angeles embodies diversity'.¹⁰³⁸ In 2018, during a debate on protests that were taking place in Iran, the chairman of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee referred to 'the first declaration of human rights – the Cyrus Cylinder' and to Cyrus' 'humanitarian values of freedom for all people, respect for culture and religious diversity, and recognition of the fact that it is better to be loved than be feared'.¹⁰³⁹ One of the purposes of the Celebrations was to promote Iranian history around the world, in particular the legacy of Cyrus the Great, framing it in the language of the modern political, particularly enlightenment, philosophical tradition. The success of the propagation of this message can be observed by the reverence in which Cyrus and the Cylinder are held both in Iran and around the world, even today.

In an international context, the Celebrations cemented the Shah's position on the world stage. The event was, in some respects, a coming-of-age for the Shah. Iran had suffered years of humiliation at the hands of foreigners;

¹⁰³⁷ The British Museum, 'The Cyrus Cylinder travels to the US', Press Release, 28 November 2012, available at <http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2012/cyrus_cylinder_travels_to_us.aspx> [accessed on 18 September 2017].

¹⁰³⁸ "Los Angeles embodies diversity." The city's new sculpture celebrating freedom is unveiled', *Los Angeles Times*, 4 July 2017, available at <<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-freedom-sculpture-20170704-story.html>> [accessed 02 October 2017].

¹⁰³⁹ Press Release: 'United States Stands with People of Iran', House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, 09 January 2018, available at <<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/press-release/united-states-stands-people-iran/>> [accessed 22 January 2018].

firstly by the Greeks, then the Arabs, who brought an end to the Sasanian period, and in more recent memory it was the British, Russians and Americans who had taken advantage of Iran's weakness to advance their imperialist agendas. The Shah ascended the throne while Iran was under foreign occupation and during the early years of his rule experienced a number of crises, including a territorial crisis in Azerbaijan, an assassination attempt and a coup. By the 1960s he had gained confidence domestically and internationally, and as Iran took a greater share of the sale of its oil, the economy began to grow. The Shah was presented as being at the centre of these achievements and by the time the Celebrations began to take shape in earnest the Shah was reaching the zenith of his political authority. The Shah was no longer a timid young man; he was a strong leader who, according to the narrative promoted by his regime, was central to the prosperity of his country. Some leaders declined to attend the Celebrations, but the abundance of political figures who did attend suggests a widespread recognition of the Shah's regional and global appeal.

This thesis has argued that we should consider the success of the Celebrations in terms of the extent to which they achieved the goals set out at the outset. The Celebrations were, in essence, about legitimising the Pahlavi dynasty, as was argued in the first two chapters, but the cultural operation they instigated was vast and, moreover, essential to achieving their principal goals. As already noted, in the decade following the event the volume of literature published on the Achaemenid period increased significantly.¹⁰⁴⁰ This occurred, in no small part, as a result of the huge effort on behalf of the Pahlavi regime to stimulate scholarship around the world. The activities of the various cultural institutions led by the Imperial Court and the Ministry of Culture and Arts were central to this effort. The Central Council for organising the Celebrations encouraged scholars around the world to engage with Iran and hold conferences and arrange publications. Some of the publications merely pandered to the ideology propagated by the regime, but many more sought to stimulate genuine scholarly inquiry. Many also showed that it was possible to do both simultaneously.

One of the significant cultural legacies of the Celebrations was the Pahlavi National Library, first proposed by Pope as one of his suggestions for

¹⁰⁴⁰ Cook, *Ancient Persia* (1983) p. iii.

projects to mark the Celebrations. It was essentially intended to be an expanded and modernised version of the already present National Library¹⁰⁴¹ and promised to 'play a pivotal role in the realisation of Iran's new social, educational, scientific, technical and economic goals, while preserving its rich national and cultural heritage.'¹⁰⁴² It was an extraordinary experiment in international collaboration, headed by Shojaeddin Shafa, and brought together experts from different backgrounds and with various professional qualifications to create a world-class national library virtually from scratch. In his 1975 report on the library's progress, the librarian Nasser Sharify wrote that, 'Never before in the history of librarianship have so many distinguished leaders in the profession been brought together for so long a period in order to apply their collective knowledge, experience, talent and judgement to a single undertaking.'¹⁰⁴³ From the moment Pope proposed the idea in 1960 up to the revolution in 1979, the aim remained to create a library to rank among the world's finest, in terms of both architecture and collections. It was an elaborate and sophisticated international project that intended to serve Iranian scholarship as well as advance the cause of literacy in Iran, and what is more, it conformed to the principal cultural goals of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.

The final 1978 report by the Swiss librarian Jean-Pierre Clavel was such a well-researched and detailed document that it was used to guide the planning and implementation of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt, completed in 2002.¹⁰⁴⁴ Additionally, the National Library of Iran which opened in 2005 was completed under the guidance of some of the original members of the Pahlavi National Library Project. The National Library was set up as an independent library, with a board of trustees whose chair is the president, a setup almost exactly as written by the original planners of the Pahlavi National Library. In a letter to Clavel, one of the founders of the new National Library wrote,

You see that your efforts have not been lost. Everything we wanted to write about a "should-be" national library we referred to

¹⁰⁴¹ Soraya Hassanalizadeh, *The Pahlavi National Library in Iran*, Master's Thesis, University of Loughborough, 1976, p. 58

¹⁰⁴² Shojaeddin Shafa, *The Pahlavi National Library of Iran: Its Planning, Aims and Future* (Tehran: Pahlavi Library, 1977), p. 5

