

Orientalist Ideology of Aryanism and Its Manifestation in the  
Architectural Culture of Iran during the Nation-Building Process

Şarkiyatçı Aryanizm İdeolojisi ve İran'ın Ulus İnşası Sürecindeki  
Mimari Kültüründe Dışa Vurumu

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**Abstract**

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, modern historiography witnessed a significant shift towards the kinship/homogeneity approach, largely driven by orientalists in non-Western regions. Within this paradigm, the geographical significance of Iran gained prominence.

This study scrutinizes the intersection of Aryanist historiography with the construction field during the Qajar and First Pahlavi periods in Iran. It assesses the tangible outcomes of this historical perspective as the emergence of Persian Nationalism in the construction field. It draws upon primary sources and an extensive literature review, employing a critical methodology to scrutinize architectural historiography during the late Qajar and First Pahlavi periods. The study identifies that, from the

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second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Persian Nationalism rose under the leadership of non-Muslim capitalists and foreign and local Orientalists, subsequently gaining political power after the First Pahlavi period and becoming a determining factor in shaping the field of construction development. In this way, the archaic mindset that glorified pre-Islamic Iranian civilizations and opposed the centuries-long presence of Turkic and Arab cultures as local elements after Islam became the main ideology of the modern Iranian nation-state. This main ideology became a dominant element in the early architectural culture of the Iranian nation-state, bringing significant outcomes in the field of urban development. In this context, the outcomes in the urban field can be summarized as follows: the glorification of Persian historical figures, the demolition of public buildings and urban morphology from the Turkic Qajar period, and the proliferation of the Achaemenid/Sassanid revivalist style.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Qajar, First Pahlavi, Aryanism, Persian Nationalism, Revivalist Architecture, Modern Iran.

### Öz

XVIII. yüzyılın sonları ve XIX. yüzyılın başlarında modern tarih yazımında soydaşlık ve türdeşlik yaklaşımının güçlenmesi, ardından Aryancı sürekli tarih yazımını oluşturma çabaları, Batı dışı topraklarda oryantalistler vasıtasıyla yayılmıştır. Bu tarih yazımı anlayışında İran coğrafyası, oryantalistler tarafından önemli bir konuma yerleştirilmiştir.

Bu çalışmada, Aryanist tarih yazımının İran'daki argümanları ve imar alanında nasıl mimari sonuçlar doğurduğu incelenmiştir. Çalışmada, bu tarihsel perspektifin somut çıktıları, Fars milliyetçiliğinin imar alanındaki tezahürü olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın hazırlanması dönem ile ilgili birincil kaynaklar ve kapsamlı bir literatür taraması sonucunda gerçekleşmiştir. Mevcut literatürde olmayan veya kullanılmayan veriler ışığında İran'daki Geç Kaçar Dönemi ile Birinci Pehlevi Dönemi mimarlık tarih yazımı eleştirel bir yöntemle tekrar ele alınmıştır.

Makalede, XIX. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren Fars milliyetçiliğinin gayrimüslim sermayedarlar ile yabancı ve yerel oryantalistlerin öncülüğünde yükseldiği, Birinci Pehlevi Dönemi sonrasında siyasal iktidarı ele geçirdiği ve imar alanının şekillendirilmesinde belirleyici bir unsur hâline geldiği tespit edilmiştir. Fars milliyetçiliğinin siyasal iktidarı ele geçirmesiyle birlikte modern İran ulus-devletinin ana ideolojisine dönüşen arkaik zihniyet, İslamiyet öncesi İran uygarlıklarının yüceltmesi ile İslamiyet sonrası yüzyıllarca yerel unsurlar olarak varlığına devam

Türk-Arap varlıklarının karşıtlığını doğurmuştur. Bu bağlamda, Türk ve Arap halkları düşmanlaştırılarak, Fars milliyetçiliğinin ötekisi haline getirilmişlerdir. Bu ana ideoloji erken dönem İran ulus-devlet mimari kültürünün başat unsuru haline gelerek imar alanında önemli sonuçları beraberinde getirmiştir. İmar alanındaki sonuçlar; Fars tarihi şahsiyetlerinin yüceltilmesi, Türk Kaçar dönemine ait kamusal yapıların ve kentsel morfolojinin yıkımı ve Ahameniş/Sasani canlanmacı üslubunun yaygınlaştırılması olarak özetlenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Oryantalizm, Kaçar, Birinci Pehlevi, Aryanizm, Fars Milliyetçiliği, Canlandırmacı Mimarlık, Modern İran.

### Introduction

In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar (1848-1896) traversed the Bistun stone reliefs during his 1870 journey without recognizing his affiliation with the Achaemenid emperor Darius as an Iranian sultan<sup>1</sup>. Despite nearly fifty years having transpired since orientalist initially delved into ancient Iranian history, Aryanism gained prominence among orientalist intellectuals in the early 19th century. This intellectual interest was fueled by the burgeoning field of historiography and supported by concurrent archaeological excavations.

The advent and consolidation of nation-states in Continental Europe, driven by capital economy development, marked a transformative period that gradually influenced the political, economic, military, and cultural landscapes of Eastern empires. Iran's administrative ties with Europe, notably France, the Vatican, Portugal, and Venice, trace back to the 16th century during the Safavid era. In the 19th century, the Qajar Dynasty, the predominant power in Iran, engaged in cultural, economic, and military exchanges with the UK, France, and Russia, the preeminent Continental European power, intensified by conflicts like the Russian-Qajar wars mid-century<sup>2</sup>.

In response to these interactions, the Qajar state, recognizing the imperative to adapt to global transformations, took significant strides in military, educational, and cultural spheres under Abbas Mirza (1799-1833) and Muhammad Shah (1834-1848). Subsequently, during Nasser al-Din Shah's reign, multidimensional

- 1 Mohammadreza Abbasi, *Safarname-ye Nasser al-Din Shah beh Atabat* [Nasser al-Din Shah's Travelogue to Atabat] [in Persian], ed. Parviz Badi'ei, Sazman-e Asnad-e Melli-ye Iran, Tehran 1993, p. 45.
- 2 Peter Avery, *Tarikh-e Moasser-e Iran* [Contemporary History of Iran] [in Persian], trans. Mohammad Rafiei Mehrabad, Vol. 1, Ataei Publications, Tehran 1984a, pp. 53-107.

modernization initiatives were implemented<sup>3</sup>. However, the persistence of Iran's traditional agricultural and livestock-based economy, coupled with a failure to generate surplus value, hindered the realization of anticipated growth within the capitalist economic framework<sup>4</sup>.

Towards the late 19th century, the state's legitimacy wavered due to substantial debts arising from onerous economic-commercial agreements imposed by colonial powers. This situation led to increased economic influence of foreign and non-Muslim groups, exacerbating the challenges faced by the state.

Simultaneously, Persian Nationalism emerged as a noteworthy force, spurred by the support of a non-Muslim bourgeois class with Indo-European roots. This movement gained momentum in the second half of the 19th century through the organized efforts of Zoroastrian Parsis in Mumbai and Persian Nationalists in Iran. Their activities, in conjunction with the Constitutional Campaign, set the stage for the establishment of the modern Iranian nation-state<sup>5</sup>. The financial prowess of these groups left lasting structural and cultural impacts, setting the groundwork for the subsequent structural and cultural transformations witnessed at the turn of the 20th century.

The Pahlavi state's establishment in 1925 ushered in a new era, marked by significant changes at various scales in construction. Regime-financed institutions, such as *Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli* (AAM), were pivotal in implementing radical changes in architecture, urban planning, and transportation infrastructure.

The influence of Persian nationalism, initially ignited by orientalist in the 19th century and later channeled into architectural and archaeological realms during Nasser al-Din Shah's reign, became a legitimizing tool for political power during the era of Reza Shah (1925-1941) in the 20th century. This study aims to contribute to the modern architectural history literature on Iran by adopting a revisionist approach, reevaluating existing literature, and highlighting overlooked

3 Aras Kahraman - Murat Gül, "Modernization initiatives and architectural instrumentalization after Nasser al- Din Shah's travels to the West (1873–1896)", *A|Z ITU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, Vol. 19/No. 2, 2022, pp. 432-440.

4 For more details, see Charles Issawi, *Tarikh-e Eqtesadi-ye Iran: Asr-e Qajar* [The Economic History of Iran: Qajar Era] [in Persian], trans. Yaghoub Ajand, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Gostareh Iran Publications, Tehran 2009.

5 Jahangir Oshidri, *Tarikh-e Pahlavi va Zartoshtian* [History of Pahlavi and Zoroastrians] [in Persian], *Mahname-ye Hookht*, Tehran 1976, p. 381.

or underemphasized data. The transformative impact on construction and nation-building, rooted in the outputs of Persian nationalism, forms the central theme of this research. This study seeks to foster the development of innovative paradigms through a revisionist approach to the modern architectural history literature, specifically focusing on Iran. The investigation entails a comprehensive review of existing literature, with particular attention to data that has been either overlooked or underemphasized. Examining the Pahlavi government's alteration of imagination and its endeavor to construct a new collective memory, facilitated by modern tools and equipment and inspired by orientalist influences, stands out as a crucial reality stemming from this transformative process.

### Methodology

By scholars employing the Emancipatory critical paradigm across diverse disciplines, it is observed that much of the research content inherently contains latent racial, ethnic, gender, and orientalist biases, assessments, and analyses<sup>6</sup>. Within this paradigmatic framework, it is posited that cultural, political, ethnic, and gender factors exert substantial influence on the construction of realities within the social fabric. The Post-structuralist method, as a facet of the Critical paradigm in qualitative research, represents an evolutionary extension of the Structuralist approach. In historical research, the Post-structuralist/constructivist method engages with specific temporal or periodical contexts in their intrinsic state. Discourses are culturally constructed within the dialectics of ideas, and they assume a discontinuous and divergent character across historical epochs. Within the purview of the post-structuralist approach, material culture, including architectural products, emerges as an outcome of a broader cultural discourse<sup>7</sup>. According to Michel Foucault, a prominent figure in the development of the post-structuralist method, historical epochs, while subject to temporal fluctuations, can be comprehended within distinct networks of discourses and realms of significance. Foucault contends that the central issue has shifted from “tradition and trace” to “rupture and limit,” with ongoing foundational transformations gaining significance as a renewal of foundations<sup>8</sup>. Foucault, in critiquing the

6 Linda Groat-David Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey 2002, p. 33.

7 Groat-Wang, *ibid*, p. 149.

8 Michel Foucault, *Bilginin Arkeolojisi* [The Archaeology of Knowledge] [in Turkish], trans. Veli Urhan, Birey Publications, Istanbul 1999, p. 16.

continuous chronology of history as “classical historiography,” contends that this historiographical approach may lead to erroneous conclusions.

The research employs a historiographical approach characterized by Karl Popper as “non-legislating”, “non-generalizing”, and “non-theorizing”. The facts available in the historical sciences cannot be renewed and recreated at will, according to Popper, because they are extremely limited. Since the historical data are predetermined, it is not possible to theorize through the generation of hypotheses<sup>9</sup>.

This study employs Pierre Bourdieu’s Field Theory to analyze the architectural/urban field as a subset of the broader political power field. Bourdieu’s theory divides the social world into distinct fields, each governed by specific rules, forms of capital (cultural, social, symbolic, and economic), and power dynamics<sup>10</sup>. Individuals within these fields engage in “games” influenced by their habitus and their position in relation to different types of capital<sup>11</sup>. These interactions shape the social and cultural order, with each field potentially influencing others<sup>12</sup>.

In this context, the architectural/urban field is defined as encompassing a range of activities—such as construction, demolition, transformation, repair, and renewal—at various scales, from individual buildings to urban areas and nationwide projects. The field is intrinsically linked to the political power field, as political forces directly influence urban-public spaces and urban development processes.

