British Persian Studies and the Celebrations of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire in 1971

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Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate British academia's engagement with the Celebrations of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire that took place in 1971. The Celebrations are commonly studied in the context of the excesses of the Shah's regime, yet they have been subject to very little research in and of themselves. This dissertation breaks this trend and looks in detail at the cultural and academic aspects of the event, which it argues were at the very heart of the Celebrations. This is done by studying the involvement of British academics and institutions, exploring their historic engagement with Iran and the Pahlavi dynasty, before considering their role in the Celebrations. Thereby this dissertation will answer some fundamental questions as to the nature of the Celebrations, as well as the cultural relationship between Britain and Iran during the period in question.

A wide range of primary sources were used to answer the principal questions of this thesis, such as official government programmes, exhibition catalogues, academic publications, unpublished archive documents, newspaper articles and oral histories. These have been used to present the Celebrations, not as an elaborate show of pomposity, but as a unique event that encouraged academic and cultural programmes worldwide. Questions as to why the Imperial Court were keen to encourage such scholarly undertakings will be explored in this dissertation, as well as why academic institutions worldwide, particularly in Britain, were eager to engage with the Iranians. It concludes that the academic aspects were a crucial part of the Anniversary Celebrations and left an important and enduring legacy.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Introduction

In 1971 the Shah of Iran held a celebration to commemorate the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great. It was a highly politicised event which, when written about in the history books, presents the Shah as a megalomaniac, and sees the event in the context of his downfall culminating in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. One remembers the prophetic desert wind as the Shah delivered his haunting speech to the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae, the pageant of 2500 years of Iranian military prowess at Persepolis, the lavish dining of heads of state at the tent city, and the inevitable storm of criticism that followed. However, aside from the unquestionable excess in a time when there were large disparities in wealth and many of Iran's population were struggling to get by, some saw the event as an opportunity to advance understanding of Iran's glorious heritage. Thus, while the heads of state and dignitaries were arriving in Iran, in Shiraz over 300 Iranologists, as they were called, were already in session, discussing the history of the country that was, at this moment, 'the centre of gravity of the world.'[1]

The event was not, therefore, just an elaborate show of pomposity. The Imperial Court saw it as a genuine opportunity to enhance both the understanding and appreciation of Iran's magnificent past, not just in Iran, but around the world. To achieve this, a multitude of committees were established across the globe, commanding the world's leading Iranologists to collect work on various aspects of Iran's history, publishing their findings in over one hundred books.[2] Taking advantage of the occasion, exhibitions were prepared around the world and conferences and lectures were organised. The event presented, therefore, a clear opportunity for academics working on various aspects of Iranian civilization to advance their subjects, which was encouraged and in many cases sponsored by the Imperial Court. In this context the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations can be seen as the culmination of the significant work done by the cultural sections of the Pahlavi state in encouraging international cultural engagement. Furthermore, these cultural and academic events were not organised merely to coincide with the Celebrations and then cease, but were often long-term projects aimed at improving dialogue between cultural institutions and promoting scholarly research.

[1] William Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989) p. 39.
[2] Afkhami writes that there were 'hundreds' of these committees, but this is surely an exaggeration. It is certain, however, that there were over 100 books published around the time of the occasion. Gholam Reza Afkhami, *Life and times of the Shah* (Monterey: University of California Press, 2008) pp. 404-422.

These aspects of the event, though very often ignored completely, are just as important, if not more so, than the commemorative aspects. While the commemorative aspects of the Celebrations present a passing moment in time, the cultural and academic legacies were more long lasting. Jean Perrot recalls that the event sparked a renewed interest in Achaemenid archaeology, for example, which allowed for the resurgence in investigation at Susa, bringing the city to life 'in all its greatness.'[3] John Cook, in his memorable work on Ancient Persia, wrote that literature on ancient Iran from the 1970s to the publication of his book in 1983 had 'almost doubled.' This, he argues, arose as a result of both the interest sparked from the 1971 Celebrations and the publication of the Persepolis fortification tablets.[4] The publication of the fortification tablets, incidentally, came initially in the form of Richard Hallock's groundbreaking article contributing to volume two of the Cambridge History of Iran, published in 1971 'as a token of what is to come, to mark an anniversary unique in the history of the course of which the Board were set up to survey.'[5] Perhaps it would be a bit of a leap of the imagination to suggest that the Celebrations alone were the sole cause for the increase in interest that Cook and Perrot refer to, however, that they contributed is seemingly undeniable. More significant, however was the determination of the Imperial Court to encourage, and in many cases fund, academic conferences and museum exhibitions around the world, bringing Iranian cultural treasures to life.

Objectives and Structure

This dissertation looks in considerable detail at the academic aspects of the event, exploring museum exhibitions, lectures, conferences and publications, as well as the participation of academics in the October 1971 event in Iran. Because the number of countries involved was considerable and to study them all in detail would extend far beyond the scope of this study, this dissertation will focus on the British participation in the event. Britain, as a country with an historical political relationship with Iran, as well as possessing an important academic tradition, provides, in many ways, the ideal case study. A study of these academic and cultural aspects of the Celebrations will answer some questions as to the very essence of the Celebrations. For example, why did they occur and for what purpose did they serve? Why were foreign academics, particularly the British, involved in what was essentially a nationalist celebration? This should allow us to reconsider the very nature of Western

[3] Jean Perrot, *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013) p. xii.
[4] John Manuel Cook, *Ancient Persia* (London: Dent, 1983) p. iii.
[5] Ilya Gershevitch, quote in his preface to Richard Hallock, ' The Evidence of the Persepolis Tablets', *The Cambridge History of Iran*, pre-printed chapter to Volume 2 (Cambridge: Middle East Centre, 1971).

scholarship on Iran. These questions will be considered with respect to the history of British political and cultural engagement to Iran, in order to fully understand the depth of British academia's involvement in the Anniversary Celebrations.

In studying the official British participation, through the invitation of academics as well as members of British Royal family, we will see the political implications of an invitation to the Celebrations. This will help us to understand not only how culture affects international relations, but also how relations in general were conducted with Iran in this period of the Shah's rule. Culture is a non-quantifiable aspect of International Relations, so the Celebrations represent a unique opportunity to explore this, since it was both political and cultural. This dissertation proposes, therefore, a detailed study of the cultural aspects of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations which, it argues, were absolutely fundamental to the event. Looking at the participation and response of foreign academics, particularly the British, it becomes clear how these countries engaged with Iran and how the Iranians encouraged such engagement.

In order to answer the above questions, this thesis is divided into four chapters dealing with different aspects of the British contribution. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the Celebrations, discussing why they were held and essentially what they were. This provides the necessary context and background for the rest of the study. Chapter 2 looks at the British Museum and the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder, which was, as we shall see, an important part of the British contribution. Seen in the context of the Cyrus legend, which was central to the Celebrations, we will see how the Cylinder was transformed from a simple building inscription and part of the Museum's vast collection, into an important Iranian national symbol. Chapter 3 discusses the purely academic aspects of the event and looks in detail at the British participation, which is key to this thesis. It looks at British scholarly interest in Iran from an academic perspective, before investigating different parts of the British involvement in the Celebrations. Finally, Chapter 4 looks at other significant British contributions to the Celebrations, in the form of the attendance of the Royal family and the Foreign Office through the British Council.

Literature Review

Literature on the Celebrations is surprisingly sparse, considering its perceived importance to the Shah's reign, though its interpretation varies considerably. Fakhreddin Azimi referred to the Shah's 'perilous arrogance' in relation to the event in his presentation of a king

completely out of touch with the needs and aspirations of his people.[6] Conversely, Houchang Nahavandi devoted a full chapter of his interestingly titled *The Last Shah of Iran: Fatal Countdown of a Great Patriot Betrayed by the Free World, a Great Country Whose Fault Was Success*[7] to the Celebrations, presenting them as a great success, and a thoroughly well-organised and executed spectacle. As one who was intimately involved in the Celebrations, as Chancellor of the Pahlavi University, Nahavandi's positive spin is unsurprising and although we should, for this reason, use his account with caution, he does give some excellent details which would be otherwise difficult to find, particularly relating to cultural and academic activities. Abbas Milani's *The Shah* dedicates a few pages to the Celebrations, yet makes little mention of the academic conferences, instead focusing on the participation of invited dignitaries and the subsequent bad press.[8] Marvin Zonis, who was actually present as a member of the American Iranologist delegation, makes no reference to the academic side of the event in his psycho-analytical account of the Shah's downfall.[9] William Shawcross also conforms to this tradition of writers who place the event firmly in the context of the Shah's demise when he writes:

> It was supposed to mark the 2500th Anniversary of the original empire founded by Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C. In retrospect it can be seen to mark the beginning of the end of the Pahlavi dynasty, which the Shah's father had founded just fifty years before.[10]

Breaking this tradition somewhat, Gholam-Reza Afkhami stressed that one of the 'major events' of the 2500th Anniversary Celebration was the Congress of Iranology,[11] yet he is also critical of the Celebrations overall. The Celebrations were 'ill-conceived', he argues, 'not because the time was not ripe for extolling Iran's history or monarchy, but rather because they became too foreign dominated, both politically and culturally.'[12] Expanding on the idea of a kind of cultural invasion, Talinn Grigor writes that although the Celebration was supposed to assert Iran's own rich and important culture, it was 'in effect a thoroughly self-Orientalizing spectacle. It was an Iranian mimicry that wholeheartedly embraced the Saidian

[6] Fakhreddin Azimi, *Quest for Democracy in Iran: A Century of Struggle Against Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) p. 290.
[7] Houchang Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran: Fatal Countdown of a Great Patriot Betrayed by the Free World, a Great Country Whose Fault Was Success*, trans., Steeve Reed (Slough: Aquillon Ltd., 2005).
[8] Abbas Milani, *The Shah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp. 322-326.
[9] Marvin Zonis, *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp. 66-68
[10] Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride* (1989) p. 38.
[11] Afkhami, *Life and times of the Shah* (2008) p. 408.
[12] Ibid, p. 412.

model of European and Western tactics and models.'[13] This is a fairly new approach, but another which, when discussing the 1971 event focuses heavily on the grand military parade, the gala dinner and the speech at Pasargadae, rather than the realms of culture and academia. Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, the academic engagement with foreign institutions could represent a sort of liberation from traditional Orientalist studies on Iran and the birth of a new era in which Iranians worked together with foreign academics.

From the very outset, due to the glamour of the occasion and the grandiose image of the Shah, it was easy for writers to exaggerate and present a romanticised image of the proceedings. One reporter wrote the following of the Shah's speech at Pasargadae:

> A whirlwind raced across the sand towards the Shah. He looked up as he spoke and it turned away, keeping a respectful distance. The appearance of three witches, prophesying fresh glories, would not have seemed wildly inappropriate.[14]

Moreover, when the Shah was eventually toppled, the 2500th Anniversary provided the perfect background to an historic tragedy. Histories of the Shah written during, or immediately following, his reign, however, make little reference to the Celebrations. There is just one small reference to the Celebrations in Hossein Amirsadeghi and Ronald Ferrier's *Twentieth Century* Iran, [15] while Amin Saikal's important work entitled *The Rise and Fall of the Shah,*[16] first published just after the Revolution and re-printed most recently in 2009, contains no reference at all to the event.

Historian Russell Chamberlin, who dedicated ten pages of his book *Preserving the Past*, published in 1979, to the Celebrations, concluded that they were 'over-egged and self-conscious', yet stressed that on a deeper level the government successfully used the past 'as a potent means of encouraging a concept of unity, of statehood in a divergent people.'[17] How the government achieved this, with the cooperation of the international scholarly community, is interesting and will be investigated in this thesis. As a consequence of bad press from the Western media through the 1970s, the Shah's regime tended to distance itself from the

[13] Talinn Grigor, 'Orientalism and Mimcry of Selfness: Archaeology of the neo-Achaemenid Style', *L'Orientalisme architectural entre imaginaires et savoirs*, Paris, Picard (2009) p. 274.
[14] Walter Schwarz, 'A kingdom remembered – 2,500 years on', *The Guardian*, 13 October 1971, p. 1.
[15] Hossein Amirsadeghi and Ronald Ferrier ed., *Twentieth Century Iran* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1977) p. 171.
[16] Amin Saikal, *The Rise and Fall of the Shah: Iran From Autocracy to Religious Rule* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).
[17] E.R. Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1979) p. 25.

Celebrations, which could explain the lack of objective investigation into them during this period, since academia tended to accept to regime's interpretation of history, as well as what was deemed appropriate to study.[18] This, coupled with the destruction of documents and the demonization of the Pahlavis during the turmoil of the Revolution, has undoubtedly contributed to our current understanding of the Celebrations. Therefore, a complete re-evaluation is necessary in order to create a more objective picture of what happened and take the event out of the context of the Revolution.