¹⁰⁴³ Quoted *ibid*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Claudine Shafa, 'Bibliographical Datas', in *Yādnāmeḥ-ye Shojā'eddin Shafā* (2013), p. 3.

the previous reports made by you, Mr Poole and other colleagues.¹⁰⁴⁵

The new National Library can, therefore, be said to be a continuation of the original project. It was even built on the same site that was designated for the Pahlavi National Library, although attempts to have it built by the German architectural firm that won the contract in 1978 failed.¹⁰⁴⁶

It is no exaggeration to say that the 1970s were a golden age for Iranian studies. This was in no small part due to the cultural policies of the Pahlavi state. Culture and scholarship were integral to the Anniversary Celebrations and the support that the regime offered to cultural programmes was significant. One clear example cited in this thesis was the Congress of Mithraic Studies held in Manchester in 1971, which received financial and logistical support from the Imperial Court. This direct support had an impact on the work that scholars were able to carry out and following the revolution many scholarly programmes suffered. The journal of Mithraic Studies, which was funded by the Pahlavi Library, ceased publication due to funding shortfall and in general it became more difficult for scholars to engage with the new regime.

In the years after the Celebrations, large-scale academic programmes continued to be supported by the Pahlavi regime. For instance, the Third International Congress of Iranology was held in Tehran in September 1972 and continued as an annual event thereafter. Other events included the First Annual Symposium of Archaeological Research in Iran in November 1972, the First International Colloquy of the Conservation of Mud Brick Monuments, also in 1972, and the Second International Congress of Mithraic Studies held in Tehran in 1975.¹⁰⁴⁷ There was a degree of self-indulgence inherent in the Pahlavi support internationally,¹⁰⁴⁸ however beyond the pomp of the Pahlavi Court, one must recognise that its patronage of cultural and scholarly programmes around the world contributed to the development of Iranian studies during this period.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Anonymous letter to Clavel, undated, c.1990-1991, author's possession.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁷ 'IsMeo Activities', *East and West*, 22:3/4 (1972), p. 385.

¹⁰⁴⁸ For instance, the Ashraf Pahlavi Foundation donated 250,000 pounds to Wadham College at Oxford University, towards a library on Iranian Studies. The library was named the Princess Ashraf Library and Ashraf was decorated with an honorary fellowship. See Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power* (Oxon: Routledge, 1978), p. 140; and Mansour Bonakdarian, 'Iranian Studies in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century' (2010), pp. 285-286.

This was important to the regime and can be observed clearly during the Anniversary Celebrations.

This thesis began with a quote from Professor Laurence Elwell-Sutton, one of the academics who attended the Celebrations as part of the British delegation. He called for 'an objective assessment' of the Celebrations, which he believed was necessary in view of the 'discourteous tone' of many of the reports from foreign journalists. This thesis has provided this sober analysis of the Celebrations and has looked in considerable detail at the many aspects of the event, including cultural initiatives, international relations and attempts made by the regime to stimulate the economy. This is a contrast to the prevailing discourse, which presents the Celebrations as futile and ultimately counter-productive. By recording what happened and placing the events in their proper context, the thesis has shown that the Celebrations were successful. The negative impression of the event was the result of poor public relations on behalf of the Pahlavi regime alongside a sophisticated and unrelenting campaign from its detractors.

In many ways the Celebrations marked a high point in Pahlavi Iran's international standing. Mohammad Reza Shah had gained confidence through his White Revolution reforms and the Iranian economy was growing rapidly. The Celebrations intended to show the world that Iran was no longer the plaything of imperial powers, as it had been for the previous 150 years, and could, under the guidance from the throne, carve out a new direction for itself. This thesis has shown that the Shah achieved some success in delivering this message. In an interview published after his death in 2010, Shojaeddin Shafa said that the Celebrations were 'a great source of pride for me and even the greatest honour of my life.'¹⁰⁴⁹ Beyond the pomp and splendour of the tent city was a huge operation, of which Shafa was a part, which successfully promoted Iran around the world as a distinct cultural space, a significant prospect for economic development and an important regional power.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Shafa interview, 'jashnhā-ye dohezar o pānsad sāleh' (2011), p. 188.

Appendix A. Guests.

1. Official Guests¹⁰⁵⁰

i. Royalty

King Abdul Halim	Malaysia
Prince Bhanubandhu Yugala	Thailand
Prince Juan Carlos and Princess Sophia	Spain
King Hussein and Princess Muna	Jordan
King Olav V	Norway
Crown Prince Carl Gustaf	Sweden
Prince Mikasa	Japan
Prince Abdul Khan	Afghanistan
Prince Abdul Aziz	Saudi Arabia
Prince Philip and Princess Anne	United Kingdom
Prince Bernhard	Netherlands
King Constantine and Queen Anne-Marie	Greece
Emperor Haile Selassie	Ethiopia
King Mahendra with Queen	Nepal
King Frederick IX	Denmark
King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola	Belgium
Prince Moulay Abdallah and Princess Lamia	Morocco
Prince Rainier and Princess Grace	Monaco

¹⁰⁵⁰ Source, *Kayhan International*, 23 October, 1971, p. 3.