The study focuses on two key actor groups that play crucial roles in shaping Iran’s architectural culture in relation to Orientalist ideologies:

- 9 Karl R. Popper, *Hayat Problem Çözmektir* [All Life is Problem Solving] [in Turkish], trans. Ali Nalbant, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Yapı Kredi Publications, İstanbul 2006, pp. 139-162.
- 10 Pierre Bourdieu, *Beğeni Yargısının Toplumsal Eleştirisi* [Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste] [in Turkish], trans. Derya Firat-Günce Berkurt, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Heterik Publications, İstanbul 2015, pp. 536–537.
- 11 Pierre Bourdieu, *Sanatın Kuralları: Yazınsal Alanın Oluşumu ve Yapısı* [The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field] [in Turkish], trans. N. Kamil Sevil, Yapı Kredi Publications, İstanbul 2006, p. 405.
- 12 Mathieu Hilgers-Eric Mangez, “Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields”, in *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and Applications*, Routledge, New York 2014, pp. 1-36.

1. Orientalist experts, who possess cultural and symbolic capital, influence the cultural and ideological direction of urban development. Their ideas are deeply interconnected with political power, providing intellectual legitimacy to the implementation of Orientalist policies.

2. Capitalist investors, who contribute economic capital, fund, and support the material realization of these architectural transformations. Their investments enable the physical manifestation of Orientalist ideologies, aligning with the political and ideological goals of modernization.

By examining the interactions between the political power field, the architectural/urban field, and the Orientalist intellectual field, this study uses Bourdieu's framework to explore how these fields mutually shape the manifestation of Orientalist ideology in Iran's architectural culture.

This study adopts Manfredo Tafuri's "architectural culture" framework within architectural historiography, building upon Jacob Burckhardt's characterization of the artistic product as a cultural artifact. Tafuri's conceptualization further elucidates that architecture is subject to non-artistic influences<sup>13</sup>. The study's focus centers on architectural and urban products, with the economic, cultural, and political milieu assessed as independent variables, while architectural and urban products are scrutinized as dependent variables.

### **1. The Foundation of Archaism in Iranian Architectural Discourses in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Orientalism and Iranology, rooted in earlier centuries and initially focused on India, began shaping the discourse in Iran in the mid-19th century, supported by archaeological evidence. Key figures like Sir William Jones, who established the *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, laid the foundation for the prevalent belief in the homogeneity of the Aryan race, gaining prominence in Iran during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>14</sup>. The support of officials from rival colonial powers and the *East India Company* further perpetuated this ideology. Notable Aryanist theorists, including

13 Andrew Leach, *Mimarlık Tarihi Nedir?* [What is Architectural History?] [in Turkish], trans. Hayrullah Doğan, 1st ed., Koç University Publications, Istanbul 2015, pp. 22, 62; Manfredo Tafuri, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica", *Contropiano*, Vol. 1, 1969, pp. 31–79.

14 Abolghassem Taheri, *Seyr-e Farhang-e Irani Dar Britanya Ya Tarikh-e Devist Sale-e Motaleat-e Irani* [The Course of Iranian Culture in Britain or the Two-Hundred-Year History of Iranian Studies] [in Persian], Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli, Tehran 1973, p. 17.

Sir John Malcolm, Arthur de Gobineau, Max Müller, and Annie Besant, utilized Iranian mythology and ancient sources to shape historiography in works like *History of Persia* (1815)<sup>15</sup>.

The integration of Aryanist discourse into the field of architecture has had profound implications for the development of modern Iranian history, facilitated by archaeological excavations and research conducted since the mid-19th century. Notably, the contributions of Sir Henry Rawlinson, who was dispatched to Iran by the *East India Company* to train Qajar soldiers, played a pivotal role in shaping the understanding of ancient Iranian history. Rawlinson's achievements include significant discoveries such as Achaemenid stone inscriptions and the translation of Bistoon and Tag-e Bostan inscriptions<sup>16</sup>.

Similarly, Austen Henri Layard and William Kennett Loftus, British orientalists, made substantial contributions by identifying ancient ruins associated with the Elam civilization in the provinces of Lorestan and Arabia, as well as through the excavation of the Apadana Palace in Susa<sup>17</sup>. However, it is worth noting that the inventorying and documentation of historical and pre-Islamic architectural remnants in Iran were primarily undertaken by French archaeologist Eugene Flandin and architect Pascal Coste<sup>18</sup>. Their seminal works, published in 1851, introduced reconstruction drawings derived from historical architectural remnants across various regions in Iran, garnering international attention (Figure 1). Flandin's meticulous documentation of buildings and his focus on creating reconstruction drawings of pre-Islamic monumental buildings within Iran and beyond added to the significance of their contributions and generated interest in architectural remnants with nationalistic and romantic expressions<sup>19</sup>.

15 For more details, see John Malcolm, *History of Persia*, John Murray, London 1815.

16 George Rawlinson, *A Memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson*, Longmans, Green & Company, London-New York 1898, p. 19.

17 St John Simpson, "Great Britain: viii. British Archaeological Excavations", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 6/No. 3, 2002, pp. 252-255.

18 For more details, see Eugène Flandin-Pascal Coste, *Voyage en Perse de MM. Eugène Flandin, peintre, et Pascal Coste, architecte, attachés à l'Ambassade de France en Perse, pendant les années 1840 et 1841*, Gide et Jules Baudry, Paris 1851.

19 Eugène Flandin, *Eugene Flandin's Travelogue to Iran* [in Persian], trans. Hossein Noor Sadeghi, Ishraqi, Tehran 1978, pp. 296, 351.

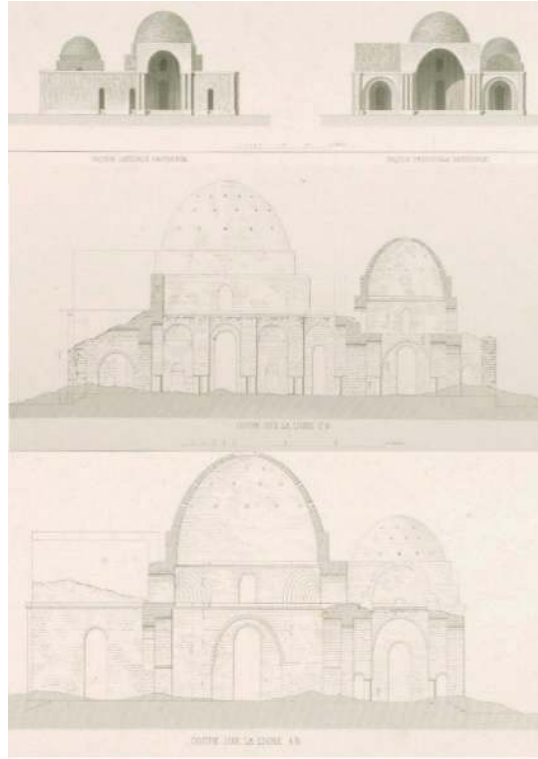


**Figure 1:** Eugene Flandin & Pascal Coste Reconstruction of the Sarvestan Palace in Sarvestan, Paris, 1851<sup>20</sup>.

Marcel Auguste Dieulafoy, another French archaeologist, played a crucial role in reconstructing and evaluating Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid architectural works through the lens of Aryanist discourse. With encouragement from Eugene Viollet-le-Duc, Dieulafoy conducted excavations in Susa, uncovering significant archaeological findings alongside his wife, Jane Dieulafoy. Their discoveries were documented in Dieulafoy's five-volume work, *L'art antique de la Perse*<sup>21</sup>. Dieulafoy employed architectural expression techniques to describe Achaemenid ruins in

20 <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/voyage-en-perse-de-mm-eugene-flandin-peintre-et-pascal-coste-architecte-entrepris>, accessed on: 06.12.2023.

21 Pierre Amiet, "Dieulafoy, Marcel-Auguste", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 7/No. 4, 1995, pp. 399-401. For more details, see Marcel Dieulafoy, *L'Art Antique de la Perse: Achéménides, Parthes, Sassanides*, Librairie Centrale d'Architecture, Paris 1885.

Persepolis and Susa, employing Aryanist discourse to analyze these remnants. Particularly notable were his narrative accounts within architectural texts, focusing on column-facade ratios and intricate details of Achaemenid architecture. Dieulafoy's contributions were instrumental in disseminating Aryanist discourse in the field of architecture, providing valuable insights into pre-Islamic architectural heritage in Iran. Furthermore, the author's works, serving as guides to pre-Islamic architecture, contain information that diverges from contemporary knowledge about the structure known as the Cyrus tomb<sup>22</sup>. It is evident that the true identity of the building, which is now recognized as the tomb of Cyrus, was not fully understood during that time and would be clarified in subsequent years (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** The Tomb of Cyrus during Dieulafoy's voyage<sup>23</sup>.

22 Jane Dieulafoy, *La Chaldée et la Susiane* [in Persian], trans. Ali Mohammad Farahvashi, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., University of Tehran Publications, Tehran 1992, pp. 382-388. Presently, the structure is widely recognized as the mausoleum of King Cyrus, an Achaemenid ruler, and holds great significance within the realm of architectural history. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as depicted in Figure 2, the building in question held little significance among the local population and was primarily utilized as grazing land. However, in subsequent years, particularly during the Pahlavi period, this structure would gain immense importance as one of the key symbols that Persian nationalism would embrace and exploit.

23 Smithsonian Institution Archives (SIA), "Photographs of Antoin Sevruguin from the Qajar period, Myron Bement Smith Collection", <https://www.si.edu/>, accessed on 06.12.2023.

Charles Chipiez, another significant French archaeologist and historian, made notable contributions to the study of Persian art and architecture with his work *History of Art in Persia*<sup>24</sup>. His comprehensive work focused on elucidating the construction techniques, dimensions, floor plans, visual characteristics, and façade proportions of architectural structures in Persepolis. By utilizing detailed architectural drawings, Chipiez advanced the ongoing research initiated by Flandin and Dieulafoy (Figure 3)<sup>25</sup>.

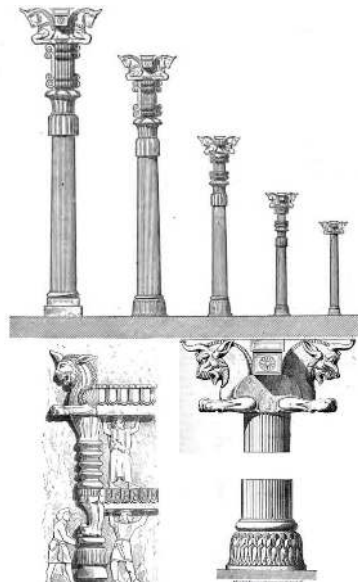


**Figure 3:** The Columns of Persepolis and Naksh-e Rostam reconstruction drawings by Charles Chipiez<sup>26</sup>.

24 For more details, see Charles Chipiez-Georges Perrot, *History of Art in Persia*, Chapman and Hall, London 1892.

25 It can be argued that the nationalist architectural discourse developed in Egypt and particularly in Iran was shaped through the glorification of pre-Islamic periods in that time. It is evident that Western Orientalists played a unique role in facilitating this phenomenon. During the same period, while the Ottoman Empire was developing its Ottomanist (post-Islamic) architectural discourse through works like *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (Principles of Ottoman Architecture), the formation of a nationalist architectural discourse in Iran centered on the elevation of pre-Islamic architectural heritage cannot be considered coincidental.

Delving into the details of this issue lies beyond the scope of this study. However, it may be argued that this divergence was likely influenced by the presence of a strong intellectual elite in the Ottoman Empire, educated in accordance with contemporary value systems.