This dissertation should be considered in the context of the history of Iranian Studies, on which a considerable amount has been published.[19] Much has been written on the history of the archaeology of the monuments of Iran, which is relevant to this dissertation, particularly in the 1970s, and nearly every work concerning Persepolis or Pasargadae includes a section dealing with the history of the excavations there.[20] There are also numerous studies that deal solely with the history of the study of Ancient Iran, such as Touraj Daryaee's recent work *The Study of Ancient Iran in the Twentieth Century*,[21] as well as Ali Mousavi and Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam's *Les Hauts Et Les Bas De L'Archaéologie en Iran.*[22] Though these works deal with various international collaborations with Iran, there is little mention of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, an occasion on which much important scholarly work was initiated. Scattered across the libraries of the United Kingdom are, however, various scholarly works that were produced for the occasion of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, such as the British Council produced *British Contributions to Persian Studies*[23], with contributions by the likes of Max Mallowan and David Stronach, the Reverend Norman Sharp's *The Inscriptions in Old Persian Cuneiform of the Achaemenian*

[18] For a discussion of this, see Stephanie Cronin, 'Writing the History of Modern Iran: A Comment on Approaches and Sources', *Iran*, 36 (1998) pp. 175-184.
[19] For example: Bernard Hourcade, 'Iranian Studies in France', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987) pp. 1-51; Hisae Nakanishi, 'Iranian Studies in Japan', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987) pp. 131-159; J.T.P. de Bruijn, 'Iranian Studies in the Netherlands', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987) pp. 161-177; Anna Krasnowolska, 'Iranian Studies in Poland', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987) pp. 179-221; Mansour Bonakdarian, 'Iranian Studies in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century', *Iranian Studies*, 43:2 (2010) pp. 265-293.
[20] For example Ali Mousavi, *Persepolis: Discovery and Afterlife of a World Wonder* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter Inc, 2012); David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Ali Sami, *Persepolis*, trans. R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Printing Office, 1958); and Ali Sami, *Pasargadae: The Oldest Imperial Capital of Iran*, trans. R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Printing Office, 1971).
[21] Touraj Daryaee, 'The Study of Ancient Iran in the Twentieth Century', *Iranian Studies*, 42:2 (2009) pp. 579-589.
[22] Ali Mousavi and Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, 'Les Hauts Et Les Bas De L'Archaéologie en Iran', *La pensée de midi*, 1:27 (2009) pp. 137-143.
[23] Max Mallowan and others, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (Tehran: Ramin Printers, 1971).

Emperors[24] and Ghirshman, Minorsky and Sanghvi's *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom*,[25] to name but a few. These works give us a wonderful impression of the length and depth of scholarly work done in conjunction with the Celebrations and are thus important to this study as primary evidence.

Statement on Primary Sources

Despite slight references in the secondary literature to the cultural and academic aspects of the Celebrations, there are very few links to primary sources. As a consequence, uncovering the facts has proved to be an arduous process, requiring a good deal of what one might call detective work, sifting through archive documents, exploring library collections up and down the country, and hearing the memoirs of those who were present. Primary source material for this thesis includes archive documents, oral histories, academic works published in conjunction with the Celebrations, official programmes, and newspaper articles. There are obvious pitfalls associated with using such source material, particularly when addressing such a controversial event that involved such vast amounts of money and political intrigue. Such potential biases have not been ignored and sources have been carefully scrutinised.

The Oral Histories referenced in this dissertation come primarily from the Harvard University Iranian Oral History Project and the Foundation for Iranian Studies Oral History Programme. These include interviews with people both present at the Celebrations, and those involved in its preparation, including, amongst others, British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham, former Ambassador Denis Wright who left shortly before the Celebrations, American academic Richard Frye and British academic Peter Avery. As well as these sources, an interview was conducted in Berkeley, California, with David Stronach, who was the head of the British Institute of Persian Studies during the Celebrations, and many emails were exchanged with other academics either present at the Celebrations or involved in important publications, such as Roger Savory and John Hinnells. There are certain dangers with using personal accounts from an historic event such as this since memories may have faded over the years, however these accounts were able to enrich the narrative and provide details that would be impossible to attain elsewhere.

[24] Ralph Norman Sharp, *The Inscriptions in Old Persian Cuneiform of the Achaemenian Emperors* (Tehran: Central Council of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, 1966).
[25] Roman Ghirshman, Vladimir Minorsky and Ramesh Sanghvi, *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom* (London: Orient Commerce Establishment, 1971).

In the many hours spent trawling through libraries and archives, many interesting and wonderful sources were uncovered. These include official publications such as Shojaeddin Shafa's information booklet about the Celebrations[26] as well as official programmes, exhibition programmes and academic publications from around the world. The academic publications released in conjunction with the Celebrations that have been discovered have not all been listed in this dissertation, but the ones that have been mentioned serve to illustrate the body of academic work that can be directly associated with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. Not being fluent in Persian, it was difficult to analyse Persian sources in any considerable detail. However, although more Persian might have been desirable, the focus of this study was British involvement with the Celebrations, so this lack did not detract from answering the principal questions of this study. Indeed, all of the official programmes were printed in English, sometimes English and Persian, and sometimes English, Persian and French. The official Foreign Office correspondence was all in English and many of the academic works, even those published in Japan and Pakistan, for example, were in English. Works cited in French, German and Italian have been translated for the author.

Theoretical Framework

The celebration that took place in Iran in 1971 is often viewed in the context of Iranian history, being seen, rather conveniently, as the beginning of a revolutionary process which culminated in the toppling of the Shah's regime. In viewing it solely as part of this distinct historical narrative, it is impossible to understand the complex processes at work. Thus, in order to examine the event in a more analytic manner, we must start from the beginning and ask some fundamental questions, the answers to which should provide the base from which we may launch this investigation. These theoretical considerations include aspects of nationalism, the relationship between knowledge and power, post-colonial approaches and theories of celebration. This section will begin with a discussion of nationalism and heritage, followed by a discussion of celebrations and their various usages through the ages and in different political systems. These will help us to begin to question the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and the participation of foreign academics and provide ammunition in answering the principal research questions throughout the dissertation's chapters.

[26] Shojaeddin Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great (*Tehran: Committee of International Affairs of the Festivities, 1971).

National heritage and its Construction

Central to the celebration are ideas of nationalism, which in turn are influenced heavily by a nation's heritage, or rather an interpretation of that heritage. Rodney Harrison argued that heritage can be considered to be 'the creation of a past in the present.'[27] In this interpretation, heritage is not some objective reality, but rather something flexible and creative, 'a form of mediation in the process of creating the past in the contemporary world.'[28] David Lowenthal argues that the past is intrinsically linked to the present and is influenced by change. 'Beleaguered by loss and change', he writes, 'we keep our bearings only by clinging to remnants of stability.'[29] Thus while Iran was seeking to progress and modernise, in the 1960s and 1970s, it was understandable that they should look to the past in order to provide this 'stability'. Furthermore, the past has, since ancient times, has been equated with individual existence and in more modern times Europeans have begun to see the past as vital to national character.[30] Alasdair MacIntyre agrees, arguing that the 'possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide.'[31] Thus it is our shared heritage that defines, to a large extent, who we are as members of a social group. Ideology is also linked to identity and heritage. Zhand Shakibi wrote that

> A vital element of an ideology is a fashioned historiography that supports the regime by rooting it in the past or presenting it as the final inevitable result of historical forces.[32]

Thus history is used by the populace to ascertain their identity and by the state, which can manipulate history to achieve its political goals. Veneration of the ancients can also shape the international policies of a state, or how they project these policies onto the people.

MacIntyre further explains that 'there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its dramatic resources.'[33] How do we then choose which stories to pluck from this seemingly endless flow of history? Lowenthal has argued that the worth of history is increased the further back we

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[27] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013) p. 37.
[28] Ibid, p. 38.
[29] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 6.
[30] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 41.
[31] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984) p. 221.
[32] Zhand Shakibi, 'Pahlavism: The Ideologization of Monarchy in Iran', *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 14:1 (2013) p. 118.
[33] Ibid, p. 216.

go: 'Being ancient makes things precious by their proximity to the dawn of time, to the earlier beginnings... the more ancient a lineage the more highly venerated it is.'[34] In this respect, due to its ancientness the Achaemenid Empire was seen as greater than other ancient empires, such as Rome. The Shah wrote, for example:

> Most of the readers of this book will have studied Roman history, but our empire was flourishing centuries before that of Rome, and it was in fact we who showed that it was possible to govern and administer on such a large scale.[35]

The whole ethos of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, therefore, can be ascribed to this desire on behalf of the Shah's regime to display their country as truly great in the context of world history. The subject of the Congress of Iranology, for example, stressed the continuation of Iranian Culture over 2500 years despite periods of foreign incursion, thus clearly displaying Iranian superiority.

This is important to consider when using post-colonial theory in discussions of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. The term 'post-colonial' refers to those states whose cultures were and continue to be affected by imperialism. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have written: 'This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.'[36] Edward Said's *Orientalism*[37] remains one of the most influential pieces of literature on this imperial domination on the Middle East and it has been subject to fierce debate ever since.[38] Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg describe it as 'a body of knowledge that claims to be superior to any knowledge that the Orientals might produce about themselves.'[39] Certainly there was a clear bias in early writings by westerners on Iran, however in the context of Iran in the late Pahlavi period this is problematic, particularly in view of the considerable respect given by British academics to Iranian scholars such as Ali Sami and Ezat Negahban.[40] The number of

[34] Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1998) p. 176.
[35] Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for my Country* (London: Hutchinson, 1961) p. 19.
[36] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 2nd ed., 2002) p. 2.
[37] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995).
[38] See for example Bernard Lewis, 'The Question of Orientalism', *New York Review of Books*, June 24 1982; Fred Halliday, ''Orientalism' and Its Critics', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 20:2 (1993) pp. 145-163.
[39] Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg, 'The Challenge of Orientalism', *Economy and Society*, 14:2 (1985) p. 178.
[40] Ali Sami was an archaeologist and prolific writer on Iran. The British Reverend Norman Sharp translated three of his works into English. He became director of the Archaeological Institute of Persepolis in the 1940s

conferences held in Iran during the late 1960s and 1970s such as the First International Congress of Iranology (Tehran, 1966), the Fifth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology (Tehran and Isfahan, 1967), the Second International Congress of Iranology (Shiraz, 1971), and the Second International Congress of Mithraic Studies (Tehran, 1975), indicate that Iran was making a concerted effort to take back its history. In this respect, far from being an orientalist, or self-orientalist spectacle, the 1971 Celebrations can be seen as a kind of reclamation of Iranian identity from foreigners.

The motive of the Western intellectual engaged with Iran is also relevant. Of use here is the idea of discourse analysis, a key concept in Michel Foucault's writings, which argues that, in the words of Michael Karlberg, 'the ways we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject.'[41] As Foucault explains:

> in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures, the role of which is to conjure its powers and dangers.[42]

Rules of discourse, in this sense, are linked strongly to power, since the complex processes at work are produced through forms of selection, omission and domination.[43] This means that power is not merely repressive since it controls, but also productive since it creates. As one who is working within a system, such as an academic field, the intellectual is both constrained and liberated by the laws which govern their work, and they are engaged in a constant power-struggle within that system. These are important factors to remember in relation to the academic engagement with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, particularly when questioning why scholars were there in the first place and what purpose their attendance served, both with respect to the regime and to themselves.

Theories of Celebration

In the ancient world celebrations and festivals were important, particularly those relating to religions, or religious cults. In the ancient Near East, periods of celebration were an essential

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and 1950s and was a highly influential figure in the archaeology of Iran. Ezat Negahban was another highly influential Iranian archaeologist and led important excavations, such as Marlik in the early 1960s. He had close connections to British scholars such as Sir Max Mallowan and David Stronach.

[41] Michael Karlberg, 'The Power of Discourse and the Discourse of Power: Pursuing Peace Through Discourse Intervention', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 10:1 (2005) p. 1.

[42] Michel Foucault, 'L'ordre du discours', quoted in Eric Paras, *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge* (New York: Other Press, 2006) p. 49.