Prince Franz Josef	Liechtenstein
Grand Duke Jean and Grand Duchess Josephine-Charlotte	Luxembourg

ii. Presidents

Nikolai Podgorny	Russia
Ludvík Svoboda	Czechoslovakia
Pál Losonczi	Hungary
Moktar Ould Daddah	Mauritania
Urho Kekkonen	Finland
Josip Broz Tito	Yugoslavia
Nicolae Ceaușescu	Romania
Cevdet Sunay	Turkey
Robert Maga	Dahomey (Benin)
Varahagiri Venkata Giri	India
Yahya Khan	Pakistan
Léopold Sédar Senghor	Senegal
Suleiman Franjeh	Lebanon
Jacobus Johannes Fouché	South Africa

iii. Sheikhs and Sultans

Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi	Ajman
Sheikh Ahmad bin Rashid Al Mu'alla	Umm ul-Quwain
Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Sharqi	Fujairah

Sheikh Saqr bin Mohammad Al Qasimi	Ras al-Khaimah
Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed Al Qasimi	Sharjah
Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani	Qatar
Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa	Bahrain
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan	Abu Dhabi
Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum	Dubai
Sheikh Sabah Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah	Kuwait
Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said	Oman
Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX	Indonesia ¹⁰⁵¹

iv. Others

Vice President Spiro Agnew	United States
Vice President Hussein el-Shafei	Egypt
President of Council of State	
Professor Mieczysław Klimaszewski	Poland
Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas	France
Prime Minister Emilio Colombo	Italy
Foreign Minister Rui Patrício	Portugal
Senator Pertonio Portela Nueves	Brazil ¹⁰⁵²
Cardinal Maximilian von Furstenberg	Vatican
Imelda Marcos (wife of the President)	Philippines
Habib Bourguiba Jr (son of President)	Tunisia

¹⁰⁵¹ He was the Sultan of Yogyakarta, but served as Minister of State for Economy, Industry and Finance in the Indonesian government.

¹⁰⁵² President of the National Congress.

Prime Minister Prince Makhosini Dlamini	Swaziland
Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil	Korea
Foreign Minister Arístides Calvani	Venezuela
Vice President of State Council Krastyu Trichkov	Bulgaria
Minister without Portfolio de Compos	Argentina
Speaker of House of Representatives Richard Henries	Liberia
Former President of the Swiss Confederation Friedrich Wahlen	Switzerland
Governor General Sir Paul Hasluck	Australia
Governor General Roland Michener	Canada
Mustafa Al Ashraf (adviser to President)	Algeria
Wang Chang Tung (chargé d'affaires)	China

2. Private Guests¹⁰⁵³

His Highness Prince Michael of Greece

Count Ernesto Vitelli, with countess

Dr Douglas Knight, Vice President R.C.A. – with Mrs D. Knight

Mr Joey Adams – with Mrs Joey Adams

Sir Clive Bossom – with Lady Bossom

Son Excellence Monsieur André Malraux

Mr Francois Castex – with Mrs Francois Castex

Mr Jeremy Thorpe

¹⁰⁵³ Source, 'Private Guests of Their Imperial Majesties', MinBuZa 2.05.191/554. Names as they appear in the source.

Professor Jean Lenegre

Professor Marcel David

Mr Zubin Mehta

Mr David Lilienthal, Director Development and Resources Corp

Mr R.C. Karanjia

Thomas Jones, Director of Northrop

Henry Kearns

Kermit Roosevelt, Director of Roosevelt and Associates

Professor Karl Fellingner

Madame Maurin

Madame Gauthier

Their Excellencies Baron Kronacker & Baroness Kronacker

Lord Hartley Shawcross

General James A. Van Fleet

Rajkumar Marthanda Tondaiman de Pudukota

Professor Donald Wilhelm Jr

La Duchess de la Rochefoucauld

Count Corrado Agusta

Cardinal Franz König

Her Highness Begum Omha Bibek Agha Khan

Mr James A. Linen, Chairman of Exec. Committee, Time Inc.

Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan

Prince Victor Emanuel of Savoy

Prince de Metternich and Princess

Prince Karim Aga Khan

Excellencies Mr Pegov (and Mrs)

Eminence Dastur Dr Manoucher Homji, Dastur of Bombay

Mr Ralph E Becker

Honourable Seymour Halpern, US Representative from 6th district New York

Their Highnesses Tunku Abdul Rahman

Mr Hermes Pan

Mr Jacques Maisonrouge, President IMB World Trade Corp.

Sir Peter Studd

Lord Thompson of Fleet

Christina Ford

Kurt Brandes

Mrs Hatam

Mr Paul Doyle

Mr S Swearingen

3. Academics¹⁰⁵⁴

Argentina

Ismael Quiles

Australia

Arthur Llewellyn Basham

J. Bowman

¹⁰⁵⁴ Names and nationalities as they appear in the official programme of the Second International Congress of Iranology.

Austria

Herbert W. Duda

Cardinal Franz König

Manfred Mayrhofer

Schmidt

Belgium

Armand Abel

Annette Destrée

Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin

Maurice Leroy

Louis Vanden Berghe

Brazil

P. Ribero

Canada

Charles Adams

Roger Savory

Cylon (Sri Lanka)

S.A. Iman

Czechoslovakia

Jiří Bečka

Jiří Osvald

Jan Rypka

Denmark

Jes P. Asmussen

Egypt

Abdol Monem Mohammad Hassanein

Yahya Al-Khachab

Husayn Mujib al-Misri

England

John Andrew Boyle

Hubert Darke

Ilya Gershevitch

Basil Gray

John Hansman

Bernard Lewis

Lawrence Lockhart

George Morrison

Norman Sharp

Laurence P. Elwell-Sutton

David Stronach

Robert C. Zaehner¹⁰⁵⁵

Ann K.S. Lambton

Peter Avery

Frank R.C. Bagley

Finland

Jussi Aro

¹⁰⁵⁵ The following four names did not attend. Richard Barnett did attend, but his name does not appear in the official programme.