26 Chipiez- Perrot, *ibid*, p. 126.

## 2. Zoroastrian Bourgeoisie and the Rise of Archaic Discourse

The emergence of modern Persian nationalism in the late 19th century was influenced not only by Western orientalist scholars but also by Iranian intellectuals grappling with history and national identity. The *Indian Parsi Zoroastrians*, who enjoyed the patronage of the *East India Company*, provided support to local Persian nationalists in Iran, playing a significant role in the growth of Persian nationalism and literature during the Qajar period. The *Anjoman-e Akabre-e Parsiyan* (The Association of Persian Grandees) organization, led by wealthy Parsi merchant Maneckji Limji Hataria, mobilized financial resources that facilitated the production of a genocidal-nationalist discourse by Qajar elites and thinkers. Figures such as Jalaladdin Mirza Qajar, Mirza Fath-ali Akhoundzadeh, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, and Reza Gholi Khan Hedayat contributed to a nationalist discourse that positioned Iran as part of the Indo-European and white race civilization<sup>27</sup>. Anti Turkic-Arab sentiment often served as a justification for the legitimacy of Persian nationalism in their works. Other authors, supported by Maneckji, also played a role in shaping Aryanist historiography across various regions of Iran<sup>28</sup>. These works had a significant impact on shaping the political actors' Tabula Rasa during the Nasser al-Din Shah era.

Moreover, this stream of nationalism among local thinkers also extended to the architectural domain, once again with the support of Zoroastrian investors, particularly Maneckji. Forsat-od-dowleh Shirazi, who had undisclosed connections with the *East India Company* and held influential positions during the reign of

27 For more details about these, see Jalaladdin Mirza, *Name-ye Khosrowan: Dastan-e Padeshahan-e Pars Az Aghaz Ta Payan-e Sasanian* [The Letter of Khosrowan: The Story of Persian Kings from the Beginning to the Sassanids] [in Persian], 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Pazineh Publications, Tehran 2010, about Mirza Fat-ali Akhoundzadeh see Fereydun Adamiyat, *Andisheha-e Mirza Fath-ali Akhoundzadeh* [Thoughts of Mirza Fet'ali Ahundzade] [in Persian], 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Kharazmi Publications, Tehran 1960, about Mirza Agha Khan Kermani see Fereydun Adamiyat, *Andisheha-e Mirza Agha Khan Kermani* [Thoughts of Mirza Agha Khan Kermani] [in Persian], 2nd ed., Payam Publications, Tehran 1978, about Reza Gholi Khan Hedayat see Reza Gholi Khan Hedayat, *Nejad Name-e Padeshahan-e Irani* [Genealogy of Persian Kings] [in Persian], eds. Mohammadreza Behzadi-Fatemeh Danesh Shakib, Parandeh Publications, Tehran 2020. To examine Maneckji Limji Hataria's relationship with the mentioned thinkers, see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, "Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the 'Aryan' Discourse in Iran", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 44/No. 4, 2011, pp. 445-472.

28 See Hossein Mofakhari et al., "Irangarai Dar Tarikhnegari-ye Mahalli-ye Asr-e Nasseri" [Iranianism in Local Historiography of the Era of Nasser al-Din Shah] [in Persian], *Journal for the History of Islamic Civilization*, Vol. 52/No. 2, 2019, pp. 311-340.

Mozaffar al-Din Shah, operated within the Masonic lodge called *Majma-e Adamiyat* (the Adamiyat Association)<sup>29</sup>. At Maneckji's request, Forsat-od-dowleh Shirazi meticulously surveyed and documented pre-Islamic architectural remains in Iran's Fars province, capturing his observations through drawings in his work titled *Asar-e Ajam* (Figure 4)<sup>30</sup>.



**Figure 4:** Forsat-od-dowleh's drawing of the Naqsh-e Rostam<sup>31</sup>.

The book not only provided information on Persian and Arab sages and poets but also mentioned numerous historical figures in Iranian history, ranging from medicine to art, in a romanticized language. Focusing on architectural remnants

29 Mahmoud Katirai, *Framasoneri Dar Iran: Az Aghaz Ta Tashkil-e Loj-e Bidari-ye Iran* [Freemasonry in Iran: From the Beginnings to the Establishment of the Revival Lodge] [in Persian], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Eqbal Publications, Tehran 1976, p. 83; Mohammad Keshavarz Beyzai-Reza Mocini Roodbali, "Method and Insight in Historiography of Forsat-od-dowleh Shirazi", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 10/ No. 1, 2020, pp. 189-210.

30 Forsat-od-dowleh, *Asar-e Ajam*, Matba-e Nasseri, Mumbai 1894, pp. 2-3.

31 Forsat-od-dowleh, *ibid*, p. 185.

like Persepolis, Forsat-od-dowleh sent his findings to Mumbai for publication. However, with Maneckji's demise, the publication was interrupted, leading to the loss of most of the drawings. In 1892, at the request of the Persian governor, Forsat-od-dowleh reworked the lost parts and incorporated new information and images to complete the work known as *Asar-e Ajam*<sup>32</sup>. Although the book lacked scientific methodology and relied on idioms and mythological stories, it presented readers with visuals of architectural remains.

In addition to the Achaemenid works, Forsat-od-Dowleh expressed admiration for other pre-Islamic ruins, including Sassanid buildings like the Firouzabad Fire Temple and the Qal'eh Dokhtar Castle works. Through his work, he effectively transmitted the Aryanist-Persianist discourse to Iranian thinkers engaging in discussions about architectural and archaeological works, thus fostering the production of nationalist discourses through architectural remains. His contributions played a crucial role in shaping an "archaic nationalist" discourse surrounding these architectural remnants.

One notable example is Forsat-od-dowleh's intriguing remarks about the Mashad-e Madar-e Soleiman (Solomon's Mother's grave) building. Unbeknownst until the author's study, this structure would later gain significant fame as the tomb of Cyrus (Figure 2) and serve as a prominent propaganda tool during the Second Pahlavi period's The Celebration of the *2,500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire*, becoming a symbol of Persian nationalism. However, the author employed a narrative style, similar to previous evaluations, when describing the building: *The building, also known as Mashhad-e Omm-e Nabi among the people... this tomb belonged to a king named Cyrus, according to Western historians... One of the kings of the Persian Empire and he was in the reign for two thousand four hundred and fifty years before that... It is unclear which Solomon is meant by those who attributed this tomb to Solomon's mother.*

Forsat-od-dowleh attempted to depict the building now recognized as the tomb of Cyrus without utilizing perspective methods. During that time, orientalist such as Dieulafoy created realist drawings in scale and adhering to perspective techniques, in contrast to Forsat-od-dowleh's approach. Nonetheless, the fervor of local Persian nationalists to align with the "superior Aryan civilization" constructed by Western orientalist motivated them to employ all available means towards that end.

32 Mohammad H. Salehi, "Sargozasht-e Forsat-od-dowleh Shirazi" [Forsat-od-dowleh Shirazi's Biography] [in Persian], *Shabakeh Mostanad*, April 2016, <http://www.doctv.ir/program/154140/>, accessed on: 09.12.2023.

### 3. Political Power with Archaic-Aryanism Discourse

Persian nationalist groups and thinkers exerted significant influence in Iran after the 1921 Coup, primarily through the journals *Iranshahr* and *Ayandeh*. These journals served as the theoretical basis for the cultural policies implemented by the Pahlavi regime, positioning their authors as opinion leaders in the newly established Iranian nation-state.

*Kaveh Magazine*, published before *Iranshahr*, played a crucial role in laying the theoretical foundation for Persian nationalism and nation-state building in Iran.

In the *Majalle-ye Iranshahr* (*Iranshahr Journal*), which was published by Hossein Kazemzadeh, the importance of the Persian language and Persianism was emphasized by him and other Persian nationalists for the country's salvation. He advocated for strengthening non-religious ceremonies like Nowruz, using depictions of Achaemenid and Sassanid architectural remains. Sharing a picture of the relief depicting Darius ascending the throne in Persepolis aimed to transform Nowruz into a new ritual while marginalizing Arab identity (Figure 5)<sup>33</sup>.

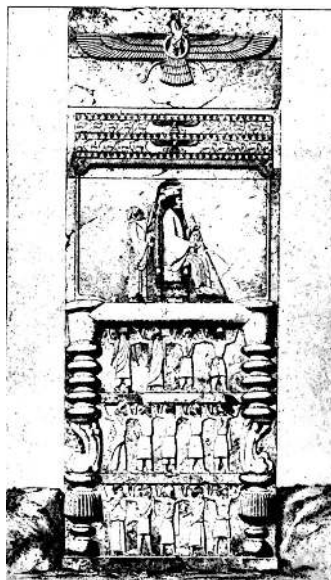


**Figure 5:** The use of antique Persian remnants and symbols (Zoroastrian Faravahar) as a legitimizer of Persian nationalism, 1926<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Hossein Kazemzadeh, *Iranshahr Journal*, Vol. 1, Eqbal Publications, Tehran 1984, pp. 254-255.

<sup>34</sup> Kazemzadeh, *ibid*, p. 255.

These ideas challenged established symbolic codes in Iranian culture. Kazemzadeh, influenced by the *Mumbai Parsi Community*, sought to impose their Zoroastrian beliefs through the creation of “historical and national” events and heroes<sup>35</sup>. This archaic understanding of nationalism favored Zoroastrianism over Islam, replacing religious figures with Achaemenid and Sassanid kings. Rather than promoting secular values as seen in Europe, this nationalist mentality instilled a new dogma. Sharing the relief of Darius in Persepolis in the magazine formed the intellectual basis for the later popularization of the slogan “God, Shah, and Homeland” by the Pahlavi regime. Just as Nicolas Lokhoff explained the capitalist power relations in his Social Pyramid drawing in 1911, Kazemzadeh was explaining the political backbone on which Persian nationalism should be established, with anachronistic discourse in this painting.

The journal used pre-Islamic Persian architectural remains to legitimize the value system of the emerging nation. Kazemzadeh created a poetry competition invitation for the tomb of Achaemenid Sultan Cyrus in the seventh issue of the journal’s first year (Figure 6).



**Figure 6:** Karim Taherzadeh Behzad’s depiction of the spirit of King Cyrus as a disheveled woman<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Kazemzadeh, *ibid*, p. 372.

<sup>36</sup> Kazemzadeh, *ibid*, p. 175.

In the depicted artwork by Karim Taherzadeh, the spirit of Cyrus is portrayed standing at the head of his grave alongside an image of a disheveled woman. The description accompanying the image states: *The spirit of Cyrus, with messy hair and a withered, horrifying face, has entered the borders of Iran... When she witnesses the losses and destruction of her ancient artifacts and pavilions, she returns to her sanctuary like a bird escaping a hunter's trap, filled with horror and hatred*<sup>37</sup>. This artistic creation involves the construction of new visual representations by dismantling older ones, but these transformations were not driven by secular values alone; rather, they emerged from dogmas that can be seen as a new ideology or belief system.

Other cultural elements, such as ethnic minority mother tongues, were also subverted with the same ferocity. Turkic speakers, making up a significant portion of the population, were particularly targeted by Persian nationalism. Mahmoud Afshar portrayed them as a “national and permanent threat” to Iran and other nations, denying the existence and cultural significance of languages other than Persian<sup>38</sup>.

The Aryanist movement that gained prominence in the 1920s played a significant role in international politics and contributed to the triggers and provocations leading to the Second World War. *Iranshahr* and *Ayandeh* journals played enthusiastic roles in propagating this movement<sup>39</sup>.

According to Mohammad Bagher Heshmatzadeh, the political nationalist discourse of the Pahlavi era marginalized ethnic, linguistic, and dialectal groups, limiting their space and rendering them invisible<sup>40</sup>.