[43] Derek Hook, 'Discourse, Knowledge, Materiality, History: Foucault and Discourse Analysis', *Theory and Psychology*, 11:4 (2001) pp. 523-524.

form of religious practice and rulers were often required to participate, notably so in Assyria, where the ruler took on a priestly role.[44] Such events could also provide the ruler with a chance to show off his power through such acts as military displays and the building of monuments. Ignoring important public festivals could also be costly for an ancient king. For example, the Babylonian king Nabonidus, who was already unpopular with the Marduk priesthood for his devotion to the moon god Sin, moved to the Teima oasis in the Arabian Desert in 552 BC, where he would stay for around ten years. As it was the king who must personally lead the festivities in Babylon, the New Year celebrations were cancelled, which caused anger amongst the population, particularly the Marduk priesthood.[45] The cancelling of the festival, the most important in the Babylonian calendar, can therefore be seen in the context of growing social tensions over the rule of Nabonidus, which explains why Cyrus the Great was presented as a liberator when his army overthrew the Babylonian king in 539 BC. In Ancient Rome too, festivals adorned each monthly calendar for reasons relating to religion, agriculture and war, allowing people in power significant opportunities for displays of pomp and giving communities the chance to celebrate together.[46]

Following the French Revolution festivals became an important tool for the new regime, in some sense renewing the festive commemorative traditions of old, yet with a nationalist sentiment that was certainly divergent from tradition. In the times of the monarchy public fêtes were designed to benefit both ruler and ruled, in order to 'tighten the people's ties to their princes and make them forget, for a brief time, the misfortunes and cares inherent in their weak humanity.'[47] The Revolution allowed for a new historical narrative to be constructed and celebrations were an important way in which this was achieved, by bolstering the revolutionary memory while wiping away the memory of the monarchy.[48] This became a kind of 'civil religion' incorporating holidays, anniversaries, festivals and a new calendar, in order to stress the discontinuation of the old and the emergence of the new.[49] One example of this was the abolishment of Catholic feast days and their replacement with Revolutionary

[44] Jeremy Black and Alan Millard, *Festivals*, in *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*, ed. by Piotr Bienkowski and Alan Millard (British Museum Press: London, 2000) p. 116.
[45] Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East* (Blackwell Publishing: Oxford, 2007) p. 280.
[46] See for example J. Rasmus Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng ed., *Greek and Roman Festivals* (Oxford University Press; Oxford, 2012).
[47] Claude Ruggieri (1830) quoted in Charles Rearick, 'Festivals in Modern France: The Experience of the Third Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12:3 (1977) p. 436.
[48] Elie Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 17.
[49] Elie Podeh, 'Celebrating Continuity: The Role of State Holidays in Syria (1918-2010)', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40:4 (2013) p. 430.

ones.[50] Other new holidays emerged, glorifying the new order, such as the *fête de la Fédération*, which evolved from spontaneous acts of celebration amongst peasants. Ozouf describes this process as an evolution from 'impoverished ritual of unity', into state-level ritual.[51] This became a major event in the Revolutionary calendar, combining official and non-official activities, which included military parades, fireworks, torchlight processions and concerts.[52]

Such events have been constantly reproduced in the West and, since colonialism, in the Third World. The French were so wary of the power of national celebrations, which they feared could arouse anti-colonial attitudes, that they were banned during the French mandate over Syria (1920-1946).[53] When the French finally left, Martyr's Day and the Maysalun myth, which glorified past struggles against the Ottoman and French rulers, were incorporated into the Syrian historical narrative.[54] Similarly, from the Qassem coup in 1958 in Iraq the new regime sought to delegitimize the British-backed Hashemite era and create a new Iraqi identity. All celebrations associated with the Hashemites were annulled, except for Army Day, and a new celebratory calendar was inaugurated which revolved around Revolution Day.[55] As with the Syrian celebrations, the Iraqis sought to obliterate colonial memory from their national psyche, creating new holidays which would elevate the emerging power and strengthen their claims of legitimisation. Thus we can observe that in some emerging nation states in the twentieth century, resistance to colonial rule shaped their historiographies and in many instances, they were able to delve into their past to create a new nationalist identity. Since the Renaissance, national character was seen as something inherent which was passed along from generation to generation; an amalgamation of shared history, culture, language, customs, genealogy and race helped to identify and explain this character.[56] On a national level this identity had been suppressed under colonial rule, so in a sense this allowed the ruler to choose a preferred history, culture, language and race, around which to shape national identity. The celebration became a powerful tool in the promotion of these new historical narratives.

[50] Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) p. xi.
[51] Ibid, pp. 36-39.
[52] Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011) p. 17.
[53] Podeh, 'Celebrating Continuity' (2013) p. 435.
[54] Ibid, p. 436.
[55] Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011) p. 123.
[56] John Breuilly, 'Nationalism and the Making of National Pasts', in *Nations and Their Histories: Constructions and Representations*, ed. by Susana Carvalho and Francois Gemenne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 10.

The Hashemite monarchy was, unlike French Syria, strikingly similar to the British model and this was reflected in their state celebrations, which focussed more on the monarchical tradition.[57] So, even though the celebration was nationalist and therefore anti-colonial at its core, it fully embraced British monarchical tradition. Modern nationalist celebrations are not, however, restricted to autocracies and there is a significant body of literature dealing with such events in democratic societies. Lyn Spillman's *Nation and Commemoration,* for example, compares the ways in which the United States and Australia use commemorative celebrations to deal with various social and political issues.[58] We can observe such celebrations in modern British society too, through the monarchical institution. The monarchy in Britain is seen as a symbol and enduring emblem of British tradition, even during economic and political hardship where it provides the ability to, in the words of Duncan Bell, 'act as a temporal stabiliser, as an anchor of permanence and constitutional fidelity.'[59] In times of economic instability, perhaps especially in such times, royal events are still enthusiastically celebrated, with little cost spared. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, for example, was celebrated nationwide and cost the British economy an estimated £1.2 billion.[60] The ceremonies associated with George VI had profound symbolic importance in shaping attitudes towards the monarchy. His coronation after the abdication of his brother was a reaffirmation of the stability of the institution, while the interest in his funeral showed strong national appreciation of a man who was not born to be king, nor wanted to be, but took the throne out of an overwhelming sense of duty.[61] In traditional forms of celebrations, such as the coronation ceremony, the whole nation can be brought into a 'ritualistic dedication to the basic values of society.'[62]

European political theorists have elaborated on the significance of celebrations. Rousseau, for example, discussed the importance of public games and competitions, much like in Classical Greece where theatre and athletics were an important aspect of local

[57] Elie Podeh, 'From Indifference to Obsession: The Role of National State Celebrations in Iraq, 1921-2003', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 37:2 (2010) p. 185.
[58] L.P Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1997).
[59] Duncan Bell, 'The Idea of a Patriot Queen? The Monarchy, the Constitution, and the Iconographic Order of Greater Britain, 1860-1900', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34:1 (2006) p. 5.
[60] Vincent McAviney, Cal Flyn and Mark Oliver, 'Queen's Diamond Jubilee: Cost of the Celebrations', *The Telegraph,* 11 April, 2012 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/interactive-graphics/9197527/Queens-Diamond-Jubilee-cost-of-the-celebrations.html> [accessed 5 September 2014].
[61] David Cannadine, 'Splendour out at Court', in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics Since the Middle Ages,* ed. by Seal Wilentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) pp. 230-231
[62] Robert Bocock, *Ritual in Industrial Society: A Sociological Analysis of Ritualism in Modern England* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1974) p. 102.

festivities. In such a society communities are engaged in a 'never-ending spectacle filled with emulation and identification.'[63] This is the most common explanation as to why a regime might hold a celebration, as articulated by Elie Podeh: the desire to create a national identity, immersing the citizen in the ideological fabric of the state and bolstering solidarity within communities.[64] Antony Smith writes that through 'ceremonies, customs and symbols every member of a community participates in the life, emotions and virtues of that community.'[65] The Nazi party, for example, manipulated popular festivals in order to advance their vision of building a racially pure fascist society, particularly with their hijacking of the celebration of Christmas, which was considered a most German holiday. In 1934, People's Christmas (*Volksweihnachten*) was celebrated in the streets as state-orchestrated festivities swept across the nation. The merging of a traditional festive holiday with Nationalist Socialist ideology 'provided an ideological myth and a moment of communal solidarity that shaped the identity of individual members.'[66] To take this point a step further, Germans, in a sense, became Nazis through participation and immersion in official festivities.[67] Similarly, by celebrating the founding of the Persian Empire in 1971, the Shah's regime sought to create a strong connection between the population and its ancient heritage.

A second explanation contends that through celebrations, a regime can express its overarching power and authority.[68] Machiavelli noted the importance of celebrations for the ruler, who

> ought to entertain the people with festivals and spectacles at convenient seasons of the year... and show himself an example of courtesy and liberality; nevertheless, always maintaining the majesty of his rank, for he must never consent to abate in anything.[69]

In Machiavelli's interpretation, the celebration is an exhibition of power and authority, where by demonstrating these attributes, the ruling authority seeks to gain the admiration and passivity of its citizens. Perhaps a regime could not survive solely on violence, so the

[63] Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau as Author* (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2003) p. 76
[64] Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011) p. 19.
[65] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1991) p. 78.
[66] Joe Perry, *Christmas in Germany: A Cultural History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) p. 185.
[67] Joe Perry, 'Nazifying Christmas: Political Culture and Popular Celebration in the Third Reich', *Central European History*, 38:4 (2005) p. 572.
[68]Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011) p. 21.
[69] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2008) p. 108.

celebration, as a show of pageantry, allows citizens to be impressed by the spectacle and gain particular pleasure in sharing in the experience.[70] In this way it allows them to create a stronger bond with the regime. It may also be possible to connect Soviet mass celebrations to this idea, which were used as a 'tool of political elites in their effort to perpetuate the political *status quo.*'[71] This theory can be applied to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, especially to the grand military parade at Persepolis and the blatant connections made between the Shah and the mighty Persian kings of antiquity.

A third explanation relates to the leader's search for legitimisation, whether to strengthen, acquire or maintain it.[72] In this scenario the ruler or regime may have come to power through dubious circumstances and could use the celebration to create a connection between themselves and the state. This is typical in authoritarian regimes, which are generally in a position to be able to manipulate ideology to their advantage. Wood argues that national celebration can reach the level of 'commemorative obsession' when the legitimacy of the regime, or ruler, is in jeopardy, thus creating a clear link between celebration and legitimisation.[73] Furthermore, by celebrating a political ideology as something sacred, such an event grants some sort of legitimacy to the state. In this regard David Kertzer explains, 'In rendering their political system sacred through the use of ritual, people also end up legitimizing the power held by political leaders.'[74] The regular associations made between the Shah and the Achaemenid kings can therefore be seen in the context of a relatively young king of a very young dynasty seeking legitimacy and thus provide a further explanation for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.

Certainly these explanations are not meant to give us an overarching theory that will explain the 1971 event, however they do give us an impression of the complex nature of these commemorative events. We should not, as has often been done, merely see the Celebrations as evidence of the Shah's megalomania, but attempt to understand it on a political and cultural level. As this chapter has shown, state celebrations are very common and serve a number of purposes: therefore, that the Shah's regime chose to celebrate the founding of its country's ancient empire was not remarkable in itself. The former British diplomat, George Middleton commented that the Celebrations were 'proof that the Pahlavi Dynasty was

[70] Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011) p. 21.
[71] Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p. 16.
[72] Podeh, *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East* (2011) p. 20.
[73] Nancy Wood, 'Memory's Remains: Les Lieux de mémoire', *History and Memory*, 6:1 (1994) p. 143.
[74] David Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1988) pp. 37-38.

frivolous; it was not serious',[75] which, although not an uncommon assessment, displays a lack of understanding of nationalist celebrations and the complexities of Iranian nationalism. Reverence of Ancient Iran was not attributable to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi alone, but the Shah was merely, as Shakibi noted 'Accepting the Enlightenment understanding of progressive history and implicitly using Hegelian and Marxian conceptions of history.'[76] Moreover, as will be shown in this thesis, the foreign participation did not amount to some sort of post-colonial Orientalist desire to dominate, but rather reflected a long process of cooperation between Iran and foreign institutions which developed into the twentieth century.

Methodology

Using some of the theoretical ideas detailed above and a wide range of primary and secondary source material, this thesis will answer the questions outlined in the introduction. Primary data has been extracted from various archives and libraries around the United Kingdom, including the archives at Manchester, the British Academy and the National Archives at Kew. Further research was conducted at the British Museum's Middle East Library, the British Library, the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Library for Iranian Studies in London, Manchester Central Library and Durham University Library. The publications sought in these libraries mostly related directly to the Celebrations, as publications released to coincide with the 1971 event. Although Afkhami makes acclamatory references to the books released as part of the Celebrations, there does not seem to exist anywhere a full record of these. For this reason it was important to attempt to build up some sort of index to illustrate the sheer volume of literature that was being published at the time. This literature includes books published in French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Czech, Persian and English.

Along with documentary evidence, an important part of the research for this thesis came from communications with academics who were either at the Celebrations, or were around at the time. These communications were conducted with academics in Canada, the United States, Britain and France, and provide valuable first-hand knowledge of the period in question, as well as documents from the participants' personal collections. The dissertation has also relied on other interviews recorded elsewhere with academics and diplomats, as well as former members of the Shah's government, who had parts to play in the organisation of

[75] George Middleton in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, London, England, 16 October 1985, Tape 3, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University.
[76] Shakibi, 'Pahlavism' (2003) p. 118.

the Celebrations. These primary sources, along with arguments in the secondary literature relating to the Celebrations, will be discussed, alongside theoretical considerations discussed in the above framework.