Henri Broms

Armas Salonen

France

L. Andrieu

Teresa Battesti

Benoit-Mechin

Henri Corbin

Roman Ghirshman

Gilbert Lazard

Pierre Lyautey

Yolande Maleki

Ali Mazaheri

André Parrot

Jean Perrot

Henri-Charles Puech

Fazlollah Reza

Daniel Schlumberger

Germany

Franz Altheim

Helmut Braun

Wilhelm Eilers

Gerd Gropp

Walther Hinz

Karl Hoffmann

Helmut Hoffmann

Helmut Humbach

Wolfram Kleiss

Friedrich Krefter

Mahmud Kuros

Wolfgang Lentz

Christian Rempis

Hans Robert Roemer

Annemarie Schimmel

Bernfried Schlerath

Bertold Spuler

Ruth Stiehl

Greece

Spyros Marinatos

Hungary

János Harmatta

Géza Képes

Zsigmund Telegdi

Iceland

Jakob Jonsson

India

Acharia (possibly Acharya Vishva Bandhu)

Raziyyeh Akbar

Ata-Karim Barq

A Feyzi

S. Chatterji

Z. Diesai

R. Hussein

Fardoonji Maneck Kanga

J. Katrak

M.Y. Kokan

Nazir Ahmad

Nur-al-Hasan

Raghib Husein

Said Hasan

Firuz Shroff

R.S. Shahmardan

Seyyed Hassan Askari

Indonesia

Shahad Tareq

Ismail Yaqub

Iran

Farhad Abadani

Phyllis Ackerman

Rahim Afifi

Iraj Afshar

Firouz Bagherzadeh

Talaat Bassari

Khanbaba Bayani
Malakeh Bayani
Issa Behnam
Zabih Behrouz
E. Davis
Nasrullah Falsafi
Bahram Farahvashi
Masud Farzad
Mehdi Forough
Ali Asghar Hekmat
Ali Reza Hekmat
Mohammad Hejazi
R. Homayoun Farokh
Lotfollah Honarfar
M.A. Imam Shushtari
Hamid Enayat
Ahmad Eghtedari
Husein Kariman
Parviz Khanlari
Sohrab Khodabakhsh
Sharaf Khorasani
Hassan Khoubnazar
Sadegh Kiya
Muhammad Javad Mashkour

Jalal Matini
Abbas Mazda
Mojtaba Minovi
Mohammad Moghaddam
Mohsen Moghaddam
Mehdi Mohaghegh
Muhammad Mohammadi
Mohit Tabatabai
Gholam-Hossein Mosaheb
M.T. Mostafavi
Manuchehr Mortazavi
Seyyed Hossein Nasr
Yahya M. Navvabi
A.H. Nayyer Nuri
Ezzat Negahban
A. Payandeh
Gh. Raadi-Adarakhshi
Z. Rahnema
Enayatollah Reza
Jamal Rezai
Mohammad I. Rezvani
Mohammad Amin Riahi
Mohsen Saba
Issa Sadiq

Zabihollah Safa

Nayereh Saidi

Ziyaeddin Sajjadi

N. Shah-Huseini

Jafar Shahidi

Shahriyar Naghavi

A. Shiva

Ali Akbar Siassi

Manouchehr Sotudeh

Ahmad Tajbakhsh

Ahmad Turjani-Zadeh

Parviz Varjavand

Habib Yaghmai

Majid Yektai

Abdolhossein Zarrinkub

Abbas Zaryab

Yahya Zoka

Italy

P. Filippini-Ronconi

Anglino

Alessandro Bausani

Francesco Gabrieli

Gherardo Gnoli

Giorgio Gullini

Umberto Scerrato

Enrico Cerulli¹⁰⁵⁶

Gianroberto Scarcia

Giuseppe Tucci

Japan

A. Ashikaya

Namio Egami

Shinji Fukai

T. Kuroyanagi

T. Mikami

Lebanon

Afram Al-Bustani

Moroco

Abdol Latif Al-Saadani

Netherlands

Arie Kampman

Hanna Kohlbrugge

Karl Jahn

Norway

Georg Morgenstierne

Pakistan

Abd-al-Wadud

Heydar

¹⁰⁵⁶ The following three names did not attend.