37 Kazemzadeh, *ibid*, p. 175-176.

38 Mahmoud Afshar, “Yellow Danger”, *Ayandeh Journal*, Vol. 12/No. 2, 1926, p. 923.

39 Among the other Aryanist views of Kazemzadeh and Afshar, see Mahmoud Afshar, “Mas’ale-ye Melliyat va Vahdat-e Melli” [Nationality Issue and National Unity] [in Persian], *Ayandeh Journal*, Vol. 2/No. 20, pp. 559-570; Kazemzadeh, *Iranshahr Journal*, Vol. 2, p. 403.

40 Mohammad Heshmatzadeh et al., “Nasiyonalizm Az Manzar-e Shahravandi Dar Asr-e Pahlavi-e Avval Ba Takid Bar Ghomiyatha” [Nationalism in Terms of Citizenship in the First Pahlavi Era with Emphasis on Ethnicities] [in Persian], *Journal of Contemporary Political Studies*, Vol. 11/No. 5, 2014, pp. 69-93.

#### 4. Orientalist-Aryanist Discourse in the Construction Field

After the 1921 Coup led by Reza Khan, Persian nationalists established the AAM, an organization aimed at preserving historical artifacts, fostering respect for cultural and artistic figures, and safeguarding heritage<sup>41</sup>. Ali Hanibal, an orientalist Iranologist, emphasized that the association's establishment coincided with a critical period:

"The AAM has a significant task. Fortunately, the establishment of the Anjoman took place during a crucial period, marking the beginning of a significant historical era in Iran. The Qajar era, one of the darkest periods in Iranian history, has come to an end, giving rise to a new era of hope. In this regard, the AAM should undertake two essential tasks within its allotted time: firstly, to eradicate the negative effects of the previous era (Qajar era), and secondly, to lay the groundwork for the renaissance of creativity through its efforts and initiatives, establishing a solid foundation"<sup>42</sup>.

The AAM was initially formed by a founding committee led by Mohammad Ali Foroughi and Abdolhossein Teimourtash, with members including Hassan Mostafvi-ol-mamalek, Hassan Pirnia, Hasan Esfandiari, Ebrahim Hakimi, Nasrollah Taghavi, Nosrat-ol-dowleh Firouz, and Keykhosrow Shahrokh<sup>43</sup>. Reza Khan assumed the presidency in 1925, and additional members joined over time, such as Isa Sadik, Said Nafisi, and Aliasgar Hekmat<sup>44</sup>.

An initial objective of the association is defined in the eighth article of its charter as *to build a museum and library in Tehran, identify and classify national works, and create and scan an inventory of exquisite works related to the library and museum*. The purpose behind these efforts was to educate the public through school teachings and speeches, with the aim of "benefiting society at large"<sup>45</sup>.

41 Hossein Bahrololoumi, *Karname-ye Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli* [Workbook of the National Monuments Council of Iran] [in Persian], Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli Publications, Tehran 1976, p. 3.

42 Anjoman-e Asâr-e Melli, *Majmu'ê-ye Entesharat-e Qadim-e Anjoman* [The Collection of Old Publications of the Council] [in Persian], Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli Publications, Tehran 1972, p. 74.

43 Isa Sadigh, *Khaterati Az Sargozasht-e Doktor Isa Sadigh* [Memories of Dr. Isa Sadigh's Life Story] [in Persian], Vol. 1, Dehkhoda Press, Tehran 1975, p. 201.

44 Ezzatollah Negahban, *Morouri Bar Panjah Sal Bastanshenasi-ye Iran* [Reviewing Fifty Years of Iranian Archeology] [in Persian], Sazman-e Miras-e Farhangi Publications, Tehran 1997, p. 42.

45 Bahrololoumi, *ibid*, p. 14.

To align with the Aryanist orientalists' concept of the "Aryan race civilization," the AAM sought to incorporate their discourses and opinions. As a strategic step, the AAM invited archaeologists and orientalists from around the world to contribute interviews and articles, aiming to introduce Iran's "brilliant history" and generate interest in the "thousands of years" worth of historical artifacts.

Overall, the AAM's efforts were geared towards preserving and promoting Iran's ancient heritage, using architectural remnants as symbols of national identity and cultural significance.

The initial expert invited by the AAM was Ernst Herzfeld, a prominent German archaeologist and orientalist, heading the *Institute For Oriental Antiquities* in Germany. AAM invited Herzfeld in 1925 with the objective of "conducting an inventory of Iran's historical buildings and artifacts", as well as researching and publishing on these items<sup>46</sup>. Herzfeld's desire to make Iran a part of the Aryan civilization in his 1925 debut at AAM was what the other Persian members wanted to announce to the world:

"There are so many buildings and national artifacts in Iran that it is impossible to mention them here. The name of this country was called "Iranshahr" by the Aryan societies and they created the 'national' artifacts of Iran about nine hundred years ago... You will never see that other nations have so many works!!! Between the fifth and third century B.C., Greek civilization only one period progressed, and it had no work other than that period. Italy was only able to progress in the Roman and Renaissance periods. Other European nations are also incomparably new to the Iranian civilization"<sup>47</sup>.

As an intellectual figure, Herzfeld's efforts not only established Iran's connection to the Aryan civilization but elevated it to a prominent position within that civilization. Despite the modern concept of nationhood, Herzfeld conveyed the idea that Iran had long embraced such a notion. Officially appointed as the head of the National Library, and the Antiquities and Archeology Administration on October 9, 1926, Herzfeld also offered lessons in the ancient Pahlavi language<sup>48</sup>.

46 Bahrololoumi, *ibid*, p. 9; Ernst Herzfeld, *Tarikh-e Bâstâni-ye Iran* [Archaeological History of Iran] [in Persian], trans. Aliasghar Hekmat, Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli Publications, Tehran 1976, p. 9.

47 Bahrololoumi, *ibid*, p. 5.

48 Abbas Masoudi, "Estekhdam-e Herzfeld" [Hiring Herzfeld] [in Persian], *Ettelaat Newspaper*, 9 December 1926, Issue 98, File No: 1014255, Islamic Republic of Iran National Library Ar-

Subsequently, he published his reports on the 1928 Pasargad excavations in his work *Bericht über die Ausgrabungen von Pasargadae 1928* and took part in the initial excavations at Persepolis from 1931<sup>49</sup>. The archaeological findings attributed to the Achaemenid period, unearthed during Herzfeld's excavations, stirred great excitement in the related period of Persian society. The nationalist journal *Pars Yearbook* disseminated these discoveries, along with materials concerning Persian history. One such article, titled "An Important Historical Discovery", showcased the inscription found by Herzfeld in 1933, attributed to the Achaemenid ruler Darius. The inscription delineated the expanse of Darius's reign, ranging from Central Asia, home to the Sakas, to the lands of Greece. Notably, the yearbook highlighted that the Sakas were regarded as the "ancestors of the Turks"<sup>50</sup>.

The *Ettelaat* newspaper dedicated several issues to the progress of these excavations. Reza Shah, emphasizing the significance of the excavations, expressed gratitude to Herzfeld, acknowledging his contribution to "civilization". His visits to the site led Reza Shah to name Zarrin and Simin, two renowned inscriptions of Darius, as the "deed of Iran"<sup>51</sup>.

The Pahlavi regime sought legitimacy for its modernization efforts and radical changes by invoking Iran's ancient history. This so-called "identity renaissance" involved reviving ancient practices, albeit with significant differences from the European Renaissance, as ancient Iranian historical elements lacked the intellectual and cultural richness of ancient Greece and Rome. Consequently, the regime's endeavors tended to glorify kings rather than develop comprehensive content, often influenced by Western Orientalists' discourse.

The AAM, favored by the Pahlavi regime, engaged in historical polemics and propaganda by instrumentalizing architectural artifacts and saw a surge in activity with the collaboration of American and French orientalist. Arthur Upham Pope, an American orientalist who visited Iran in 1925, significantly contributed to the nationalist discourses of the period with his emphasis on Iran's pre-Islamic

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chives (IRINLA), Tehran.

49 Herzfeld, *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

50 Mohammad Ali Amir Jahed, *Yek Kashf-e Mohemm-e Tarikhi* [An Important Historical Discovery] [in Persian], 1934, p. 10, *Pars Yearbook*, Asset No: DSR1570, File No: 1014718, IRINLA, Tehran.

51 Gholamhossein Moghtader, *Asrar-e Takht-e Jamshid* [Secrets of Persepolis] [in Persian], Vol. 1, Majles Press, Tehran 1956, p. 49; Charles Breasted, *Takht-e Jamshid*, trans. Mir Hossein Hejazi, *Ettelaat Newspaper*, 11 November 1933, Issue 2046, File No: 1014255, IRINLA, Tehran

architectural heritage. Arthur Upham Pope emerged as a prominent figure embodying the Orientalist fascination with Persia during this era. He asserted that Persian art significantly influenced not only Turkic and Indian artistic traditions but also the artistic developments in Europe and China, with its impact tracing back to the fifth century BCE<sup>52</sup>.

In his AAM debut, Pope puts forward the sharpest discourses about Iran's art and architectural history, emphasizing Iran's pre-Islamic architectural remains:

“... [Ancient] Chinese and Japanese art was influenced by Persian art. China owes Iran to enamel coating, painting, tile making, and fabric making!!! The painting and architecture of North India was created with the delight of Iranian artists. During the Seljuk period, Asia Minor (Anatolia) reached a high position in terms of art, and almost all the masters and professionals there were Iranians!!! Almost all of the arts attributed to the Turks belong to Iran... Moreover, Iranian art reached the shores of Europe and left great traces by paving the way for new styles there... Today, there is no second country in the world that has as much artistic treasure as Iran. Therefore, Iran deserves to be praised and loved. Reaching a high level in art is not a task to be underestimated”<sup>53</sup>.

Pope's discourse had a profound impact on all members of the AAM, including Reza Shah<sup>54</sup>. His emphasis on the Iranian and Persian identity being “worthy of praise and love” was achieved through a tendency to marginalize and diminish other identities. The Pahlavi regime and Aryanist elites became fixated on consistently disparaging alternative identities as a means to promote and elevate Persian identity. Pope's approach consequently resulted in the most exalted commendation of Iran's historical monuments.

Pope's motivation to involve Americans in archaeological activities in Iran likely contributed to his enthusiastic praise of Iranian art and culture<sup>55</sup>. The establishment of the Iranian and American Cultural Association, led by the Pope, reinforced the discourse on “Iranian civilization”. Symposia like “Iranian Archeology and

52 Ali Uzay Peker, “The Formation and Denouement of ‘Perso-Islamic’ in Oriental History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History”, *Belleten*, Vol. 86/No. 307, 2022, p. 899.

53 Bahrololoumi, *ibid*, p. 11.

54 Mohammad Gholi Majd, *The Great American Plunder of Persia's Antiquities 1925–1941* [in Persian], trans. Bahram Ajorlou, 1st ed., Karang Publications, Tehran 2007, p. 62; Sadigh, *ibid*, p. 298.

55 Majd, *ibid*, p. 117-122.

Art”, held in Philadelphia (1927), London (1930), and Leningrad (1935), further propagated Iran’s nation-state identity on the global stage. Praise from Russian experts, who highlighted Iranian culture’s influence on Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik, and Armenian cultures, bolstered Pope’s perspective that Iranian art significantly shaped world civilization<sup>56</sup>.

Moreover, Prime Minister Foroughi’s message at the Leningrad symposium praised Iranian art as a crucial symbol of civilization, emphasizing the nation’s honorable position among the world’s civilizations. Foroughi disparaged the Qajar period as a “degenerate era” marked by turmoil, chaos, misery, ignorance, and darkness, underscoring the contrast between that era and Iran’s potential to reclaim its standing by embracing Western influences<sup>57</sup>.