Chapter 1: Nationalism, Academia and the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations

This chapter will look in further detail at the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, from its initial inception in 1958 to the festivities that took place in Iran in 1971. As will have been observed in the previous chapter, celebrations can be important to the ideology of the state and are a blatant expression of how the state sees itself, or rather how it wants to be seen by its people and the outside world. So important are celebrations to our understanding that Pierre Nora wrote, 'we no longer celebrate the nation, but we study the nation's celebration.'[77] In this section, therefore, we will be provided with a clear background to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. This will help us to answer some key questions relating to the aspects of the Celebrations relevant to this study. How, for example, did Iran come to celebrate this event in 1971? Why was the Achaemenid period chosen as the period worthy of such a celebration? And who chose it, the Western Orientalists, or the Pahlavi modernists?

Having answered these questions we will look at what actually happened in Iran and around the world for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. This will provide a valuable context to the rest of the study. This chapter begins with two examples of other nationalist celebrations in which ancient history and material cultures played an important role. These examples, one from the West and one from the East, will provide interesting comparisons which will help to provide some clarity when discussing the Iranian Celebrations. We have already explored in the previous chapter why a celebration might occur, but as we will see in the following examples, celebrations are often quite elaborate affairs, consisting of a multitude of different commemorative actions. Far from being completely unique, the Shah's celebration conformed to particular norms of this type of nationalist celebration. These include, for example, military parades, commemoration at important sites, glorification and nationalization of historical relics, as well as the issuing of coins, stamps and medals.

Celebrating Babylon and Rome

In the previous chapter it has become clear that celebrations have been used by regimes in order to strengthen their own position, instil some sense of nationalism into the population and/or legitimize their rule. Material cultures play an important role in this, as ancient monuments are able to create a tangible link between the past and the present. For example,

[77] Pierre Nora ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, Volume 1, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) p. 7.

the ancient city of Babylon in Iraq had long been associated with attempts to highlight Iraqi national identity, which reached a climax under the rule of Saddam Hussein. Upon the launch of the Archaeological Restoration of Babylon Project in February 1978, commemorative coins were released with cuneiform inscriptions extolling the glory of the 'restorer of the city of Babylon' Saddam Hussein.[78] In 1987 the first International Babylon Festival was held, which would be repeated nearly every year until 2002, mainly taking place in the Greek Theatre, the Throne Room of the Southern Palace and the Temple of Ninmakh.[79] The theme of the celebration was 'From Nebuchadnezzar to Saddam Hussein, Babylon undergoes a renaissance', with brazen comparisons made between Saddam Hussein and the great kings of Babylon 'whose legacies transcended time and history to fuse with the great strides and magnificent splendour of H.E. President Saddam Hussein.'[80] During the second International Babylon Festival in September 1988 a huge procession by torchlight took place down the main street towards the Ishtar Gate, with participants dressed in Babylonian costumes and playing traditional instruments.[81]

Through the revitalization and politicisation of Babylon the site became the centre of a project in which Saddam Hussein's regime would attempt to display the importance of Iraq both historically and in the present.[82] In this sense the festival was an apparent success, with the following words printed in the New York Times in October 1990:

> Under President Saddam Hussein, one of the ancient world's most legendary cities has begun to rise again. More than an archaeological venture, the new Babylon is self-consciously dedicated to the idea that Nebuchadnezzar has a successor in Mr. Hussein, whose military prowess and vision will restore to Iraqis the glory their ancestors knew when all of what is now Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, and Israel was under Babylonian control.[83]

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[78] John Curtis, 'The Site of Babylon Today', in *Babylon,* ed. by Irving Finkel and Michael Seymour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 213.
[79] Maryam Musa, 'The Situation of the Babylon Archaeological Site until 2006', in *Babylon: Wissenskultur in Orient Und Okzident,* ed. by Eva Cancik-Kirschbaum, Margarete Van Ess, and Joachim Marzahn (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011) p. 20.
[80] Curtis, 'The Site of Babylon Today', in *Babylon*, ed. by Finkel and Seymour (2009) p. 215.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Friedrich T. Schipper, 'The Protection and Preservation of Iraq's Archaeological Heritage, Spring 1991-2003', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 109:2 (2005) p. 261.
[83] Alice Ogden Bellis, 'The Changing Face of Babylon in Prophetic/Apocalyptic Literature: Seventh Century BCE to First Century CE and Beyond', in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, The Apocalyptic and their Relationships,* ed. by Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak (T&T Clark International: London, 2003) p. 65.

The Ba'athist regime continued with the festival right up until 2002, shortly before it was toppled by the US-led invasion. Throughout this period, Babylonian iconography continued to be used on official articles. For example, in 2001 a 25 dinar note was issued displaying the Ishtar gate and the Lion of Babylon.[84] Moreover, the Babylon festival provided an event in which Iraq could celebrate its ancient past, creating a revamped national ideology which remembered a time when it was known as the Cradle of Civilization. Interestingly, in October 2012 the first annual Babylon Festival of Arts and Cultures was launched in place of the former celebration. This festival was intended to celebrate Iraq's culture and history without the pomposity associated with the Babylon Festival of Saddam Hussein's reign.[85] Its aims were, however, undoubtedly similar, bringing some sense of nationalist pride back to a country that had suffered years of dictatorship and a recent period of foreign occupation.

Further examples of this can be observed in other states with rich historical traditions. In Italy, for example, during the early twentieth century, politicians harked back to the glories of the Roman Empire in order to stir up nationalist sensitivities. This idea, Romanità as it was called, was nothing particularly unique to this period; Italians had generally identified themselves as natural heirs of the ancient Romans and, in a sense, this affected how they interpreted their present and future circumstances.[86] The Fascists, and to a lesser extent the government of unified Italy (1870-1922), utilised Romanità to create a myth that presented the Rome of antiquity as the ideal state; a state that produced an idyllic populace which put the state's interests before their own.[87] The Fascist regime particularly played on this myth, pouncing on any opportunity to emphasise both the glory of Ancient Rome and its similarity to the emerging power, which sought to revive past glories. The regime even called itself the *Olimpiadi della Civiltà*; Olympiad of Civilization.[88] Mussolini himself made reference to the link between past and present in a speech in 1922 entitled *Passato e Avvenire* (Past and Future). He said:

[84]John Curtis, 'The Present Condition of Babylon', in *Babylon: Wissenskultur in Orient Und Okzident*, ed. by Cancik-Kirschbaum, Van Ess, and Marzahn (2011) p. 8.
[85] Lara Jakes, 'Babylon Festival: Iraq Arts Festival Beset by Controversy, Huffington Post, 5 November 2012 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/11/babylon-festival-iraq-controversy_n_1509819.html> [accessed on 5 September 2014].
[86] Peter Aicher, 'Mussolini's Forum and the Myth of Augustan Rome', *The Classical Bulletin*, 76:2 (2000) p. 118.
[87] Susan L. Fugate Brangers, 'Political Propaganda and Archaeology: The Mausoleum of Augustus in the Fascist Era', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3:16 (2013) p. 125.
[88] Aritstotle Kallis, 'Framing Romanità: The Celebrations for the Bimillenario Augusteo and the Augusteo-Ara Pacis Project', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46:809 (2011) p. 810.

> Rome is our point of departure and reference; it is our symbol or, if you wish, our myth. We dream of a Roman Italy, that is wise and strong, disciplined and imperial. Much of what was the immortal spirit of Rome, resurges in Fascism: Rome is the Lictor, Roman is our organization of combat, Roman is our pride and courage: Civis Romanus sum.[89]

Mussolini had a vision and he clearly invested a lot in it. It seems that he was almost consumed by this ideology, by the myth of Romanità, and believed that this could be the key to fulfilling his political aspirations.

The bimillennial celebration of the birth of Emperor Augustus that took place in 1937-38 was a magnificent and concrete expression of Romanità and Mussolini's vision. Grand celebrations were not, however, uncommon in twentieth century Italy. In 1930 the bimillennial of Virgil was celebrated, for example, strengthening the links between ancient and modern Rome. The celebration was, Richard Thomas writes, 'pervasive and thoroughly charged with contemporary political meaning, and Virgil was made to share actively in that tradition.'[90] Such extravagant commemorations seem to be a key feature in post-unification Italy as leaders perhaps sought to create historical and cultural links with past heroes that could bind Italians together in an all-encompassing nationalist ideology.

The idea to hold a celebration for Augustus developed in the early 1930s, though the origins can be traced into the previous decade. One of the principal Roman archaeological experts, Giulio Quirino Giglioli, presented a paper to the second congress of the *Insituto di Studi Romani* (Institute of Roman Studies), in which he articulated his ideas for a programme to commemorate Augustus.[91] This programme included a series of publications on Roman history, the restoration of the mausoleum of Augustus and the reconstruction of the *Ara Pacis*, a series of excavations across the country, academic conferences and museum exhibitions, including the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, directed by Giglioli himself.[92] Though the celebration was originally planned as a somewhat modest nationalist affair, focusing on archaeological investigation and educational programmes, it was soon hijacked by the Fascists after which it 'spiralled into a gargantuan technical, aesthetic and indeed

[89] Quoted in Jan Nelis, 'Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of the "Romanita"', *The Classical World*, 100:4 (2007) p. 403.
[90] Richard Thomas, *Virgil and the Augustan Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 236.
[91] Kallis, 'Framing Romanità' (2011) p. 812.
[92] Ibid, p. 813.

political tour de force of a regime enthralled by its own universalist illusions.'[93] Contemporary political links to the past could be seen in every aspect of the celebration, even the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, which assembled items from all parts of the world and was installed in the Via Nazionale.[94] It was hugely popular, attracting over one million visitors throughout the celebrations, yet included a banner in the entrance hall that read 'Italians, you must ensure that the glories of the past are surpassed by the glories of the future.'[95]

As in other similar celebrations of this type, commemorative stamps were printed, evoking imagery of Augustus and featuring quotations from the *Res Gestae*. Augustus was represented as the embodiment of the perpetual values of the Romanità and clearly stressed were the virtues of robust, centralized leadership,[96] while ancient monuments were used to provide tangible evidence for the greatness of Rome. The mausoleum of Augustus was excavated, to be the centrepiece of the new Piazza Augusto Imperatore, dominated on four sides by new buildings, again connecting the past with the present.[97] Today the mausoleum, though an important monument in Rome's history, has an abandoned feel to it and appears somewhat lost in the urban setting.[98] This is perhaps an inevitable danger of the use of archaeology and history for political propaganda. The life of an ancient monument often, as was the case with Augustus' mausoleum, does not end in antiquity. Layers of history revealing the monument's use as a medieval fortress, a public park, local stadium and late Renaissance statuary garden, were disregarded and centuries of history were lost, never even recorded in the excavations.[99] Such blatant disuse and abuse of historical monuments is observable in Iran also, where, in preparation for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, the regime ordered for the removal of non-Achaemenid ruins. This included the column drums of a congregational mosque constructed in the thirteenth century, for which the tomb of Cyrus

[93] Ibid, p. 830.
[94] See E. Strong, 'Romanità Throughout the Ages', *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 29:2 (1939) pp. 137-166.
[95] Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1997) p. 93.
[96] Romke Visser, 'Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27:1 (1992) p. 16.
[97] Susan L. Fugate Brangers, 'Political Propaganda and Archaeology: The Mausoleum of Augustus in the Fascist Era', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3:16 (2013) p. 128.
[98] Though interestingly in 2014, the 2000th anniversary of the death of Augustus, plans are afoot to bring the monument back to life again, see Tom Kington, 'Augustus Rules Again as Rome Acts to Store Lost Mausoleum', *The Guardian*, 29 March 2014, available online at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/29/augustus-rome-lost-mausoleum> [accessed on 5 September 2014].
[99] Brangers, 'Political Propaganda and Archaeology' (2013) p. 131.

was a focal point.[100] This is not uncommon in such state-level interpretations of historical monuments. In nineteenth Century Europe, for example, medieval churches were purged of later additions in the hope that this would reveal the true nature of the monument and thus bring the restorers closer to the pure spirit of the Christian faith.[101]

As Mussolini termed his Italy the Olympiad of Civilization, the Shah spoke of his own Great Civilization. In a press conference in 1971 the Shah explained this term:

> I think that we can say very firmly and with absolute certainty that Iran will not only become an industrial nation but in my assessment will, in 12 years' time, enter what we say the era of the Great Civilization. The era of the Great Civilization, for those who are interested to know, is a kind of welfare state, where everybody from birth until death will enjoy every kind of social insurances.[102]

The very notion of a Great Civilization had very clear ancient connotations, as the Shah sought to utilize Achaemenid historiography as a key component in his own historical narrative. Furthermore, the idea of 'social insurances' is a very modern one and through this the Shah created a link between his Ancient Persia and the modern, enlightened world. The 2500th Anniversary Celebration was the arrival point of the Great Civilization, which was supposed to evoke memories of Iran's heroic past and the splendour of its destiny in equal measure.[103] The ideology espoused by the regime sought, in the words of Shakibi, to combine 'a Romantic interpretation of imperial history that was subjective and impassioned with a deterministic conception that identified it with the inevitable golden age of Iran's modern future.'[104] The Achaemenid Empire had been largely forgotten until the arrival of European travellers to Iran from the 18th Century. Even the great city of Persepolis was referred to locally as *Takht-e Jamshid* (the Throne of Jamshid) after the mythical fourth king of the world as denoted in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. Which begs us to question, where did this resurgence of interest in Achaemenid history come from, why was it selected as part of Iranian nationalist discourse in the 20th century, and by whom?