Adalulhamid Irfani

Mumtaz Hasan

Muhammad Habib Mufti

Gh. Nabibakhsh

Hussanuddin Rashidi

A Saddiqi

Sajjad Hussein

Poland

Barbara Majewska

Franciszek Macharski

Bogdan Skadanek

Zofia Józefowicz

Romania

George Dan

Spain

Emilio García Gómez

Felix Pareja

Sweden

Henrik S. Nyberg

Geo Widengren

Stig Wikander

Switzerland

Amir Mehdi Badi

Fritz Meier

Georges Redard

A. Rochedieu

Syria

Mahmoud Al-Furati

Tunisia

A. Al-Chabi

Bachir ben Salomeh

Turkey

Maliheh Anbarchioglu

Nashat Cagatay

Adnan Sadiq Erzi

Ali Genceli

Nuri Gencesman

Hikmet Ilaydin

Abidin Itil

A Karakhan

Aydin Sayili

Ali Nihat Tarlan

M Under

S Unvar

Tahsin Yazici

USA

George Cameron

Peter Chelkovski

Martin Dickson

M Dimand

Mark Dresden

Robert Dyson

Paul English

Richard Ettinghausen

H. Farmanfarmaian

Walter Fischel

Richard Frye

Oleg Grabar

Gustave E. Von Grunebaum

George Lenczowski

Kenneth Luther

Khusrow Mostowfi

Brien O'Doherty

Girdhari L. Tikku

Donald Wilber

M.A. Jazayeri

Marvin Zonis

Ehsan Yarshater

USSR

Vasily Abaev

Kamal S. Ayni

Rustam M. Aliev

A.A. Alizadeh

S. A. Azimdjanova

A.S. Bertels

M.N. Bogoliubov

A.N. Boldirev

Muhammad A. Dandamaev

E.A. Gerantovski

B.G. Gafurov

D.G. Indjikian

V.G. Laukonine

N.A. Masumi

L.I. Miroshnikof

A.G. Mirzaov

M.N.O. Osmanov

L.M. Peissikov

Boris Piotrovsky

G.A. Pougatchenkova

O.I. Smirnova

M.A. Todua

G.V. Tsereteli

V.V. Tsibalski

Yugoslavia

B. Gavela

Appendix B. Speeches.

1. Shah's speech at the banquet, 14 October 1971¹⁰⁵⁷

Your Majesties, Honourable Presidents of Republics, Highnesses, Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Shahbanou and myself, and in the name of the Iranian nation, I welcome you as the most honoured guests of our country at this time when Iran is celebrating the 2,500th anniversary of its national unity and its monarchy. I take the present assembly of the great personages of the world at Persepolis, the historical birthplace of [the] Persian Empire, as a good omen, because I feel that in our gathering this evening, past history is linked with the realities of today. Naturally such a bond of past and present, achieved by understanding and friendship, is to be taken as a good omen.

Distinguished friends, if we have been eager to invite you to the greatest festival in our history, it is because we thought the occasion was one which merited the trouble you have taken to come here, for this festival is, above all, in honour of Iranian cultural heritage which belongs to humanity as a whole. In fact, your host this evening is "History" itself rather than ourselves.

We have gathered this evening only a few paces away from the great edifice of Persepolis whose silent pillars have been witness to the passage of twenty-five centuries with all their hardships and joys. We all know that in the old days this building was the centre of the world, but this is now a memory which belongs to history alone. What matters to us now much more than its historical and political significance is that it was the seat of a form of government which, in its philosophical outlook, was based on the spiritual heritage of Cyrus the Great, that is, on respect for wisdom and for human rights which form, furthermore, the very foundation on which all Iranian culture stands.

Looking from an historical point of view, we can clearly perceive that every nation of the world has, over the millennia, been through many great adventures and suffered hardship and sacrifice along the difficult and dangerous road which lay before humanity. Yet it is a source of pride for all of us, as members of the

¹⁰⁵⁷ The following three speeches are from MinBuZa 2.05.191/554.

human race, that, in spite of the difficulties and dangers upon this long road, the greater part of which passes through tears and blood, man has not forgotten his great mission to strive for both material and spiritual perfection and has come proudly through all tests.

For, throughout this struggle, that innate spark of genius which has existed from the beginning in the nature of man, has been stronger and more effective than all the mighty forces which have been arrayed against him. It is this spark of genius that has enabled man, who in the beginning was no more than one of the innumerable creatures on earth, to go beyond the earth and open for himself a path in the boundless universe.

Remembering this proud fact is enough for us to make clear the responsibility and duty of all the people of goodwill in the world. I have no doubt that our gathering this evening is one of men of goodwill, for it is perfectly logical that no head of state can have any other wish than the increasing material and spiritual progress of every individual in his nation. We must only hope that all these wishes are realised in such a way that each harmonises with and compliments the other so that the final outcome will be the attainment of the happiness of not just a part of the people of the world but of all mankind.

We still face many problems most of which are a legacy of the ways of thought and necessities of the past. But let us be hopeful that the human society will succeed in its final and at the same time most rewarding test as it has succeeded in previous ones.

We all know that man is still grappling with many problems. We are aware that a large part of the population of the world still suffers from poverty, ignorance, hunger and all kinds of discrimination. Every day, in some corner of the world, we hear the whistling of bullets and come across various manifestations of violence and hatred. On the other hand, we also know that if man has thus far failed to eliminate disorder and prejudice, there is no cause to despair, for man's eternal and changeless mission is constant progress towards perfection. In order to follow the true path in fulfilling this mission, each one of us must try as hard as possible, as much as circumstances allow, to turn the world into one of love, peace and cooperation for mankind, a world in which every person may enjoy to the full the amenities of science and civilisation.

If I tell my distinguished guests that the world today expects those that are responsible for the affairs of the world, all those who have a share in managing the destiny of nations to pay more attention to this fact than to anything else, I have certainly told them nothing new. All the people of the world, irrespective of race, nationality and social condition, share the desire for a world free from fear, anxiety, and the constant threat of annihilation. They all desire that the product of their labour should be used to secure an ever better life for themselves in the kind of world they wish for.