Pope’s discourses on Iran’s architectural history exerted a significant influence on shaping the architectural norm and culture of the Pahlavi regime, a trend evident in present-day Western orientalist centers. In his selective and subjective interpretation of Iranian history, he exalts the pre-Islamic to pre-Qajar periods as more intriguing, with some exaltations such as “century of Iranian architecture”, while downplaying the Qajar period’s importance<sup>58</sup>.

The advent of German and American archeology teams, following the abolition of the 1900 Convention, prompted the employment of a French expert, Andre Godard, to oversee the *Museh-ye Melli* (National Museum), *Ketabkhaneh-ye Melli* (National Library), and *Edare-ye Atigheh* (Department of Antiquities) for a five-year term, through parliamentary decision<sup>59</sup>. Godard, an architect and archaeologist trained at *École des Beaux-Arts*, engaged in various cultural, architectural, and archaeological activities facilitated by the AAM. He assumed leadership of the newly established *Iranian Archeology and Department of Antiquities* in 1929, during which 247 historical artifacts, including 82 pre-Islamic pieces, were identified until 1932<sup>60</sup>. Additionally, Godard played advisory and managerial roles in diverse

56 For more details, see Sadigh, *Khaterati Az Sargozasht-e Doktor Isa Sadigh*, Vol. 2, p. 263-284.

57 Safavi, *Sevvomin Kōngere-ye Bein ol-melali* [Third International Congress] [in Persian], *Kōushesh Newspaper*, 25 September 1935, Issue 2822, Asset No: JA٩٩--/٬٬٩, File No: 1014294, Registration No: 82-00668-00, IRINLA, Tehran.

58 Arthur Upham Pope, *Persian Architecture* [in Persian], trans. Gholamhossein Sadri Afshar, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., Dat Publications, Tehran 2011, p. 231.

59 Masoudi, “Estekhdam-e Motakhasses-e Atighejat” [Hiring the Antiques Expert] [in Persian], *Ettelaat Newspaper*, 26 April 1928, Issue 475.

60 Avery, *ibid*, p. 64.

public projects, including the foundation of *Majalle-e Bastanshenasi* (Journal of Archeology), the design of Tehran University's faculties layout, the establishment of Tehran University's Faculty of Fine Arts, the design and project management of the National Museum of Iran, and the National Library building's design<sup>61</sup>.

Among Godard's most significant contributions under the AAM's auspices is his four-volume work, *Athar-e Iran*, co-authored with Maxime Siroux, which meticulously recorded the outcomes of his archaeological and architectural research<sup>62</sup>. This work stands as a paramount addition to the literature on ancient, medieval, and modern architectural history in Iran. Additionally, Godard played a crucial role in designing the Ferdowsi monument-tomb, another important endeavor undertaken in collaboration with the AAM.

The AAM played a central role in embodying the government's archaic ideology, particularly in the architectural and urban fields. It served as a key organizing institution for the government's Persian ideology, and the Pahlavi regime utilized its actions as a propaganda tool to foster "national consciousness". The AAM focused on designating elements as "national monuments", primarily from pre-Islamic periods, although some post-Islamic eras were eventually included. Glorifying Iran's ancient history relied heavily on unearthing architectural remains rather than highlighting artists, philosophers, or scientists, as seen in ancient Greek history.

### **a. Exaltation of the "National Poet"**

Tomb structures as sacred and monumental architectural buildings in the Islamic world emerged around the 10th century, according to Robert Hillenbrand. The tradition of tomb architecture in Iran began with Turkic dynasties such as the Ghaznavids and Seljuks in the 11th century, and further thrived during the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods, with mausoleums for religious figures and dynasty cemeteries<sup>63</sup>.

61 Mostafa Kiani, *Me'mari-e Doure-ye Pahlavi-ye Avval* [Architecture of the First Pahlavi Period] [in Persian], 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Nashr-e Shahr Publications, Tehran 2014, p. 222.

62 Ève Gran-Aymerich and Mohsen Marefat, "Godard, André", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 6/Fasc. 1, 2001, pp. 29-31.

63 bert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning* [in Persian], trans. Bagher Aya-tollahzadeh Shirazi, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Rozaneh Publications, Tehran 2012, pp. 253-254, 275; Behzad Masouei Asl and others, "Architectural Basics of Imams Descendants' Holy Shrines in Iran", *Bagh-e Nazar Journal*, Vol. 15/No. 64, 2018, pp. 5-14; For more details about Turkic mausoleums, see Mehmet O. Anık, "Erken Devir Anadolu-Türk Mimarisinde Türbe Biçimleri" [Tomb Forms in

Hassan Taghizadeh, one of the founding members of the AAM and known for his closeness to the Germans in the government, made romantic evaluations of Ferdowsi in *Kaveh Magazine*, which he published from Germany in previous years. This time, Taghizadeh emphasized that Ferdowsi's historical rank should be brought to the in his words "deserved" position in the second issue of *Ayendeh Journal*<sup>64</sup>.

The prevailing belief among the culture builders of the period was that constructing a mausoleum for Ferdowsi, as a historical symbol of Persian identity and othering, would strengthen the Persian dominance within the nation-state of Iran. This idea reflected the narrative of the *Shahnameh*, where Persian identity, symbolized by Ahura Mazda, triumphs over Turkic identity, represented by Ahriman. Mahmoud Erfan, a nationalist thinker, emphasized the need to reinforce Persian against the defeat of the Tajik language (Persian) by the Turkic language in Central Asia<sup>65</sup>.

In the process of nation-building, the Pahlavi government's cultural politicians played a crucial role by creating new "sacred personalities" using Iran's traditional culture's "sanctifying the individual" aspect. These new national-sacred figures served as alternatives to religious-sacred ones in traditional Iranian culture. In the *Constitutional Revolution* years, the groups attacking the Qajar government with fierce secular slogans were now creating new dogmas.

Persian nationalism found historical legitimacy in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, with mythological figures transformed into modern national heroes, reinforcing its influence in elite circles. The endeavor of opinion leaders to establish intellectual legitimacy for constructing a mausoleum in honor of Ferdowsi encountered opposition in the *Majles-e Shoura-ye Melli* (National Consultative Assembly), particularly regarding the allocation of funds for the grave. This objection perturbed members, including Zoroastrian parliamentarian Arbab Keikhosrow Shahrokh, who was entrusted with locating the tomb<sup>66</sup>. Nevertheless, Shahrokh,

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Early Anatolian-Turkish Architecture], *Anadolu*, Vol. 11, 1967, pp. 57-100.

64 Hassan Taghizadeh, "Chand Kalameh Dar Bare-ye Ferdowsi" [A Few Words About Ferdowsi] [in Persian], *Ayandeh Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1925, pp. 141-144.

65 Mahmoud Erfan, "Zaban-e Farsi Dar Torkestan" [Persian Language in Turkestan] [in Persian], *Ayandeh Journal*, Vol. 1/No. 1, 1925, pp. 28-32.

66 Keikhosrow Shahrokh, *The Memoirs of Keikhosrow Shahrokh* [in Persian], eds. Shahrokh Shahrokh and Rashna Writer, trans. Gholamhossein Mirzasaleh, Maziar Publications, Tehran 2003, pp. 92, 183.

with support from the AAM, determined the tomb's location based solely on the accounts of local people<sup>67</sup>. Subsequently, AAM organized a competition for the mausoleum's design, with proposals presented by the German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld, French architect Andre Godard, and the Iranian architect Karim Taherzadeh Behzad, who had studied abroad. Herzfeld's design was rejected due to its perceived resemblance to Islamic architecture<sup>68</sup>.

One influential figure in favor of the mausoleum was Hossein Kazemzadeh, who presented a sketch of Karim Taherzadeh Behzad's design in the *Iranshahr* Newspaper. To strengthen the argument for employing an Iranian architect, Kazemzadeh downplayed Taherzadeh's unfinished education in Berlin. He glorified the design as a reflection of Ferdowsi's greatness and the Iranian nation's spirit, incorporating motifs from Persepolis and bull-headed columns under an onion-shaped dome, with Ferdowsi's statue at the center (Figure 7). Kazemzadeh hailed the design's eclectic blend of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic architectural styles, representing the "immortal spirit of the Iranian race"<sup>69</sup>.



**Figure 7:** A design for Ferdowsi's tomb by Karim Taherzadeh Behzad<sup>70</sup>

67 Shahrokh, *ibid*, p. 90; Amir Jahed, *Jashn-e Hezaromin Sal-e Tavallo-e Ferdowsi* [Celebrating the Thousandth Anniversary of Ferdowsi's Birth] [in Persian], *Pars Yearbook*, 1934, p. 19, Asset No: DSR1570, File No: 1014718, IRINLA, Tehran.

68 Shahrokh, *ibid*, p. 92.

69 Kazemzadeh, *Iranshahr Journal*, Vol. 3, p. 610-613.

70 Kazemzadeh, *ibid*, p. 612.

The AAM approved Taherzadeh's design proposal, but practical difficulties and the selection of inappropriate stone led to its abandonment. As a result, André Godard's design was chosen, incorporating some changes suggested by State Minister Teimourtash.

Godard's design proposal, combining elements of Persepolis with a focus on preserving Iranian nationality and unity, was put into practice in October 1928. State officials, including Reza Shah and Teimourtash, closely monitored the construction progress, with Reza Shah even offering to cover the expenses of roads connecting to the tomb site. The Shah became emotional after seeing the building closely and turned to Shahrokh and said: *Ferdowsi was regarded as a great man, and now, after a thousand years, a famous person like Keikhosrow has become the trustee of this building. One day, maybe they will remember me like he did.....* During the construction phase, cracks appeared in the pyramid-shaped cover of the building, halting progress (Figure 8)<sup>71</sup>.

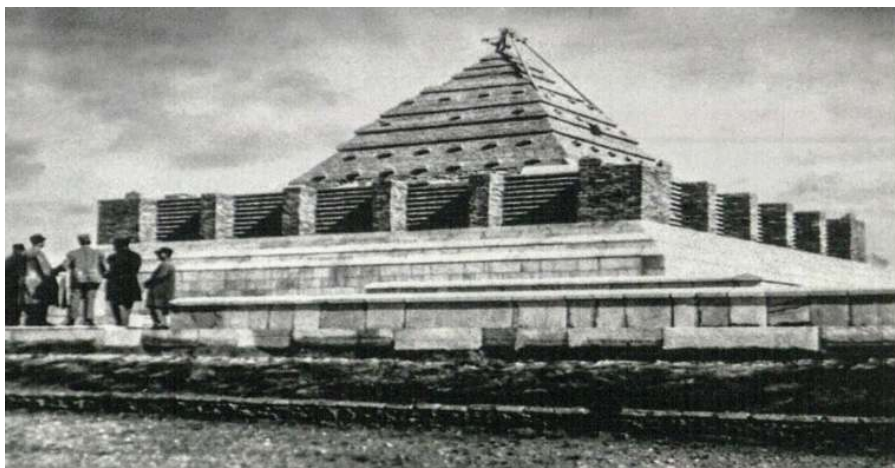


**Figure 8:** The initial Tomb of Ferdowsi designed by André Godard<sup>72</sup>.

As a modern nation-state hero, Ferdowsi was transformed from a historical non-religious figure into a sanctified figure. As a means of reconciling these contradictions, the Pahlavi administration played with doctrinal codes. As a solution to the issue, the AAM requested a new design option from Taherzadeh,

71 Shahrokh, *ibid*, p. 91-94, 96; Amir Jahed, *Jashn-e Hezaromin Sal-e Tavallo-e Ferdowsi*, p. 19.

72 Jahed, *Jashn-e Hezaromin Sal-e Tavallo-e Ferdowsi*, p. 20.

while Prime Minister Teimourtash urged a Cyrus-style tomb to symbolize Ferdowsi's role in preserving Iranian nationality<sup>73</sup>. Taherzadeh revised his design, eliminating the pyramid cover and incorporating elements from Persepolis while maintaining the main structure of Godard's design (Figure 9)<sup>74</sup>.