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[100] David Stronach, 'Cyrus and Pasargadae', in *Cyrus the Great: An Ancient Iranian King*, ed. by Touraj Daryaee (Santa Monica, CA: Afshar Publishing, 2013) p. 63.
[101] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) p. 278.
[102] Darius Kadivar, 'New Deal: Shah Explains "The Great Civilization" During Press Conference' (1971), *Iranian.com*, 1 September 2012, video available online at <http://iranian.com/main/blog/darius-kadivar/new-deal-shah-explains-great-civilization-during-press-conference-1971-0.html> [accessed on 5 September 2014].
[103] Azimi, *Quest for Democracy in Iran* (2008) p. 290.
[104] Shakibi, 'Pahlavism' (2013) p. 118.

Appreciating Ancient Persia

Undoubtedly, early knowledge of Ancient Iran in the West would have been restricted to the likes of Herodotus, Xenophon, and the Alexander historians. Indeed, as Ansari writes, such authors

> left a narrative legacy that would permeate the medieval mind and be reinforced by the advent of the Renaissance, which, along with the growth in travel, literacy and publishing, ensured an increasing and fertile audience.[105]

This can be observed in both attitudes towards Iran, a land of oriental despots, and their ancient past. Richard Frye argues that in ancient times there existed a 'healthy respect' for Persians by their Roman and Greek enemies, even though they were considered barbarians. This respect disappeared following the Arab invasion 'when a kind of curtain was drawn between the Persians and the West, and this lasted for many centuries.'[106] This disconnection with Iran's past was brought about by the Arab invaders who were seen as brutish and uncivilized, or at the very least different and threatening to the West.

The Renaissance and the opening up of Persia to Western merchants, armies and diplomats, brought a renewed interest and appreciation of its history, and perhaps a return to the admiration that Frye argues was evident in the Western powers of Antiquity. Islam was generally seen by Orientalists as a direct cause for the Persian decadence since their fall at the hands of the Arabs. Indeed, as Reza Zia-Ebrahimi writes:

> A certain distaste for Islam and anything Islamic was deeply ingrained in European writings on the Orient; it is therefore no surprise that Orientalists held the period before Islam in higher esteem. Secondly, many Orientalists looked at their subjects from a classicist perspective, through sources in Greek and Latin. Therefore, as Classicists, they had an aversion to Islam, seen as the phenomenon that put an end to western antiquity.[107]

An example of this attitude can be found in Malcolm, who wrote that Islam was a prominent factor 'in retarding the progress of civilization among those who have adopted his [Mohammad's] faith' and that 'The History of Persia, from the Arabian conquest to the

[105] Ali Ansari, 'Persia in the Western Imagination', in *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, ed. by Vanessa Martin (London: Routledge, 2005) p. 10.
[106] Richard Frye, 'Persia in the Mind of the West', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 14:4 (2003) p. 403.
[107] Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the 'Aryan' Discourse in Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 44:4 (2011) p. 465.

present day may be adduced as proof of the truth of these observations.'[108] The focus on pre-Islamic history in archaeological investigation was not confined to Persia. Between 1810 and 1910, for example, nearly all minor and major excavations by Westerners focused on pre-Islamic sites such as Babylon, Khorsabad and Nippur. These were considered interesting and, more importantly, relevant to Europeans who felt that this history, in some way belonged to them, or was as much a part of their history as it was the Oriental's. Islamic sites, therefore, were not considered valuable or particularly relevant.[109] Iranians also lamented their own demise and along with Orientalists, attributed this to Islam and the Arab invasion. Akhundzadeh (1812-1878), for example, wrote:

> It has been 1,280 years now that the naked and starving Arabs have descended upon you and made your life miserable. Your land is in ruins, your people ignorant and innocent of civilization, deprived of prosperity and freedom, and your King is a despot.[110]

The Persians too, in the late Qajar period, developed an interest in their pre-Islamic past. While Western travellers continued to influence activity in the archaeological sites of Fars, the Qajars nurtured their own fascination with Persepolis. According to Curzon, they were so endeared to the ancient capital that the first modern warship of the Iranian navy, a 600-ton steamship purchased from Germany towards the end of the nineteenth Century, was called Persepolis, along with a small river steamer, which was named Susa.[111] It is possible that an explanation for this new interest in pre-Islamic history is that the Qajars wished to connect with the Europeans and their idea of what a 'civilized' Iranian society should be like. To achieve this, they encouraged studies of the pre-Islamic past, allowing archaeologists and historians to work on sites within Iran's territory.

The Qajars showed a keen willingness, therefore, to engage with both Iranian pre-Islamic history and the European archaeologists. For example, Prince Mo'tamad al-Dowleh Farhad Mirza (1817-87), son of Abbas Mirza (1789-1833), led the third major excavations at Persepolis from 14 March to 16 April 1877. Later, in October 1877, Farhad Mirza gave

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[108] John Malcolm, *The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, Volume 2 (London: John Murray, 1815) p. 622.
[109] Magnus T. Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past: Archaeology and Nation Building in Modern Iraq* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005) p. 11.
[110] Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (Houndmill: Palgrave, 2001) p. 102.
[111] George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, Volume 2 (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1892) pp. 394-6.

permission to the Germans Friedrich Carl Andreas and Friedrich Stolze to excavate at the site, on the proviso that they should not be permitted to take possession of any artefacts that they uncovered. The Germans' refusal on these grounds is illustrative of both the fact that the Europeans were eager not just to learn about Iran, but remove objects for their own collections, and the fact that some Iranians were keen to stop this. The Qajar connection with ancient Iranian studies continued into the Pahlavi era. Firuz Mirza Firuz, for example, a prominent Qajar nobleman and minister of finance, was instrumental in the Society for National Heritage's (SNH) dealings with French archaeological attachés, while Hassan Pirnia (1872-1935), a notable political figure in the late Qajar period, wrote a *History of Ancient Iran* in four volumes and was one of the founders of the SNH in 1921.[112] It was during the Qajar period too that Naser al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896) created the Royal Museum in his Golestan Palace in Tehran in 1876. The objects on show were of questionable quality, but they clearly reflect the interest the Qajar king had in his heritage. Furthermore, the opening of the Bastan Museum in Tehran is often attributed to Reza Shah. However, a precursor to the Bastan Museum, the National Museum, was actually established in 1917 in the building of the Ministry of Education north of the Dar al-Fonun.[113]

European investigations seemingly contributed to the development of this interest and the British were willing to engage with Iranians in such matters, as is reflected in the fact that Rawlinson actually presented the first Persian language translation of the Behsitun inscriptions to Mohammad Shah (r. 1834-1848).[114] The French also had a deep interest in the archaeology of Iran, though their studies focussed primarily on Susa. In 1895 they took part in the first Franco-Iranian archaeological convention and in 1897 the French Archaeological Mission became one of the first permanent research institutes to be established in Iran.[115] The Franco-Persian convention of 1897 gave the French a monopoly over excavations in Iran, which was only abolished in 1927 by Reza Shah.

The incorporation of the Achaemenid myth in Iranian nationalist politics is often seen as a Pahlavi venture, however as we have observed, it can be traced back further to the late

[112] Talinn Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste": The Early Pahlavi Modernists and their Society for National Heritage', *Iranian Studies*, 37:1 (2004) pp. 20-21.
[113] Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, 'Archaeology and the Iranian National Museum', in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran,* ed. by Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (London: Routledge, 2014) p. 129.
[114] Grigor, 'Orientalism and Mimicry of Selfness' (2009) p. 3.
[115] Ali Mousavi and Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, 'Les Hauts Et Les Bas De L'Archaéologie en Iran', *La pensée de midi*, 1:27 (2009) p. 139.

Qajar period. The Europeans, as Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi has written, contributed to its development, both materially and by providing an alternative identity to Islam:

> identification with heterotopic Europe served as an oppositional strategy for the disarticulation of the dominant Islamicate discourse and for the construction of a new pattern of self-identity grounded on pre-Islamic history and culture.[116]

This was developed significantly under the Pahlavis, though they were certainly building on practices started under the Qajars. The use of Achaemenid architecture as a symbol of political identity, for example, can be seen in the coronation series of stamps from 1915 which displayed Achaemenid buildings. These ancient graphic designs would be reincorporated in the Pahlavi stamps issued in 1930, remaining a dominant feature of Pahlavi iconography for the proceeding decades.[117] During the 1920s also, in the early years of the Pahlavi dynasty, old buildings in Tehran were demolished and in their place new buildings were erected. Some of these were constructed in Achaemenid style such as the Bank Melli main office and the police headquarters, while the Bastan Museum was designed after Sasanian era Ctesiphon. In this period Tehran essentially became a blank canvas on which Reza Shah sought to mark out his own unique architectural landscape, one which displayed modern European design blended with distinctly ancient Iranian influence. He had an obvious desire to 'restore the past glories of Persia',[118] which is represented in the architecture of the period.

It is not clear exactly how much early European interest in pre-Islamic Iran influenced this ideology, although its promotion certainly benefited from the works of European Orientalists.[119] It is therefore apparent that early Western travellers and explorers contributed to the re-discovery of this ancient past in Iran and can be seen as encouraging, in a sense, its revival. It has been argued by Grigor that 'the neo-Achaemenid spaces and rituals that recreated the entire history of the Persian Empire were in effect a thoroughly self-Orientalising spectacle', as the Shah sought to live up to the image that Western imperialists

[116] Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran* (2001) p. 37.
[117] Roman Sibertz 'Depicting power: the commemorative stamp set of 1935', in *Culture and Cultural Politics Under Reza Shah*, ed. by Devos and Werner (2014) p. 156.
[118] M. Reza Ghods, 'Iranian Nationalism and Reza Khan', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27:1 (1991) p. 42.
[119] Azadeh Kian and Gilles Riaux, 'Crafting Iranian Nationalism: Intersectionality of Aryanism, Westernism and Islamism', in *Nations and Their Histories: Constructions and* Representations, ed. by Susana Carvalho and Francois Gemenne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 193.

had of Iran.[120] Shall we, then, make similar charges against Mussolini's appropriation of his own ancient civilization, since it was the French imperialists under Napoleon who led the first large-scale archaeological investigations in Rome?[121] Indeed, it was during this period that the idea was first suggested for a large archaeological zone between the Palatine, Capitoline, Aventine, Caelian and Esquiline, and some five million francs were spent excavating sites such as the Forum Romanum, the Colosseum and the Forum of Trajan, which arguably led the way for future excavation.[122] The early Pahlavi intellectuals appeared to gain some inspiration of the study of Iran from Europeans, but essentially this was *their* heritage, one glorious moment in their history when they did not suffer from imperialist aggression, be it from Arabs, Ottomans, the British, or Russians.