Two thousand five hundred years ago, one of the sons of this country, Cyrus the Achaemenian, who belongs as much to History and mankind as a whole as he does to our nation, tried, by bringing about a complete change from the ruthless principles of government current in the world of those days and by establishing a new system of government on the basis of tolerance and respect for the rights and beliefs of others, to open a new page of history. Many other leaders, thinkers and men of goodwill followed the same path which aimed at the constant evolution of the human community towards perfection. Let us hope that with unity of thought and action among all men and women of goodwill in the world, once again a new page on which there are no traces of darkness, want, ignorance, disease, hunger, discrimination and injustice. Let us hope that our children will forever live in a world free from fear and insecurity, and that their lives will be full of nothing but light.

Your Majesties, Presidents, Highnesses, Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You who have met in this historic gathering in loving unity with the Iranian nation and in tribute to its ancient culture, I wish each of you, and every other leader and statesman of the world, success in attaining this goal. With this wish, I drink a toast to the health and happiness of each one of you, and wish for ever-increasing progress and welfare for all your nations.

2. Reply of Haile Selassie I at the banquet

Your Imperial Majesties,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government,

Your Highnesses,

You Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These celebrations have been so rich in symbolism and far-reaching in implications that they must surely have evoked different responses in each of your honoured guests. In assessing the meaning of these events, I cannot, therefore, pretend to speak on behalf of the eminent Heads of State and Governments and the many high dignitaries attending this dinner. I know, however that I am expressing the sentiment of all the distinguished leaders assembled here tonight when I saw that we all feel privileged and greatly honoured to join Your Imperial Majesties and your justly proud nation in this hour of triumph.

Leaders and high representatives of governments from all over the world are today participating without doubt in a unique commemoration. A nation securely anchored in its long history, ethos and culture now pauses to look back at the long road it has travelled for twenty-five centuries and to scan the terrain that lies ahead. Either way the sight is impressive. Iran is a cradle of civilisation, where men first settled to till the land and where for the first time he learnt to put down in writing the words he uttered. Not only were the first permanent human settlements established here, but also the first organised state structure, with a highly developed system of government, holding within its folds many tribes and nations with different cultures and religions, took root and flourished in Iranian soil.

If this historical panorama is breathtaking, the view in front is no less fascinating. Under the wise and far-sighted leadership of Your Imperial Majesty Iran has undergone a spiritual and material renaissance. Not that it has not known many renaissances before – as a matter of fact the history of Iran is a

succession of one renaissance after another. But the present era ushered in particularly by the 12-point reform programme announced in 1963 by Your Imperial Majesty is destined to become one of the greatest. Indeed, Your reforms have already set [an] example to the rest of the world.

In the last ten years, modern Iran has successfully stood up to the challenges of economic and social developments as few nations in [the] recent past. With one of the fastest growing economies in the world, Iran is increasingly developing into a modern, industrial state offering a better life and a broadened base of social justice to its people.

Your Imperial Majesty,

We have borne witness to the fact that these commemorative celebrations have not been mere occasion of jubilations and festivities – although it should be said that few nations have more rights than Iran today to rejoice in the full splendour and glory of its long history. But far more important are the higher purposes these celebrations are meant to serve. In all respects, they have as much significance to the rest of the world as to the people of Iran.

By underscoring to Iranians the essential unity of their history and civilisation, this commemoration is also emphasising to the rest of the world the essential unity and interdependence of civilisations and cultures. Sitting astride the Orient and the West, Iran throughout the centuries has fulfilled a three-fold historical function: that of a giver, a taker and a synthesiser of cultures and civilisations. The Persian Empire at one time stretched from the Nile to the Indus Valley, within which different civilisations prospered, influencing each other by peaceful interaction rather than imposition. Founded on the precepts of civil responsibility it was possible for this empire to flourish for a very long period. The Persian language was the language of commercial intercourse for most of the peoples who lived in this great stretch of land. Greek and Roman civilisations – that are today taken for granted as forerunners to Western civilisation – and those of the East owe a great deal to Iran.

By providing what can be done with one's history the events of the last few days are also teaching the world a valuable lesson. In time past and recent, history has been used to arouse false pride, narrow nationalism and a dangerous

feeling of supremacy. Instances have not been few of leaders resorting to history either to create an indulgent nostalgia for yesteryears to escape the challenges of the day or to trigger off an ugly, aggressive impulse.

These celebrations show how to use history positively – not for false glorification or idle self-congratulations, but for new strength and revitalisation. That is why as much emphasis is placed on the future as on the past. All over the country this has been a time for thanksgiving, reflection, intellectual assessment, as well as an opportunity to inaugurate new projects for development.

There is yet another signal [sic] lesson. This long and glorious past of Iran serves to correct a time perspective of history too often accepted uncritically. There is sometimes temptation to judge nations by what they have achieved or failed to achieve in the technological age of today – an age that barely began 200 years ago. This myopic vision has in the recent past and even today given rise to ethnocentrism.

Perhaps by showing that history has been a much longer process with interludes of high and low points that the development of the last two hundred years, a balanced message may yet issue from Iran these days.

Such indeed are the implications of the events we are witnessing that it is only fitting that the world should have joined Your Imperial Majesties and the people of Iran in this assertion of unity and continuity or Iranian history. UNESCO's association and celebrations of these events by national committees in all regions are expressions of a grateful world's indebtedness to Iran.

Your Imperial Majesty,

It is also fitting that the founding of Your Empire by Cyrus the Great, 2500 years ago should be the focal point of this commemoration – although it is common knowledge that Iran's history did not begin with that. But this Empire over which you have been destined not only to reign, but to guide and revitalise with such renewed energy, wisdom and devotion was begun by Cyrus the Great.