مراسم افتتاحیه‌ی آرامگاه فردوسی به طراحی کریم طاهرزاده بهزاد، 21/7/1313. (مأخذ: آرشیو فیروز بهزاد)

**Figure 9:** The final design of Ferdowsi's Tomb by Karim Taherzadeh Behzad<sup>75</sup>.

The costs associated with the tomb's construction were covered through the issuance of a stamp in Ferdowsi's name in 1927 as a result of the initiative of Reza Shah and Foroughi.

However, increased expenses and challenges during construction suspended the implementation of Taherzadeh's final design. During the period, Persian publications presented the public with the slogans of "national mobilization" as a "national debt" that must be fulfilled. Hashem Haeri, a writer for Ettelaat Newspaper, expressed this call in the issue of 27 December 1933, as though it were a revelation from Ferdowsi's own words: *Despite Ferdowsi's eternal resting place in Tus, he expects the conscious Iranians and their living citizens to build a monument to honor the thousand-year-old house (Shahname) he built with his words. This epic continues to resonate with*

73 Sadigh, *ibid*, 1975b, p. 203.

74 Jahed, Jashn-e Hezaromin Sal-e Tavallo-d-e Ferdowsi, p. 19.

75 Bijan Shafei and others, *Mermari-ye Karim Taherzadeh Behzad* [The Architecture of Karim Taherzadeh Behzad] [in Persian], Did Publications, Tehran 2005.

*conscious Iranians and their fellow citizens. Anyone who feels a deep sense of national pride will undoubtedly take part in the project initiated by the AAM to complete the tomb of Ferdowsi*<sup>76</sup>.

The AAM initiated a national lottery competition on February 1, 1934, to secure the necessary budget for the construction of the Ferdowsi Tomb. While the state's annual budget could have covered the expenses, AAM officials opted for the lottery competition to foster a sense of "patriotism" by involving the "entire nation" in the project. The lottery tickets featured Taherzadeh's final design of the tomb and a renowned poem by Ferdowsi, enhancing public interest<sup>77</sup>. On the lottery ticket, Taherzadeh's final design was accompanied by a famous poem by Ferdowsi.

As a symbol of the archaic nationalist mentality of the era, Ferdowsi's tomb symbolized a "picture-perfect image" and "picturesque appearance." By linking Cyrus's Tomb with the ornamental elements of Achaemenid architecture in Persepolis and Ferdowsi's non-religious status after Islam, it served as a solid instrument to create an ideal nation-state for Iranians. One of the best methods for nation-building would be to integrate historical and cultural elements into the traditional Iranian population through solid mythological values.

To strengthen the nation-building scenario by capitalizing on Ferdowsi's legacy, Pahlavi intellectuals organized an international symposium on the occasion of Ferdowsi's thousandth birthday, with the participation of Western Aryanist orientalists, who had been interested in Ferdowsi since the late 18th century. The decision to anchor the nation-building strategy formulated by Pahlavi cultural policymakers on robust and compelling foundations found a seamless synergy with the collaboration of orientalists.

The *Ferdowsi Congress*, held from October 4-8, 1934, in Tehran's Daro-ol Fonoun conference hall, was financed by the Pahlavi government with a substantial budget<sup>78</sup>. Foreign orientalists from countries such as Japan, America, India, the Soviet Union, Italy, the United Kingdom, Iraq, Afghanistan, Türkiye, Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia attended the congress, where various papers on Ferdowsi's Shahnameh were presented<sup>79</sup>.

76 Hashemi Haeri, Aramgah-e Ferdowsi [Ferdowsi's Tomb], 27 December 1933, *Ettelaat Newspaper*, Issue 2048, File No: 1014255, IRINLA, Tehran.

77 Sadigh, *Khaterati Az Sargozasht-e Doktor Isa Sadigh*, Vol. 2, p. 210.

78 Sadigh, *ibid*, p. 212.

79 Safavi, "Moarrefi-ye Mostashreghin" [Introducing Orientalists] [in Persian], *Koushesh Newspaper*, 4 October 1934, Issue 2538, Asset No: JA۲۶--/۷۹, File No: 1014294, Registration No: 82-

The Pahlavi government allocated a substantial budget, fully covering the expenses of the congress and the guests, displaying a strong commitment to ensuring the event's alignment with its intended objectives. Notably, government officials warmly welcomed the attending orientalists, with Keikhosrow Shahrokh extending a special reception to Zoroastrians from India<sup>80</sup>.

The Ferdowsi Congress garnered significant international attention, making headlines in numerous countries' newspapers, while the Iranian newspapers showcased enthusiastic coverage of the event. The Pahlavi cultural policymakers utilized the occasion to propagate and legitimize their cultural agenda through Ferdowsi's poems. They sought to highlight the historical importance of Ferdowsi for the "Iranian nation," emphasizing his role in revitalizing the Persian language and asserting the independence and revival of the Iranian people<sup>81</sup>. This effort aimed to present Ferdowsi as a national figure, transcending temporal boundaries and promoting modern concepts such as "nationality" and "patriotism" that resonated with the Pahlavi government's objectives.

It was part of the Pahlavi cultural politics to present Ferdowsi as a prophet, the Shahnameh as a holy book, and the mausoleum as a holy temple in the newly built value system. At a congress presentation, Oreng asserted, *The Shahnameh is a sacred symbol by bringing people closer to God, showing the beginning and end of man, containing modern politics and the laws of life, and ultimately showing the way to worship God. It has all the features of the book. The Shahnameh shows all the ways of worshipping God*<sup>82</sup>. The Pahlavi government's attempt to replace the old ones with new ones was akin to the "new against the old" campaign in architectural, urban, clothing, health, and cultural fields.

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00668-00, IRINLA, Tehran.

<sup>80</sup> Bahrololoumi, *ibid*, p. 35-36.

<sup>81</sup> Mohammad Tabatabaei, "Avvalin Kongere-ye Ferdowsi" [The First Congress of Ferdowsi] [in Persian], *Tajaddod-e Iran Newspaper*, 16 October 1934, Issue 1525, Asset No: DSR۱۴۰۳--/۳۲, File No: 1012517, Registration No: 82-35917-00; Safavi, *ibid*; Safavi, "Kongere-ye Ferdowsi" [Ferdowsi's Congress], 8 October 1934, *Koushesh Newspaper*, Issue 2541, Asset No: JA۲۶--/۷۹, File No: 1014294, Registration Number: 82-00668-00, IRINLA, Tehran.

<sup>82</sup> Safavi, "Eftetah-e Aramgah-e Ferdowsi" [Inauguration of Ferdowsi Tomb] [in Persian], 12 October 1934, *Koushesh Newspaper*, Issue 2544; Safavi, "Aramgah-e Ferdowsi Az Taraf-e Alahazrat-e Homayouni Eftetah Yafi" [The Ferdowsi Tomb was Inaugurated by Reza Shah] [in Persian], 14 October 1934, *Koushesh Newspaper*, Issue 2545, Asset No: JA۲۶--/۷۹, File No: 1014294, Registration Number: 82-00668-00, IRINLA, Tehran.

In 1934, during the peak of Aryanist discourse globally, commemorative events for Ferdowsi were held in industrialized countries, honoring his legacy. Streets in Berlin and a square in Rome were named after him<sup>83</sup>.

To instill “national elements” instead of alienated local customs among the public, the regime relied on constructing new sanctuaries like monuments and tombs with supernatural significance in the cultural norm. Thus, the Pahlavi regime destroyed the traditional by implementing traditional beliefs or built the modern by using dogmatic mentality. For the elite, promoting Ferdowsi as a national hero and organizing the Ferdowsi Congress helped legitimize the modern Iranian nation-state internationally.

## **b. Reviving Archaic Iran**

The revivalist architectural style, distinguished by its incorporation of Achaemenid and Sassanid architectural elements, can be seen in the façades of the private residences of some aristocratic and merchant classes of the Qajar period. This form of revivalist style found expression in the construction of the Adrian Shrine in Tehran in 1917, commissioned by Keikhosrow Shahrokh for the Zoroastrian community. Furthermore, preliminary experimentation with this style gained international exposure through the Qajar Pavilions showcased at the 1889 Paris International Exhibition and the 1913 Ghent International Exhibition.

However, it was during the First Pahlavi period that this architectural style found formal integration within government buildings. This endorsement was catalyzed by Arthur Upham Pope’s influential presence following his involvement with establishing the AAM. His influence prompted Reza Shah to commission grand structures, including the Post Office, Bank-e Melli, and Shahr-bani buildings, all exemplifying what he termed the “Achaemenid Style”<sup>84</sup>.

83 Safavi, “Meydan-e Ferdowsi Dar Rom” [Ferdowsi’s Square in Rome] [in Persian], 17 December 1934, *Koushesh Newspaper*, Issue 2594; Safavi, “Jashn-e Ferdowsi Dar Berlin” [Ferdowsi’s Celebration in Berlin] [in Persian], 26 December 1934, *Koushesh Newspaper*, Issue 2602, Asset No: JA۲۶--/۷۹, File No: 1014294, Registration Number: 82-00668-00, IRINLA, Tehran.

84 Ali Heidari, “Karname-ye Arthur Upham Pope Iranshenas-e Amrikayi” [Report Card of American Iranologist Arthur Upham Pope] [in Persian], *Panezdah-e Khordad Journal*, Vol. 3/No. 8, 2011, pp. 99–137.

Herzfeld's excavations at Persepolis between 1931 and 1934 also had great repercussions in the archaic nationalist atmosphere of the time. *Ettelaat Newspaper* devoted five issues of October 1933 to the reports of these excavations. An expert on the excavation team described the Achaemenid Empire in these reports with words of praise: *My experience of passing through Persepolis will never be forgotten. Today, Persepolis, once a place where great and brave people lived, a center of world politics, a place where the sultans made love, and a place where the enemy and friends took sides, lies buried in deep silence, far away from any capital of the world*<sup>85</sup>.

Reza Shah's burgeoning fascination with Persepolis emerged from the early years of his reign in 1921. Taj ol-molk Ayramlou, his third wife, illuminated the Shah's escalating preoccupation with Iran's pre-Islamic heritage in her memoirs. According to her, Muhammad Ali Foroughi played a pivotal role, dedicating extensive hours to instruct Reza Shah in Iranian history and the Persian language, despite Shah's limited literacy. Foroughi posited that the historical adversities Iranians endured were due to Arabs, expressing skepticism toward Islam and emphasizing Zoroastrianism as the foundational source of all religions<sup>86</sup>.

Reza Shah's discourse on Iran's antiquity evolved to encompass a visionary connection with Achaemenid monarchs Cyrus and Darius through interactions with Foroughi. His worldview was profoundly influenced by Foroughi's private works and ancient Iranian exaltation, which Western orientalist from the world's superpower countries were obsessed with. It reinforced the notion of "inept leadership", causing Iran's perceived stagnation during the Turkic Qajar era<sup>87</sup>. Reza Shah's veneration of Zoroastrianism and disdain for Iran's historical aspects, notably the Qajar dynasty, became embedded in his daily routine<sup>88</sup>.

85 Charles Breasted, "Takht-e Jamshid" [in Persian], trans. Mir Hossein Hejazi, 11 November 1933, *Ettelaat Newspaper*, Issue 2046, File No: 1014255, IRINLA, Tehran.