Preparing the Event

Iran had, since the glories of Nader Shah, suffered a great deal of humiliation inflicted upon it by imperial powers. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the British and Russians extended their influence in Iran, extracting concessions such as the Reuter concession of 1872, the oil concession of 1901 and the tobacco concession of 1890. Although these concessions were popularly opposed, foreign interference continued throughout the twentieth century, in commerce and politics. In 1907 Russia and Britain, suspicious of German overseas ambitions and in blatant disregard of Iranian sovereignty, signed a treaty dividing Iran into three zones, one controlled by the British, one by the Russians and one neutral.[123] Shortly after Reza Shah had seized power through a British-backed coup d'état in 1921, he pledged to 'rejuvenate Iranian life with the help of the army.'[124] Iran had been looking for a strong leader to bring back the former glory of the ancient dynasties, easing the disillusionment of a century of imperial degradation, but this was not to last. Systematic humiliation of Iran's sovereignty continued throughout the twentieth century, notably with the invasion of Iran by Russia and Britain in 1941,[125] and later with the coup of 1953 in

[120] Grigor, *Orientalism & Mimicry of Selfness* (2009) p. 273.
[121] For a detailed history of French archaeological investigations in Rome during the Napoleonic era, see Ronald T. Ridley, *The Eagle and the Spade: Archaeology in Rome during the Napoleonic Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[122] William Stuart Messer, 'The New Rome and Archaeology', *The Classical Journal*, 22:3 (1926) p. 179.
[123] Michael Axworthy, *Iran: Empire of the Mind* (London: Penguin, 2008) pp. 211-212.
[124] Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 34-63; and M Reza Ghods, 'Iranian Nationalism and Reza Shah, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27:1 (1991) p. 38.
[125] Mokhtari describes the mood very well: 'The public's reaction was one of disbelief and revulsion. The Allies who had sung the praises of international law and the sanctity of diplomatic missions had violated neutrality... Rounding up foreign nationals working for Iran in order to hand them over to their enemies was a despicable betrayal of the nation's guests, contrary to traditions of honour, hospitality and human decency... Bullard demanded Iranian currency from the Acting Treasury Minister to pay for the British occupying troops at the exchange rate of 168 rials per one British pound, disregarding the official exchange rate of 68-70 rials per

which nationalist Prime Minister Mossadeq was overthrown with the assistance of the CIA and British intelligence.[126] These past humiliations, Ramsbotham argues, were in 1971

> at the root of modern Iranian nationalism. For although the Iranian reaction to these humiliations was anti-Imperialist in sentiment, paradoxically they re-aroused Iranian national and imperial pride more than any successful conquests might have done.[127]

In this sense, the Achaemenids were the perfect symbol of Persian independence, for they ruled at a time when Persia was a truly great and peerless power whose authority could be felt across three continents.

The idea to host an event to celebrate the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great was suggested in 1958 by Shojaeddin Shafa, who was a researcher, man-of-letters, historian and the Shah's cultural counsellor, in light of the fact that 1962 would mark exactly 2500 years since the founding of the Empire by Cyrus the Great.[128] In his own words, Shafa said:

> At the time, the world saw Iran as a simple third world country. The intent behind this celebration was to show Iran as one of the great world empires such as the Greek, Roman... and to show the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus the Great, otherwise than through the Holy Books, named the Messiah or Yehovah and the liberator of the oppressed people. We wanted the world to know that the Persians had art, literature, religions and culture of their own. Through these festivities, Iran gave to the world the message that the country which was put back in a depreciate state was again connecting with its past and accepting future responsibility.[129]

A committee was set up in Tehran to organise the Celebrations and UNESCO declared its support to an event which sought to pay homage 'to the memory of the founder of Iranian

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

[126] Though the extent of foreign involvement is fiercely debated. See, for example: Mark Gasiorowski and Malcolm Byrne ed., *Mohammad Mossadeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Syracuse University Press; New York, 2004); Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup* (The New Press: New York, 2013); and Darioush Bayandor, *Iran and the CIA: The Fall of Mossadeq Revisited* (Palgrave Macmillan; New York, 2010).

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

[128] Afkhami, *Life and times of the Shah* (2008) p. 404.

[129] Shojaeddin Shafa, 'Shojaeddin Shafa in his own words', *Persian Heritage* (Spring 2001) Translated from Persian by the editor.

national unity as well as 2500 years of Iranian history and civilizations.'[130] It was regarded as an event in which Iranian cultural contributions to the world were commemorated and truly acknowledged and appreciated by the international community.

Another aim of the Celebrations was to identify the Pahlavi dynasty with that of Cyrus the Great and associate the current Shah with Iran's pre-Islamic historical monuments.[131] As Michael Axworthy has written, the Shah

> wanted to assert the strength and enduring character of Iranian kingship, at a time when monarchy as an institution was menaced by republicanism and communism internationally, and when some in Iran were asserting Islam rather than monarchy as the true centre of Iranian identity.[132]

Whether monarchy itself was being challenged internationally is debateable, although the Shah had recently seen the demise of his friend King Constantine of Greece, who was at the time of the Celebrations in exile. When asked why an exiled king was present at the Celebrations, an Iranian protocol officer declared: 'For us, the government is the king.'[133] The Shah was clear in his presentation of monarchy as the ideal form of governance. This was made abundantly clear in his adoption of protocol established in the nineteenth century whereby an Afghan princess could outrank the Vice-President of the United States. Furthermore, Shafa, noting the threat posed by Iran's religious leaders to the Shah's grip on power, hoped that by accentuating the glories of pre-Islamic Persia, people might identify less with Islam.[134] Islam was seen by the monarchists as the cause for the country's decline since the times of the great Achaemenid, Parthian and Sasanian civilizations, so a national spectacle that paid tribute to these empires as the encapsulation of Iranian greatness could serve to discredit Islam while strengthening the monarchical tradition and thus the Shah's own position.

The event was a way in which the Shah could show the world that Iran had truly arrived on the international scene and was ready to reclaim its place among the world's

[130] Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (1971) pp. 18-19.
[131] Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921* (Harlow: Longman, 2003) p. 171.
[132] Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (London: Penguin Books, 2013) p. 77.
[133] Quoted in William A. McWhirter, 'The Shah's Princely Party', *Life Magazine*, 29 October 1971, p. 26.
[134] Milani, *The Shah* (2011) p. 324.

superpowers, a place that naturally belonged to Iran because of its past contributions to world civilization and culture. In an interview conducted before the Celebrations the Shah said:

> After all, apart from the great warrior-statesman Cyrus, who bequeathed to civilization its first humanitarian code, we contributed to it, also, the prophet Zoroaster, the scientist-philosopher Avicenna, the mathematician-poet Omar Khayyam, the astronomer Biruni, the alchemist Rhazes and the poets Ferdowsi, Sa'di, Hafez and Rumi. Throughout the centuries Persia has stood as a bridge in geographical, historical and cultural exchanges between the great civilizations of Asia and Europe.[135]

The Shah was, therefore, keen to stress continuity. Since the times of Cyrus, Iran had contributed to the world in culture, science and humanity and although the Achaemenids were celebrated as the epitome of Persian greatness, they were not celebrated in isolation.

In 1960 plans for the Celebrations were already underway and committees were being established around the world. DeGaulle was installed as chair of the French committee, King Baudouin led the Belgium committee and it was hoped that Kennedy and Eisenhower would be patrons of the US committee, which was formed by the American scholar Arthur Upham Pope (1881-1969).[136] Pope was one of the most influential foreign academics working in Iran during the Pahlavi period. It was said that he alerted Reza Shah to the importance of Ancient Persia in the 1920s, as well as spearheading five international congresses of Iranian art and architecture, the last of which was held in Iran in 1968 and was attended by 270 scholars from 26 countries.[137] In a letter to the press counsellor to the Iranian Embassy in Washington, Pope stated that

> it is of outstanding importance that the presentation to the American people of this occasion should stress the fact that it is not merely an episode in Persian history, but a very great event in the history of civilization.[138]

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[135] Zaven N. Davidian, *Iran in the Service of World Peace: On the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Celebration of the Founding of the Iranian Empire* (Tehran: Davidian, 1971) p. 28.
[136] Arthur Upham Pope letter to Jay Gluck, 12 December 1960, in *Surveyors of Persian Art: A Documentary Biography of Arthur Upham Pope and Phillis Ackerman,* ed. by Jay Gluck and Noël Siver (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1996) p. 426.
[137] See Noël Siver, 'Arthur Upham Pope', *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* online edition, 2005, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/pope-arthur-upham> [accessed on 7 September 2014].
[138] Arthur Upham Pope letter to Amir Ebrahimi, 4 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 427.

The Shah was not just relaying his message to the Iranian people; it was a message for the world and everyone was encouraged to join in the festivities.

In the early 1960s Pope also made some suggestions as to how the Celebrations should be carried out. Many of these suggestions were followed through, including the construction of a library 'similar to the Library of Congress' that should, he proposed, be called the Pahlavi Library. This particular suggestion was made directly to the Minister of Court Hussein Ala, and was immediately authorised by both Shojaeddin Shafa and the Shah himself.[139] This large specialist library was an Iran-UNESCO project, chaired by the Shah and 'was home to the collection of Iranian studies undertaken around the world over the past two hundred years.'[140] Pope also encouraged the idea for a military parade at Persepolis, as well as a display at night which should 'be done on a very large scale with tremendous effect', and the construction of a tent city for accommodation which should 'err a bit on the luxurious side for the sake of foreign visitors.'[141] Pope's letters clearly display his delight at the idea of a celebration; it was not seen by him as a political event connected to the state, but rather an opportunity to commemorate a great civilization. Pope's Asia Institute remained influential in the organisation of the Celebrations. His successor, Richard Frye, bemoaned in July 1971 that the Institute's budget had been stripped to pay for the event and that 'we are now in worse shape than ever, fighting for rials now, not toumans.' In the same letter he wrote that 'Everyone is working on the 2500 celebrations and it is like a sickness.'[142]

Over the next few years a number of dates were proposed for the occasion, from the original idea of 1962 to 1965 and then 1967 to coincide with the coronation.[143] The Celebrations had been delayed thus far because of uncertainty and administrative disorganisation, but with the recent oil boom, the Shah was in a strong position financially to be able to undertake such an event. The date of 1971, however, is a little odd in the history of Cyrus the Great because this marked 2500 years exactly, according to traditional interpretation, since Cyrus met his end while fighting a Scythian tribe on his north-eastern frontier. Nonetheless, as the event began to take shape UNESCO was keen to encourage cultural engagement with it. A resolution adopted at their 16th General Conference in November 1970, urged 'Member States and interested non-governmental organisations to

[139] Memo from Assadollah Behroozan, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 426.
[140] Afkhami, *Life and Times of the Shah* (2008) p. 414.
[141] Arthur Upham Pope letter to Amir Ebrahimi, 4 December 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 429.
[142] Richard Frye letter to Noël Siver, 7 July 1971, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 564.
[143] Afkhami, *Life and times of the Shah* (2008) p. 172.

associate themselves with the celebration of this centenary at the cultural level, in whatever way they deem most suitable.'[144] Furthermore, at the 28th International Congress of Orientalists at Canberra, Australia in January 1971, the congress invited its members to give the Celebrations 'all their support in the cultural domain by giving lectures and organizing exhibitions in their own institutes.'[145] Nearly 70 committees were set up around the world, typically fronted by heads of government, to prepare programmes of activities to celebrate different aspects of Iranian civilization and culture.[146]

Programmes organised by these committees included exhibitions, publications, street parties, parades, academic conferences and much more. For example, in Pakistan government offices, shops and streets were dressed with coloured lights, bunting, slogans about Pakistani-Iranian friendship, triumphal arches and giant photos of Their Royal Highnesses[147] and a beautifully illustrated catalogue was published entitled *Iran and Pakistan: The Story of a Cultural Relationship Through the Ages*.[148] The Canadian committee, headed by Jean Paul Deschatelets, President of the Senate, organised a week of cultural activities in June 1971 which was initiated by the Shahbanu upon her visit to Canada that month. The committee also sponsored the Conference on Iranian Civilization and Culture at the University of Toronto, organised by Professors Roger Savory and Charles Adams.[149] A number of museum exhibitions appeared across the globe including, among countless others, an exhibition on 2500 years of Iranian coinage at the National Gallery in Prague[150] and one in Washington D.C.'s Textile Museum entitled *From Persia's Ancient Looms* under the patronage of the Ambassador to the United States, Amir Aslan Afshar.[151] From 27 to 30 September in Leningrad there was a conference on Iranian history and culture, where experts took part from 'diverse scientific centres of the Soviet Union' as well as a group of experts from Iran and some Western countries. Other academic events were held in Moscow and other cities in

[144] Quoted in Shafa, *Facts about The Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (1971) p. 21.
[145] Ibid, p. 22.
[146] There was some talk about these committees being kept after the celebrations as 'friendship committees', but idea does not seem to have taken off. See 'Cyrus Committees Forge Friendship', *Kayhan International*, 28 October 1971.
[147] FCO 17/1529, Richard Escritt letter to Richard Fell, 2 November 1971.
[148] Ahmad Nabi Khan, *Iran and Pakistan: The Story of a Cultural Relationship Through the Ages,* produced by the Central Committee of the Government of Pakistan for the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Iranian Monarchy, October 1971 (Karachi: National Pub. House, 1971).
[149] *Iranian Civilization and Culture: Essays in Honour of the 2,500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire,* ed. by Charles Adams (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1973).
[150] Jarmila Stěpková, *2500 let íránského mincovnictví* (V Praze: Narodni galerie, 1971).
[151] *From Persia's Ancient Looms: An Exhibition in Honour of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Washington D.C.: Textile Museum, 1972).

the USSR[152] and there was a special series of talks arranged by the Polish Oriental Society at the University of Warsaw in conjunction with the Celebrations.[153]