In contrast to the rulers of his time, this important figure of early history was known for his benevolent, just and efficient administration. He is particularly

remembered for the Charter of Freedom he gave his peoples – a charter which is universally acclaimed today as the forerunner to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Your Imperial Majesty has not only been personally inspired by this great founder of your Empire but also have directed your nation to draw inspiration from his examples. When the history of Iran of today comes to be written, Your Imperial Majesty will no doubt find an equally prominent place for having revitalised your nation to face up to the challenges of modernisation.

With these words I ask all of you to raise your glasses in high tribute and homage to Their Imperial Majesties and the Iranian nation in this, their finest hour.

3. Shah's speech at the Grand Parade, 15 October 1971

On this great day in the history of Iran;

From Persepolis, the birthplace of the ancient Iranian monarchy;

In the presence of the exalted heads of state who have met here to participate in this national festival of commemoration;

In the presence of other distinguished guests;

In the presence of the eminent representatives of world culture and learning;

In the presence of the honourable representatives of the various religions of the world;

In the presence of the worthy envoys of the world new media; and,

Before the innumerable people the world over who are at this moment witness to the ceremonies of the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire;

I, Shahanshah of Iran, salute the proud history of Iran and the great, immortal nation of Iran;

I salute Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire, immortal hero of humanity;

I salute the kings who have kept aloft the Iranian flag and upheld the pride of this nation over 25 centuries;

I salute all the Iranian patriots who have valiantly defended the integrity and honour of their eternal country in the most terrible vicissitudes of history;

I salute the millions of soldiers and other brave people of this land who have given their lives to keep Iran alive over the long centuries;

I salute all the builders of the grand edifice of Iranian civilisation and culture, to all the thinkers, scientists, scholars, writers and poets, to all the creators of art who have made Iran a never-failing source of thought and spirituality over

thousands of years and presented the world community with some of the noblest values of man's cultural heritage;

I salute all the unknown servants of this land, who, loving their country and never ceasing from struggle, have brought about the marvellous continuity of Iranian civilisation and culture and kept it alive as a constant agent of world brotherhood and international understanding.

On this historic day when modern Iran has turned its attention to the glorious birthplace of its ancient monarchy to renew its bond with the proud 25 centuries of its history, I, as the Shahanshah of Iran, call the history of the world to witness that we, the heirs of the legacy of Cyrus, have remained true to our spiritual mission throughout this long period, and have never forgotten the pact we made with history 2,500 years ago; that we have made our culture a messenger of sublime human aspirations and a herald of peace and love, and wherever we went, together with our culture we have carried the message of tolerance and understanding.

Today we submit to History the account of the past 2,500 years and we firmly believe that the balance is proudly to our credit, for this is the balance sheet of the life of a nation which has faced the most fearful events and has sacrificed millions and millions of her sons, yet has never forgotten her spiritual mission to defend the noblest human values.

Today, after 25 centuries, Iranian soldiers once again will march past the pillars which stand upright in this vast plain as monuments of the age-old grandeur and glory of Persepolis. But these soldiers, like the soldiers of Achaemenid times, revere as a sacred goal the combination of national sovereignty and moral standards. Twenty-five centuries ago, in an inscription which is only a few paces away from us now, and in which Darius the Great recorded the victories of his army, he also said these words: "I love truth and abhor evil. I do not wish the strong to oppress the weak in my kingdom. I do not wish one to cause loss to another out of wickedness."

Today also, besides the soldiers who represent the Iranian army in different ages, others march who are called Army of Knowledge, Army of Health, and

Army of Development, and yet others who are known as the “Universal Welfare Legion”, whose humanitarian duties know no geographical or ethnic boundaries.

At this historic moment, I, in the name of the Iranian nation, greet all the distinguished representatives of the nations and countries of the world who are present here to participate in our great national festival of commemoration. I send greetings to all the people of the world who partake with heartfelt sincerity in paying tribute to Iranian culture and civilization. I send greetings to all men of goodwill in the world, to all who serve the cause of peace, justice, and progress, wherever they may be.

It is my ardent wish that the great cause of understanding and friendship which has brought together in one place the distinguished representatives of so many countries and nations of the world may inspire all the people on earth to pursue the way to real prosperity and human society.