86 Malihe Khosrowdad et al., *Khaterat-e Malake-ye Pahlavi* [Memoirs of the Pahlavi Queen] [in Persian], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Beh Afarin Publications, Tehran 2001, pp. 87–88.

87 Khosrowdad, *ibid*, p. 90.

88 Abdollah Shahbazi, *Zohour va Soghout-e Saltanat-e Pahlavi* [The Emergence and Fall of the Pahlavi Reign] [in Persian], Vol. 1, 21st edition, Ettela'at Publications, Tehran 2007, p. 72.

Due to these circumstances, it is incontrovertible that Reza Shah perceived himself as a heroic figure, driven by a mission to reinstate the “bygone magnificence of ancient Iran”. As articulated by William Jackson during his expedition to Persepolis in 1903: ... *The ruins of Persepolis are the lost grandeur and glory of the past, but who knows?! Maybe someone will emerge from the shadow of the past days, from the dust and smoke of forgotten centuries, from the ashes of the Simurgh bird and ruined Iran, and with his strong hands he will shine the historical phases of Iran, revive ancient Iran and glorify the Iranian people again*<sup>89</sup>.

Reza Shah visited Persepolis three times, once in 1922 before he took office, and twice in 1932 and 1937, respectively, following Herzfeld and his team's excavations and learning about Achaemenid architecture.

On October 29, 1932, *Ettelaat Newspaper* prominently featured Reza Shah's visit with Ernst Herzfeld and Andre Godard to Persepolis. As they ascended the Apadana Palace stairs, Reza Shah attributed their poor condition to “the ignorance and bad faith of the Qajar period”. The stone reliefs' uniqueness led to an emotional response from Reza Shah upon Herzfeld and Godard's enthusiastic praise. Witnessing the translation of new stone inscriptions, Reza Shah said in astonishment: *How lofty ancient Iran!*<sup>90</sup>. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago commended Reza Shah via telegraph for his beneficial actions for Iranians<sup>91</sup>.

In 1937, Reza Shah's third visit to Persepolis occurred, accompanied by his son Mohammad Reza. *Ettelaat Newspaper* documented this trip to the Sassanid settlement of Bishapur, highlighting its historical significance due to Reza Shah's involvement. Bishapur's ruins showcased the nation's historical grandeur, as illustrated in the dated April 5, 1937 travel photos: *The ruins of Bishapur, which were discovered with the great favor of the Shah, exhibit the historical greatness of this country* (Figure 10).

89 A. V. Williams Jackson, *Persia, Past and Present* [in Persian], trans. Manouchehr Amiri-Fereidoun Badrei, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Kharazmi Publications, Tehran 1978, p. 364.

90 Ali Sami, “Nokhostin Didar-e Alahazrat Reza Shah-e Kabir az Viraneha-ye Takht-e Jamshid” [The Great Reza Shah's First Visit to the Ruins of Persepolis] [in Persian], *Barrasiha-e Tarikhi Journal*, No. 67, 1976, pp. 212-232.

91 Masoudi, “Tashriffarmayi-e Alahazrat-e Homayouni Be Takht-e Jamshid” [The Visit of Reza Shah to Takht Jamshid] [in Persian], *Ettelaat Newspaper*, 6 November 1932, Issue 1749, File No: 1014255, IRINLA, Tehran.



**Figure 10:** Reza Shah, Crown Prince Mohammad Reza, and Ernst Herzfeld in Bishapur Settlement, 1937<sup>92</sup>.

The *Ettelaat Newspaper* prominently featured the Persepolis visit in multiple consecutive editions, emphasizing the disclosure of new archaeological findings. The Pahlavi regime, driven by a historical nationalist perspective, leveraged archaeological excavations, display of artifacts, and propagandistic efforts to establish legitimacy. According to Ayramlou, Reza Shah ordered that the architectural style of all state buildings be inspired by the Achaemenid-Sassanid architecture to revive Iran's past: *For example, he asked the architecture of the Shahr bani building to be made similar to the Pasargad Palace*<sup>93</sup>.

92 Masoudi, "Bazdid-e Asar-e Tarikhi-ye Shapur" [Visiting the Historical Monuments of Bishapur] [in Persian], *Ettelaat Newspaper*, 5 April 1937, Issue 1749, File No: 1014255, IRINLA, Tehran.

93 Khosrowdad, *ibid*, p. 91.

Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies<sup>94</sup>. In this regard, the built environment is politicized because it is produced as a part of conscious or subconscious political strategies<sup>95</sup>. This issue derives from the fact that space is a social product that one can manage, manipulate, and exploit; thus, an important consideration is who owns and exploits space, for what purposes, and in what way these purposes are achieved. In this context, the attempts to revive ancient Iran, inspired by the suggestions of both Western and local Orientalists, can be considered a political and ideological endeavor. However, they may also be viewed as modern, as they served the rational process of nation-building.

The cultural policies of the Pahlavi regime deliberately promoted the “Achaemenidization” of ancient Iranian history. This strategy highlighted Iran’s pre-Islamic heritage as a distinct and significant chapter within its cultural history, with the objective of strengthening the ideological underpinnings of the modern Imperial State of Iran<sup>96</sup>.

Bringing the ancient Iranian architectural essence to the nation would be achieved through the modern function of government buildings, schools, hospitals, and select private residences. As the incorporation of diverse elements from Achaemenid-Sassanid temple and palace architecture into structures serving contemporary purposes proved unfeasible in terms of floor plans, construction techniques, and spatial relationships, their integration was primarily relegated to façade ornamentation. Nevertheless, the prevailing ideology of the era deemed edifices crafted in the revivalist style as “authentic Achaemenid-Sassanid architectural creations.”

In the architectural historiography literature on contemporary architecture in Iran, evaluations of the Pahlavi-era neoclassical and Achaemenid-Sasanian revivalist styles are typically classified outside the category of “modern style.” Prominent architectural historians such as Banimasoud, Ghobadian, Kiani, Mokhtari, and Rajabi often associate the concept of “modern architecture” with styles that exhibit cubic forms and the canonical imagery of modernity<sup>97</sup>. However, the

94 Henri Lefebvre-Micheal J. Enders, “Reflections on the politics of space”, *Antipode*, Vol. 8/No. 2, 1976, pp. 30-37.

95 Lefebvre-Enders, *ibid*, pp. 33-34.

96 Peker, *ibid*, p. 900.

97 For more details see, Parviz Rajabi, *Memari-ye Iran Dar Asr-e Pahlavi* [Iranian Architecture in the

notion of “modernity” is, as Bozdoğan argues, a self-conscious act that reflects an individual’s subjective stance toward change<sup>98</sup>.

Peter Collins contends that the 18th-century European revivalist style, persisting into the 19th century, epitomized conscious democratization and artistic critique against elite hegemony. Amid the rise of national identity, the revivalist style, rooted in historical Romanesque and Renaissance architecture, assumed a distinct role beyond mere representation<sup>99</sup>. Contrary to early modernist architects’ notions, this style embodied modernism, consciously engaging the past for contemporary intervention. Though distinct from other artistic branches, its nostalgic portrayal of history, considered a deviation from modern currents, signified a modern endeavor<sup>100</sup>. This viewpoint aligns with Foucault’s “governmentality” theory, suggesting that the 19th-century revivalist style mirrors his quest for solutions within governance, addressing a pivotal concern of modern states<sup>101</sup>. Therefore, the revivalist style of the 19th century was a search for a solution to “governing”, one of the biggest problems of modern society. Thus, the persistent manifestation of the neo-classical revivalist style, which gained prominence in Qajar Iran during the final quarter of the 19th century, transitioned into the Achaemenid-Sassanid revivalist style during the Pahlavi era, embodying a distinctly modern movement. It is accurate to assert that, alongside the neo-classical idiom in the Pahlavi epoch, Achaemenid-Sassanid revivalism essentially aligned with the 19th-century Western stylistic development pioneered by the *Ecole Des Beaux Arts*. As articulated by Foucault, the governing mechanisms employed by modern states, characterized by standardization, regulation, and formation, were fully enacted within the

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Pahlavi Era] [in Persian], Daneshgah-e Melli-e Iran Publications, Tehran 1976; Vahid Ghobadian, *Sabkha va Mafahim-e M’emari-e Mo’aser-e Iran* [Styles & Concepts in Iranian Contemporary Architecture], Elm-e Me’mar Publications, Tehran 2015; Amir Banimasoud, *Me’marie Mo’aser-e Iran* [Contemporary Iranian Architecture], Honar-e Me’mari Publications, Tehran 2015; Kiani, *ibid*; Eskandar Mokhtari Taleghani, *The Modern Architecture Heritage of Iran*, Daftar-e Pajouhesh-ha-e Farhangi Publications, Tehran 2017.

98 Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernizm ve Ulusun İnşası: Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye’sinde Mimari Kültür*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul 2002, p. 35.

99 Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950*, McGill-Queen’s Press-MQUP, Montreal 1998, pp. 62-65.

100 Martin Bressani, “Revivalism”, in *Companion to the History of Architecture*, Vol. 3, ed. Henry Francis Mallgrave, Université du Québec à Montréal, Québec 2017, pp. 1-16.

101 Foucault, *Entelektüelin Siyasi İşlevi* [Political Function of the Intellectual] [in Turkish], trans. Işık Ergüden-Osman Akinhay-Ferda Keskin, Third Edition, Ayrıntı Publications, İstanbul 2011, pp. 264-287.

developmental strategies of the Pahlavi administration. This approach aimed to dismantle non-Persian cultural, historical, linguistic, and artistic elements, aiming to foster a Persian-centric ethos termed “Persianization”. It involved perceiving alternative cultural facets as potential threats, prompting the strategic imposition of Persianization.

Within this context, the interpretations of Rajabi, an advocate of Pahlavi policies, further corroborate this viewpoint. Rajabi underscores that Reza Shah, while cognizant of revitalizing ancient Iranian traditions for the preservation of national identity, concurrently endorsed the integration of European architectural styles and techniques to address contemporary needs<sup>102</sup>.

The rise of Nazi Germany in 1933 marked a pivotal shift in Iran’s political and cultural alignment under Reza Shah. Seeking to diminish British influence, Reza Shah fostered closer ties with Germany, inviting German companies, engineers, and architects to participate in infrastructure and development projects<sup>103</sup>. This collaboration introduced elements of Nazi neoclassical architecture into Iran, intertwined with a revivalist Achaemenid-Sasanian style.

While modernist movements like Bauhaus were suppressed in both Nazi Germany and Iran, functionalist designs persisted in industrial and transportation infrastructure. Gabriel Guevrekian, a CIAM member and advocate of the *Modern Movement*, faced intervention in his designs under the Pahlavi regime. His projects, including the Officers’ Club and Justice Ministry, were modified to align with Nazi-inspired aesthetics (Hakim, 2001). The influence of Nazi architecture in Iran is visible in public buildings, transportation networks, and industrial facilities. These structures embody a unique synthesis of Nazi and revivalist styles, reflecting Reza Shah’s ideological aspirations and alignment with Germany during this transformative era.

There are a number of extroverted buildings in Iran, including the Municipality Building (1923) and Emarat-e Qazakhaneh (1902), both built during the Qajar era of the last quarter of the 19th century. These buildings, each featuring neoclassical and Qajar architectural traits, represent a transposition of European influences into Iranian culture in the 19th century. The application of the Achaemenid-Sassanid revivalist style, previously restricted to Parsi Zoroastrian temples in

<sup>102</sup> Rajabi, *ibid*, p. 41.

<sup>103</sup> Shahbazi, *ibid*, p. 87-90.

Mumbai with only a few exceptions in the 19th century, can be regarded as a direct intervention of Persian nationalism in shaping contemporary architectural developments in Iran during the first half of the 20th century.