Books on Iranian history and culture were published in a number of languages and included specific academic volumes such as the ones published in Portuguese on various aspects of Portuguese-Iranian relations,[154] general histories such as the wonderfully lavish volume *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom*, by Roman Ghirshman, Vladimir Minorsky and Ramesh Sanghvi,[155] publications by NGOs such as UNESCO's *Iran: Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 years,*[156] and a number of publications sponsored by the Iranian organisational committee, including an interesting book entitled *Iran in the Service of World Peace.*[157] Other works included the Reverend Norman Sharp's book on inscriptions in Old Persian Cuneiform,[158] Haidari's *Iran: in Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*[159] and Banri Namikawa's *The Legacy of Cyrus the Great,*[160] as well as conference publications, such as *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans,*[161] the proceedings of a conference on Indo-Iranian relations[162] and one on Mithraic Studies at the University of Manchester.[163] The publications and events were far too numerous to include here, but those volumes mentioned should give a flavour of the

[152] Muhammad A. Dandamaev, 'Préliminaire', in *Acta Iranica,* Volume 1, ed. by Jacques Duchesne-guillemin (Tehran: Bibliothèque Pahlavi; Leiden: Brill, 1974) pp. 1-2.
[153] See Bogdan Skladanek, 'The Structure of the Persian State', in *Acta Iranica,* Volume 1 (1974) pp. 117-123.
[154] They include the following five books published by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation: Luís de Matos, *Das relações entre Portugal e a Pérsia, 1500-1758: catálogo bibliográfico da exposição comemorativa do XXV centenário de accommodatie monarquia no Irão* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972); [Exhibition programme] *Portugal e a Pérsia: exposição integrada no ámbito das comemorações do 2.500.º aniversário da fundação da monarquia no Irão* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972); Roberto Gulbenkian ed. and trans., *L'ambassade en Perse de Luís Pereira de Lacerda et des pères portugais de l'ordre de Saint-Augustin, Belchior dos Anjos et Huilherme de Santo Agostinho 1604-1605* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972); Jean Aubin, *L'ambassade de Gregório Pereira Fidalgo à la cour de Châh Soltân-Hosseyn, 1696-1697* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1971); Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, *Un voyageur portugais en Perse au début du XVIIe siècle: Nicolau de Orta Rebelo. Traduction française de Simone Biberfeld* (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1972).
[155] Ghirshman, Minorsky and Sanghvi, *Persia: The Immortal Kingdom* (1971).
[156] Peter Avery and others, 'Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 Years', *The UNESCO Courier,* October 1971.
[157] Zaven N. Davidian, *Iran in the Service of World Peace: On the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Celebration of the Founding of the Iranian Empire* (Tehran: Davidian, 1971).
[158] Sharp, *The Inscriptions in Old Persian Cuneiform of the Achaemenian Emperors* (1966).
[159] Jayad Haidari, ed., *Iran: in Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (St. John's University Press: Jamaica, 1971).
[160] Banri Namikawa, *The Legacy of Cyrus the Great: On the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire* (Tokyo: Tokyo International Publishers, 1971).
[161] Wilhelm Eilers ed., *Festgabe Deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (Stuttgart: Hochwacht Druck, 1971).
[162] *Kurus: Memorial Volume: Essays on Indology and Indo-Iran Relations in Memory of Cyrus Celebration Held in the City of Bombay on 2500th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Persian Empire* (Bombay: The House, 1974).
[163] John Hinnells ed., *Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975).

exceptional flurry of interest generated by the Celebrations, facilitated by the Iranians, as well as foreign academics.

The Iranian Government also commissioned and sponsored various films about Iranian history, the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and the Shah's modernisation efforts. Among those were the Orson Welles narrated and Farrokh Golestan produced propaganda film *Flames of Persia* (1972). The film was widely distributed by Iranian embassies in foreign countries and it was shown over a one-week period in over 60 Tehran cinema houses.[164] Another film produced around the time was *Tales from a Book of Kings* (1974), which was produced by Time-Life Inc. and is based on poems of the *Shahnameh*. The film ends with a caption thanking the Iranian ambassador in Washington and is declared to be 'In commemoration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great and the First Declaration of Human Rights.'[165] It is clear that all types of media were used by the Shah's regime to promote Iran's national historical narrative both at home and abroad.

As Deputy Minister of the Imperial Court for Cultural Affairs, Director General of the Pahlavi Library and Secretary-General of the International Union of Iranologists, Shojaeddin Shafa was responsible for cultural and academic cooperation with foreign cultural centres throughout the world. One of his responsibilities was also writing the Shah's speeches for the Celebrations, of which there were many. In these the Shah emphasised international cooperation as well as the continuation of Iranian culture through the centuries. The relationships cultivated during this period between cultural institutions in Iran and various other countries, facilitated by Shafa and his colleagues, were long-lasting and many of these partnerships continued up to the Revolution. For people such as Shafa, the Celebrations represented a tremendous opportunity to advance scholarship and he remained, up to his death in 2010, immensely proud of his achievements in this respect. According to Richard Frye Shafa was

> a kind of cultural tsar under the Shah, who built up a kind of reputation in trying to – and I'm sure he convinced the Shah that it was a good thing to do

[164] Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema, Volume 2: The Industrializing Years, 1941-1978* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012) p. 139.
[165] Hamid Naficy, 'Nonfiction Fiction: Documentaries on Iran', *Iranian Studies*, 12:3/4 (1979) p. 229.

> to make Iran internationally known in the academic world, in the world of writers, in the intellectual world.[166]

Despite Frye's assertion that people such as Shafa were sycophants, who constantly had one eye on pleasing the Shah, the fact that they had considerable effect on the Shah and his cultural policies is indisputable. It is important to acknowledge the input of these people when discussing the Celebrations, particularly Shafa, who appeared, as we shall see, to be behind a good deal of the cultural and academic work that went on.

The Event

The reawakening of Iran to its ancient past might at first seem to be a noble cause. However, the event came to be remembered as an unnecessary and over-elaborate show of pomposity, and it led to considerable disillusionment in Iran with the Shah. It was only in 1969 that it was decided that heads of state should be invited; before this time it was planned to be a national affair, with the addition of Orientalists and experts on Iranian history.[167] The Shah would later rue the over-reliance on foreign services. 'We were led along that route,' he said, 'we should not have let it happen.'[168] The focus of this dissertation is the cultural and political aspects of the Celebrations, however to understand the criticisms of the event, it is important to consider what happened in Iran during October 1971. This should give us a clear context and understanding as to why the event is not remembered for its cultural achievements both in Iran and around the world, but rather the excesses of the Pahlavi regime.

The event in Iran began officially with the 'Glorification of Cyrus' ceremony at the Great King's grave at Pasargadae on Tuesday 12 October. It was a simple ceremony, yet it set the 'tone of deadly seriousness which the Shah and his Ministers want to maintain.'[169] Participants at the 'Glorification of Cyrus' ceremony, included: high-ranking Iranian officials; representatives of various religious and international bodies; Iranologists; journalists, reporters, photographers and cameramen; Iranian scholars and writers; representatives of the Iranian nation; representatives of the Revolutionary Corps; and

[166] Richard Frye in an interview with Shahla Haeri, Cambridge, MA 24 October 1984, Tape 5, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 31.
[167] Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005) pp. 23-24.
[168] Ibid, p. 25.
[169] Walter Schwarz, 'A Kingdom Remembered – 2,500 years on', *The Guardian*, 12 October 1971, p. 1.

representatives of the Imperial Army Units.[170] The whole event was over within an hour and consisted of a wreath laying ceremony and speech by the Shah.

On the following day, 13 October, the Congress of Iranology, which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3, was inaugurated, followed by the staggered arrival of the monarchs, heads of state and other dignitaries at Persepolis, who were given an informal dinner. Over the next 24 hours more guests arrived, as the Shah drove around the tent city in his open Rolls-Royce, greeting his visitors and overseeing proceedings.[171] 62 heads of state, or their representatives, made their way to Persepolis for the event and were housed in the tent city, constructed specifically for the occasion. The tent city, designed by the Swiss interior design firm of Jansen, was made up of five wings, supposed to represent the five continents and was said to have been inspired by the 1520 Field of Cloth of Gold meeting between Francis I of France and Henry VII of England.[172] Each head of state had a single apartment with a sitting room, two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and a service room with an electric stove and ironing board for their entourage.[173] Portraits were woven out of silk for each of the distinguished guests and hung in their sitting rooms, in a marvellous display of Persian artistic majesty.[174] Each room was decorated in a unique style, which ranged from Louis XVI to contemporary. The floors were ordained with priceless Persian carpets and the marble bathrooms, installed by Paris-based bathroom store Le Bain de Diane,[175] were equipped with the finest French toiletries including Guerlain shaving preparations for men and Joy eau de cologne and soap for the women. All the linen and towels were supplied by Porthault of Paris.[176] No expense was spared in providing the very best for the foreign guests, which, played into the hands of the event's critics, who saw it as unnecessary and costly. It also detracted from the essential character of the Celebration, which was supposed to commemorate the longevity and glory of Iranian civilization.

The evening of the Thursday 14 October, the Shah's 33rd birthday, culminated in the Royal Banquet. In opening the Banquet, the Shah said, 'In our gathering this evening, past history is linked with the reality of today. Such a bond of past and present achieved by an

[170] Programme: *The Glorification of Cyrus the Great Achaemenian King of Kings*, Pasargad, 12 October 1971
[171] Walter Schwarz, 'Finale Saves the Cyrus Show', The Guardian, 16 October 1971, p. 1.
[172] Cyrus Kadivar, '2500-Year Celebrations Revisited', *The Iranian,* 25 January 2002, available online at <http://iranian.com/CyrusKadivar/2002/January/2500/index.html> [accessed on 19 September 2014].
[173] Farrokh Golestan, *Flames of Persia*, narrated by Orson Welles (1972).
[174] Ibid.
[175] Anthony Mann, 'Paris wins order of the Bath', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1971.
[176] Charlotte Curtis, 'Tent City Awaits Celebration: Shah's "Greatest Show"', *The New York Times*, 12 October 1971, p. 39.

understanding of friendship is surely an omen of good.'[177] The food was prepared by Maxims of Paris, which provided the 30 cooks, along with 22 tons of provisions, which included 4500 bottles of the finest wines, and 200 waiters.[178] The meal represented the greatest in opulence and refined dining. It began with poached quails' eggs stuffed with golden imperial caviar, and was followed by: mousse of crayfish tails; roast saddle of lamb with truffles; champagne sorbet; fifty peacocks with tail feathers restored, accompanied by roasted quails, served with nut and truffle salad; Oporto glazed figs with raspberries; and finished off with coffee and cognac Prince Eugene.[179] It lasted over five and a half hours and was described by one journalist as

> an expression of the most absolute luxury... and the most complete refinement. It was the greatest of all the parties of the twentieth century and it is very possible that a similar one is never organised again.[180]

As with many aspects of the event, there was a clear European flavour, which many people recognised. This habit of ordering food from abroad can be seen also in Shah's coronation in 1967 when lobsters, oysters, cheeses and wines were ordered from Paris.[181] Not only was the Royal Banquet wastefully lavish, but, as critics were keen to stress, it was not even an Iranian affair.