Figures

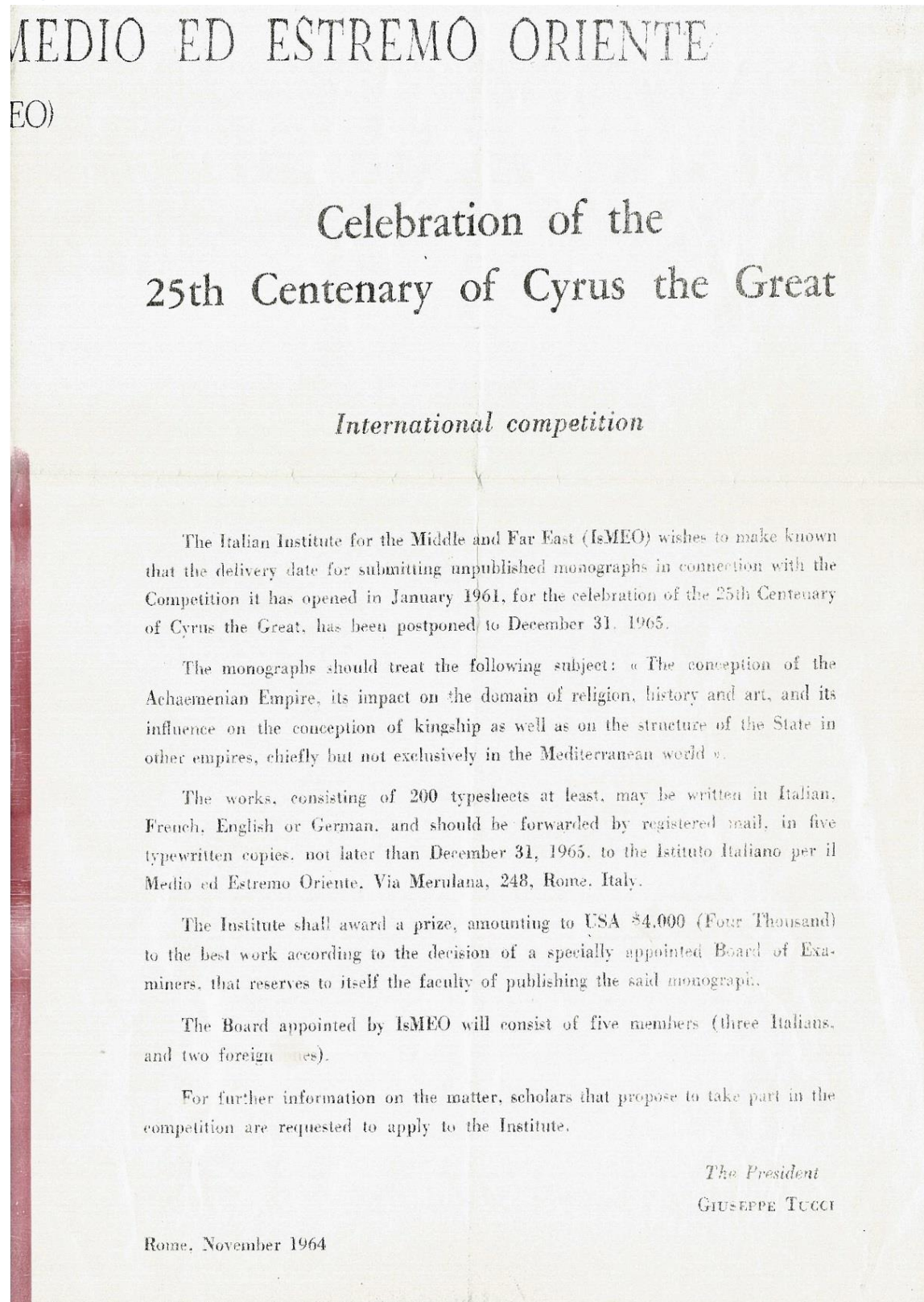


Figure 1: Poster from the Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO) inviting scholars to submit papers for a competition, with a \$4,000 prize for the best submission. Author's collection.

الذكري 2500 لتأسيس الامبراطورية الفارسية



2500^e ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA FONDATION DE L'EMPIRE PERSE PAR CYRUS LE GRAND

تنته البيع : 500
PRIX DE VENTE

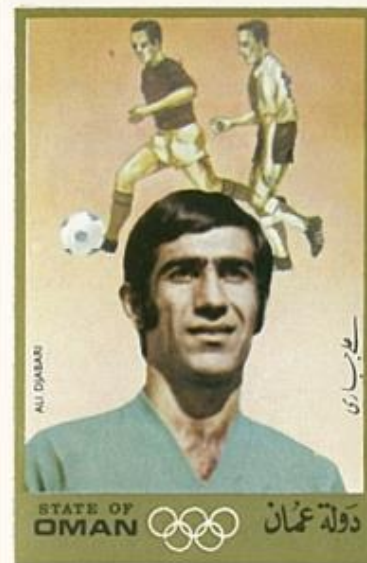
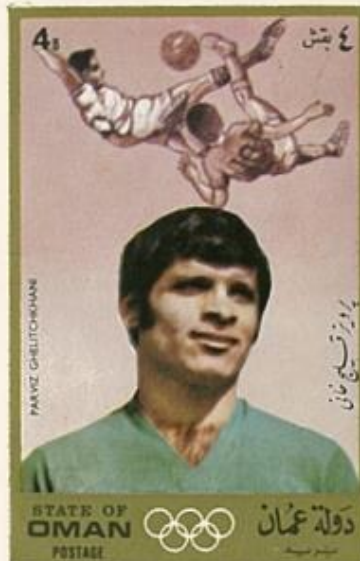


2500^e ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA FONDATION DE L'EMPIRE PERSE

شرکت در بازی های المپیک مونیخ
جشنهای ۲۵۰۰ ساله شاهنشاهی ایران



آمادگی یستم ملی ایران برای
در سال کورنش کبیر سال بزرگ بازی



PRE-OLYMPIC  GAMES MUNICH 72

Figures 2-4: Stamps commemorating the Celebrations from Tunisia (top), Fujairah (middle) and Oman (bottom). Author's collection.



Figure 5: Illustration published on the front page of Iran Free Press, October 1971. The caption below the illustration reads: 'Shah: "Here's to us, forget about those beggars outside, they're just Iranians." Cyrus: "Have your cruel joke, Shah, your thieving, murdering days are numbered."'





Figures 6-8: The site of the tent city at Persepolis, photographed in December 2017. Top: frontal view of one of the tent structures. Middle: view down one of the avenues towards Persepolis. Bottom: frontal view of the structure of the dining hall.

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