The architectural revival during the initial phase of the Pahlavi dynasty, rooted in the architectural heritage of the Achaemenid and Sassanid epochs, was designated as “national architecture” in the subsequent phase. The ideal image of Iran was created by dominant and individual derogatory state structures that created enough perspective around the wide streets. The urban landscape metamorphosed into an emblematic realm of Persian-Zoroastrian nationalism, just as the religious role of Gothic cathedrals. Putting the old against the new was accomplished by building the image of the oldest imperial structures of Persian history upon the ruins of the newer Qajar structures<sup>104</sup>.

The Achaemenid-Sassanid revivalist style's echoes in the 1930s extended overseas to the 1935 Brussels International Exposition (Figure 11). The exposition guidebook states, *The Iranian pavilion was built in the most popular corner of the exposition area... The design of this building was inspired by the most famous works of antiquity: Darius Palace in Persepolis... Architect Frankignoul, informed about the building's plan in our museums, was his assistant. Alongside Rene Burgaeve, they designed the building*<sup>105</sup>.



**Figure 11:** Iranian Pavilion in the Brussels International Exposition, 1935<sup>106</sup>.

104 Kahraman, “National Identity and Cultural Heritage: The Construction of Conservation Culture During the First Pahlavi Period”. *Herança*, Vol. 8/No. 2, July 2025, pp. 84-86.

105 [https://www.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo\\_id=29&pavillon\\_id=2196/](https://www.worldfairs.info/expopavillondetails.php?expo_id=29&pavillon_id=2196/), accessed on: 06.12.2023.

106 Safavi, “Eftetaḥ-e Namayeshgah-e Beyn-al-melali-ye Brussels, Ghorfe-ye Iran” [Inauguration

The *Otagh-e Tejarat* (Chamber of Commerce) Magazine enthusiastically showcased Iran's economic and industrial progress of the era, spotlighting the inauguration of the Iranian pavilion and the associated celebrations. The pavilion's opening ceremony saw attendees from Iran—its exposition representative and ambassador to Belgium—and Belgium's economy minister, mayor of Brussels, and director of the Brussels International Exposition.

Iranian representative Esmailzadeh's opening speech, titled "Iran," emphasized the Achaemenid period and its architecture, effectively projecting Iran's new international image during that era:

"The pavilion that stands before your eyes today is, in fact, a replica of one of the palaces in Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire two thousand years ago. The establishment of the Iranian pavilion in a location that was one of the centers of civilization and culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is proof of the vitality of an ancient and sublime civilization. This building effectively portrays both the 'ancient and new Iran. In other words, it presents the story of a thousand-year-old romantic past on one hand and the story of a country progressing with innovation on the other'"<sup>107</sup>.

Following Esmailzadeh, the Belgian Minister of Economy draws a nationalist inference from the pavilion's architectural elements, stating: ... *You've remained faithful to your ancient sentiments! You pay homage to your enigmatic history, bestowing this pavilion with a 'national' appearance... The entrance's winged bulls not only reflect Iran's millennia of grandeur but also evoke the gardener who, fearing death, sought refuge in a mysterious garden on the path to Isfahan... The world understands the impact of craftsmanship on our art!*<sup>108</sup>.

The pavilion's architectural embodiment of the Achaemenid revivalist style conveyed the Pahlavi administration's aspiration to project an international image rooted in Persepolis' antiquity, signifying Iran's embrace of Persian-Zoroastrian nationalism. The building showcased the regime's simultaneous engagement

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of International Brussels Exposition, Pavilion of Iran][in Persian], 30 June 1935, *Koushesh Newspaper*, Issue 2774, Asset No: JA۲۶--/۷۷۹, File No: 1014294, Registration Number: 82-00668-00, IRINLA, Tehran.

107 Masoudi, "Goshayesh-e Ghorfe-ye Sanaye va Mahsoulat-e Iran" [Inauguration of the Iranian Industry and Products Pavilion at Brussels Exposition][in Persian], 22 August 1935, *Otagh-e Tejarat Magazine*, Issue 116, Asset No: ۱۱ / HF ۳۷۷۰, File No: 1010585, IRINLA, Tehran, pp. 4-6.; Safavi, *ibid*.

108 Masoudi, *ibid*, p. 6.

with anachronistic concepts and modernization endeavors. In tandem, a Belgian female dance ensemble adorned Iran's nascent image with vivacious gestures<sup>109</sup>.

Reza Shah ordered the relocation of *Bagh-e Melli* (National Garden), originally in Mashgh Square and built in 1922, to Sanglaj District. The Achaemenid-Sassanid style structures, mainly government buildings, were erected under Ali Asghar Hekmet's Education Ministry (1932-1938), with Reza Shah overseeing and occasionally influencing architectural designs. Hekmet noted that the current National Park in Sanglaj emerged by demolishing the old district, reflecting the revivalist style's shift<sup>110</sup>.

Pahlavi cultural politicians projected the concept of modernity from the West, which they formally perceived, onto all their cultural practices, ranging from architecture to clothing. The regime, driven by its desire to align with Aryan civilizations, chose to adopt pre-modern and dogmatic values to achieve a pre-Islamic façade while simultaneously attempting to construct a new Iran based on the "Tabula Rasa", as described by John Locke. In other words, contrary to the Enlightenment movement in the modern era, which was based on rationalism rather than the medieval value system in the West, the Pahlavi government sought to establish a new ideological and dogmatic mentality by justifying it through the denial of the "dogmatic and outdated nature" of the past.

Achaemenid-Sassanid architectural revivalism emerged as a prominent style in the inaugural official structures of the nation-state (Figures 12 and 13)<sup>111</sup>. The new Iran, characterized as "ancient and un-Islamic", a manifestation of the pristine Aryan lineage, resistant to Arab-Turkic influences, and a bastion of the Zoroastrian religion, was constructed upon the foundations of old Iran. This perspective implies that the Achaemenid-Sassanid architectural revivalism transpired not through preservation but rather through dismantling its antecedent.

109 Masoudi, "Jashn-e Ghorfe-ye Iran Dar Namayeshgah-e Bruksel" [Celebration of the Iranian Pavilion at Brussels International Exposition] [in Persian], 7 November 1935, *Otagh-e Tejarat Magazine*, Issue 121, Asset No: ۱۱/HF ۴۴۷۰, File No: 1010585, IRINLA, Tehran, p. 23.

110 Ali-Asghar Hekmat, *Si Khatereh az Asr-e Farkhonde-ye Pahlavi* [Thirty Memories of the Blessed Pahlavi Era] [in Persian], Pars Press, Tehran 1976, pp. 50-57.

111 Arash Kazemivand Niar, "Persian-Zoroastrian Nationalism in the First Pahlavi Period Architecture." *Art-Sanat*, No. 11, 2019, pp. 263-272.



**Figure 12:** Shahr bani Mansion designed by Mirza Ali Khan Mohandes, 1936<sup>112</sup>.



**Figure 13:** The central building of the Bank-e Melli-ye Iran (National Bank of Iran) designed by H. Heinrich in 1936<sup>113</sup>.

112 [https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/کاخ\\_شهربانی\\_تهران#/media/پرونده:Iranian\\_Foreign\\_Affaire\\_Ministry.jpg](https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/کاخ_شهربانی_تهران#/media/پرونده:Iranian_Foreign_Affaire_Ministry.jpg), accessed on 15.12.2023.

113 [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Bank\\_Melli\\_Building\\_-\\_Ferdowsi\\_Ave..jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ea/Bank_Melli_Building_-_Ferdowsi_Ave..jpg), accessed on: 15.12.2024.

The formalist mentality of exclusion, destruction, erasure, and adversarial treatment towards entities deemed “distant from the ideal form” was evident not only in construction but across all domains. This formalism found expression through the revival of aesthetic and ornamental elements in architecture. While architectural components such as columns, capitals, stairs, and reliefs were extracted from the Achaemenid-Sassanid architectural tradition, crucial elements such as functionality, spatial arrangement, and overall architectural design were disregarded. In the blueprint of these constructions, characterized by a dearth of innovative architectural exploration founded upon creative principles and featuring a uniform typology, architects were compelled to execute predetermined directives akin to subcontractors.

### **Conclusion**

The Aryanist historical thesis, originating from foreign orientalists, transitioned from historiography to archaeology in the mid-19th century, profoundly influencing the construction of the modern Iranian nation-state. Through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, the architectural and urban transformations of early 20th-century Iran can be understood as situated within the intersection of the broader political power field with the architectural/urban field. Based on Bourdieu’s theory, it is possible to say that individuals and groups within the architectural/urban field -such as Orientalist experts and capitalist investors- engaged in a “game” influenced by their social position, access to various forms of capital, and the overarching political context. This alignment between intellectual and economic forces underscores how the material culture, including architecture, became a tool of power and ideological expression.

Zoroastrian investors, linked to Persian nationalism and the East India Company, played a pivotal role in financing archaeological projects that legitimized Persian nationalism. These archaeological discoveries were not passive historical findings but active discourses within an ideological framework. Using Foucault’s approach of “rupture and limit”, the newly established Pahlavi regime deliberately distanced itself from traditional Iranian identity, severing ties with the past. This rupture, driven by foreign and local Orientalists, investors, and Persian nationalists, led to the construction of a new national identity that marginalized the post-Islamic periods of the country. This transformation was not just aesthetic but part of an active process of creating a new political and cultural order, as evidenced in the architectural and urban developments of the period.

While Persian nationalist thinkers view the application of ancient Iranian history as a renaissance, the endeavor is constrained by the lack of intellectual accumulation compared to ancient Greece. The emergence of a new Persian nationalist identity, shaped by local and foreign orientalists through archaeological excavations, historical references, and political organizations, culminated in political ascendancy in 1925. With Persian nationalism assuming governance, substantial transformations unfolded in the architectural and urban domains.

The orientalist-aryanist mindset pervading the administration swiftly disrupted the ethno-cultural, social, religious, economic, and architectural/urban fabric of the country. Official and unofficial governmental entities underscored an “emphasis on ancient Iran”, seeking to overshadow Islam with the Zoroastrian faith. Persianization policies extended to the cultural assets of non-Persian ethnic groups, becoming the official stance of media outlets. This cultural transformation extended fervently into the architectural and urban spheres.

Under Persian nationalism’s influence, architectural/urban spaces became crucial tools in the nation-building process, witnessing radical interventions. Across the nation, significant public and civil structures from the Qajar period were demolished, ostensibly for “road widening” and due to “ideological hatred towards the Qajars.” The historical texture of cities was disrupted, with public houses demolished for road expansion projects, reshaping the urban landscape.

Architectural revivalism drawing from Achaemenid-Sassanid influences rapidly permeated state buildings, reshaping the appearance of cities. AAM, through archaeological and architectural activities, propelled Persian nationalism into a new dimension. Western archaeologists affiliated with AAM amplified Achaemenid and Sassanid findings through government-affiliated media, contributing to Persian nationalism’s legitimacy on the international stage.

The Ferdowsi Millennium Congress, organized by AAM, consolidated Ferdowsi as the symbolic hero of the newly established nation-state. The subsequent “excessive emphasis on Ferdowsi” became a central narrative used by Pahlavi cultural politicians for political legitimacy.

Within the authoritarian modernization of the Pahlavi government, architectural/urban initiatives adopted a commanding and formalist character, implemented from the top down. These initiatives, central to legitimizing nationalist policies, involved the destruction of old memories and the construction of a new religious,

cultural, and value system. Architectural products emerged as fundamental tools in realizing the objectives of this nation-building process within modern Persian nationalism, shaped by Western orientalists, reinforced through archaeological endeavors, continued by local scholars, and manifested in architectural/urban outputs.

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