The lack of Iranian food for this evening was considered a great pity for what was supposed to be a celebration of Iranian heritage and culture. Queen Farah voiced her concerns before the Celebrations had begun, saying 'We have waited twenty-five hundred years, why not wait another three years to do things more Iranian? It will be more interesting for everybody; it will please the Iranians.'[182] Even Ardeshir Zahedi, son of General Fazlollah Zahedi, was critical of the catering. With 2500 years of civilization and at the foot of one of the world's grandest ancient capital cities, he asked, why could the guests not be served Persian dishes like *kabab kubideh* or *ab-gusht?*[183] The Shah was forced to respond to the criticism. 'Why are we reproached for serving dinner to 50 heads of state? What am I

[177] 'A Peace Call by the Shah', *The Guardian*, 15 October 1971.
[178] John L. Hess, 'Made in France – Persia's Splendorous Anniversary Celebration', *New York Times*, 5 October 1971, p. 36.
[179] David Housego, 'Pique and Peacocks in Persepolis', *The Times*, 15 October 1971.
[180] Quoted by Martin Clark, 'The Party', in *Celebration at Persepolis*, ed. by Michael Stevenson (Bristol: Jrp Ringier, 2008) p. 23.
[181] Denis Wright, in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, Aylesbury, UK, 10 and 11 October 1984, Tape 4, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University.
[182] Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride* (1989) p. 96.
[183] Quoted in Milani, *The Shah* (2011) p. 326.

supposed to do, give them bread and radishes?'[184] One could perhaps forgive the event organisers for choosing to serve dishes which would be familiar to the VIP guests. After all, one of the reasons for Queen Elizabeth's refusal to attend was that it would be poorly organised and therefore her comfort could not be guaranteed.[185]

Following the dinner, the guests moved out into the ruins of Persepolis where they were treated to a *son et lumière* show and fireworks. Greek avant-garde composer Iannis Xenakis, who had befriended the Shah and Shahbanou a few years earlier at the annual Shiraz Music Festival, was commissioned to write a major new work to be premiered that night, which seemed to be appreciated by the audience.[186] The audience were surrounded by the sound of music and as luminous patterns in the ruins evoked the Zoroastrian symbolism of light as eternal life, while people in traditional Achaemenid dress walked solemnly around the ruins by candlelight.[187] With such a magnificent high-tech spectacle at the ancient ruins, the Shah was showing that Iran could transcend Orientalist traditions and modernise while at the same time remaining true to its culture and heritage.[188]

On the following day a grand military parade took place, showcasing 2500 years of Persian history. It began, as usual, with a speech from the Shah before the procession started. The procession lasted over an hour and a half and featured various soldiers from distinct periods of Iranian history including the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian, Saffarid, Delamite, Safavid, Afshar, Zand, and Qajar periods, culminating in the Pahlavi period.[189] The spectacle was entrusted to the Army under the control of Commander-in-General Fathollah Minbachian,[190] was the result of 12 years of study under the auspices of the Military Committee for the Celebration and involved 3500 soldiers of the Iranian army.[191] Additional well-researched particulars were included such as siege equipment and triremes from the Achaemenid period.[192] Rehearsals lasted several months and soldiers who were due to take part in the parade were allegedly banned from shaving in the weeks leading up to the

[184] Charlotte Curtis, 'Tent City Awaits Celebration: Shah's "Greatest Show"', *The New York Times*, 12 October 1971, p. 39.
[185] FCO 57/323, Sir Philip Adams to A.L. Mayall, 20 January 1971.
[186] Clark, 'The Party' (2008) p. 25.
[187] Maria Anna Harley, 'Music of Sound and Light: Xenakis's Polytopes', *Leonardo*, 31:1 (1998) p. 59.
[188] Talinn Grigor, 'Preserving the Antique Modern: Persepolis '71', *Future Anterior*, 2:1 (2005) p. 26.
[189] Programme: *Parade of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, Persepolis, 15 October 1971.
[190] Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005) p. 33.
[191] Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979) p. 24.
[192] *Parade at Persepolis: Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1971).

event.[193] Additionally, a book was published to accompany the parade with detailed illustrations of soldiers from the various periods of Iranian history.[194] The event finished with a parade of the Revolutionary Corps and the Universal Welfare Legion, followed by a fireworks display.[195] In the evening special guests (in the British case this included only Prince Philip and Princess Anne, not other private guests of the Shah[196]) were given an informal 'Persian Evening' by Their Imperial Majesties with traditional Iranian music, dancing girls and Persian food.[197]

The festivities then moved to Tehran. Two major events that deserve our attention were the opening of the Shahyad Monument and the inauguration of the Aryamehr stadium. The move from Persepolis to Tehran represented a giant leap from the ancient past to the future, what Grigor calls 'a conspicuous evocation of change and continuity – of ancientness and modernity.'[198] On 16 October the Monarchs and Heads of State were invited to the tomb of the Shah's father, Reza Pahlavi, where a wreath was laid, following which they were lead to the Shahyad Aryamehr Memorial Square for the opening of the monument. The Iranologists and official guests, who were not invited to the laying of the wreath, arrived separately for the inauguration ceremony.[199] Like events in Shiraz, the opening ceremony also featured a grand fireworks display, which the organisers seemed to enjoy. The monument was designed by Hossein Amanat after a nationwide competition was organised by the Celebration Committee.[200] Many weird and wonderful ideas were discussed and duly forgotten, including one by the Supreme Council of Archaeology, of which British archaeologist David Stronach was one of two non-Iranian members, which was a ghastly structure consisting of a number of layers stacked on top of one another, each corresponding to the artistic style of a period of Iranian history.[201] The winning design by Amanat was successful because it draws a remarkable link between the ancient past and the modernity that the Shah wished to promote. It represents, according to Grigor,

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[193] Grigor, 'Preserving the Antique Modern' (2005) pp. 26-27.
[194] *Parade at Persepolis: Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1971).
[195] Programme: *Parade of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, Persepolis, 15 October 1971.
[196] FCO 57/323, 'The Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied by the Princess Ann visits Iran to attend the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire' p. 8.
[197] Golestan, *Flames of Persia* (1972).
[198] Grigor, 'Orientalism & Mimicry of Selfness' (2009) p. 6.
[199] They participated in a separate wreath-laying ceremony the following day. *Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1971) p. 20.
[200] Talinn Grigor, 'Of Metamorphosis: Meaning on Iranian Terms', *Third Text*, 17:3 (2010) p. 210.
[201] Interview with David Stronach, April 2014.

> an excellent synthesis of Roman triumphal arches, Parthian fire temples (Chahar-taq), the Sasanian Ctesiphon Iwan, Seljuk tomb towers, Safavid muqarnas, and the various modernist architectural qualities of austerity, iconoclasm, axiality, and monumentality.[202]

Its location, close to the airport, also provided a link between the past and the future, and the monument became a symbol of the new Iran, eventually appearing on banknotes in the mid-1970s. As part of the inauguration ceremony, attendees were invited inside the monument where there was a museum of 87,000 square feet, dedicated to Iran's rich heritage. It was here that the Cyrus Cylinder, loaned from the British Museum, was on display.

Also inaugurated was the Aryamehr Stadium, a 100,000 seat stadium for the 1974 Asian Games designed by Iranian architect Abdol Aziz Farman Farmaian. The opening ceremony consisted of a military parade, a traditional Iranian athletics show and a dance spectacle.[203] Following a successful Asian Games in 1974, in which Iran finished third behind China and Japan, Iran had started the process of applying for the 1988 Olympic Games.[204] These buildings illustrate the fact that the Celebrations were organised, not as a specific moment in time, but as a legacy; something that could, through these impressive monuments, be forever etched onto the Tehran landscape. In post-Revolution Iran the monuments still stand, albeit under a different name: *Azadi* (freedom). These buildings, it should be noted, were part of a massive development programme which included also the construction of schools, hospitals and roads, so should be considered in the context of this programme as much as the programme of the Celebrations.

The Celebrations were not supposed to be such a grand affair; they certainly had not originally been planned to be. However, as more money began to be pumped into them and in a regime where people were always eager to impress the Shah, it was perhaps inevitable. This should not detract from the importance of the cultural and scholarly aspects of the Celebrations, which were absolutely fundamental, but should rather illustrate why they have not received as much attention as they perhaps should have. There are few references in the press at the time to the Congress of Iranology, special publications or the various museum exhibitions, yet almost every newspaper covered the marvellous tent city, the gala dinner and the parade at Persepolis.

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[202] Grigor, 'Of Metamorphosis' (2010) p. 211.
[203] Golestan, *Flames of Persia* (1972).
[204] Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005) pp. 37-38.

Criticism

The event sparked a barrage of criticism. Ordinary Iranians were angered that they were forced to watch the Celebrations from their television screens while dignitaries from around the world, for whom Iranian civilization was perhaps a trivial matter, were intimately involved. One young Iranian commented:

> We, the people, knew nothing of it. We paid for it. It was in our name but we could not get within a mile of it. Literally. The road was blocked by soldiers – real soldiers, not walk-on operetta parts.[205]

Perhaps the Shah's regime would have avoided such criticism if only they had taken note of Pope's other suggestions:

> Of course there should not be a single person in Persia during this period who does not have the message of this significant event dramatically brought home to him. It can be a tremendous creator of morale and intense loyalty to the country and of a resolute home to build a future adequate to the promise of its beginnings.[206]

Of course it was a great shame that normal Iranians were excluded from the pageant at Persepolis and the opening ceremony at Pasargadae, but with such dignitaries in attendance the regime was particularly fearful that something might go wrong. Indeed, shortly after the Celebrations, in November 1971, US Ambassador Douglas MacArthur was almost kidnapped by gunmen who ambushed his limousine, and a potential plot to attack British Ambassador Peter Ramsbotham was also uncovered around this time.[207] A plot by the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* (MEK), which had planned to blow up Tehran's main power station in order to disrupt the Celebrations, was also foiled.[208] Perhaps the Iranian Security Service (SAVAK) were excessive in ensuring that there would be no breaches in security, but this is indicative of how high the stakes were for the Shah and how important he perceived the Celebrations to be. With the eyes of the world watching, it was essential that nothing went wrong.

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[205] Quoted in Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979) p. 25.
[206] Arthur Upham Pope letter to Amir Ebrahami, 4 December, 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 429.
[207] Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, London, UK, 18 October 1985, Tape 1, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 28.
[208] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: The Life of the Ayatollah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009) p. 164.

Charges of excess from the Western press dominated the post-Celebration period and the Shah's regime was forced to defend its position. Denying reports that the event had cost up to 300 million dollars, the Minister of Court, Assadollah Alam, insisted during a press conference on 24 October 1971, that the event had cost no more than 16.8 million dollars. This figure did not include the costs of building airports, roads, schools and hotels across the country, for these, he argued, were part of the Fourth Development Plan and would have been constructed regardless. According to Alam the cost of entertaining heads of state was 2.3 million dollars, the tent city cost 6.3 million dollars and the Shahyad Monument cost six million dollars. The parade at Persepolis, printing and publishing of books and transport completed the spending.[209] Even if the Shah's regime did spend 300 million dollars on the event, would this have been money well spent? Indeed, a lot of the spending was actually intended to improve the infrastructure and open the country to tourism, evidenced, for example, by the construction of the Darius hotel in Shiraz and the printing of a number of promotional tourist pamphlets on the occasion of the Celebrations, including one on Isfahan[210] and another on Persepolis, Pasargadae and Naghsh-e Rustam.[211] Income from tourism in Iran had increased by 33 per cent between 1969 and 1970, with a figure of around 45 million dollars a year in 1970, to become the country's fourth largest industry.[212] The Foreign Relations Department at the Ministry of Information declared that 'The 2500th Anniversary Celebration may well be regarded as one of the most rewarding tourist promotion developments of the 20th century.'[213]

The problem was that the Shah wanted the Celebrations to improve his country's image abroad. However, in combination with human rights abuse and massive disparities in wealth, the event perhaps had the opposite effect. Many newspapers in the United States, for instance, focused on the excessive spending.[214] The Celebrations did, however, alert the millions of people worldwide who watched the event from their television screens to the existence of Iran. Ramsbotham said that they 'put Persia-Iran on the map.' He continues,

[209] FCO 17/1529, Publicity for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, 25 October 1971.
[210] *Isfahan* (Tehran: Iran National Tourist Organization, 1971).
[211] Aziz Hatami, *Persepolis, Pasargadae and Naghsh-e Rustam: Presentation on the Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Achaemenian Dynasty* (Tehran: Ministry of Information, 1966).
[212] 'Iranian Tourist Industry Strongly Benefits from Anniversary Celebrations', Foreign Relations Department, Ministry of Information, Tehran 1971, p. 2, from the University of Durham Middle East Documentation Unit.
[213] Ibid, p. 7.
[214] See William A. Dorman and Mansour Farhang, *The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism Deference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) pp. 117-120.

> When I was in the United States afterwards, people knew about it -- "Oh, gee, were you at Persepolis?" They actually knew where Persia was. They never knew before. It was a successful way of putting Persia on the international map.'[215]

If this was one of the goals of the Celebrations, then they were certainly successful in that sense.

In the months leading up to the Celebrations, they were condemned by Khomeini from exile in Iraq. In a speech on 13 October at Najaf Khomeini questioned the very essence of the Celebrations and encouraged protest against the event.

> It is the duty of the Muslim people of Iran to refrain from participation in this illegitimate festival, to engage in passive struggle against it, to remain indoors during the days of the festival, and to express by any means possible their disgust and aversion for anyone who contributed to the organization or celebration of the festival. Let the festival organizers know that they are despised by the Islamic community and by all alert peoples throughout the world, that they are hated by all lovers of freedom, and that Islam and the Muslims are repelled by the very notion of monarchy.[216]

Some have pointed to this as a pivotal moment in the revolutionary movement, where Khomeini, incensed by the Celebrations, clearly formed his anti-monarchical conceptions.[217] That there was clerical opposition is unquestionable. Khomeini, however, was a shrewd and calculated opponent who was attentive to the political mood of the population, particularly those whose loyalties lay with the clergy, and would use anything as ammunition against the Shah. It should not be seen as a turning point, therefore, but rather as merely part of the process of the formation of Khomeini's opposition to the Shah, and in the context of the framing of his theological/political position while in exile. Influential clerics such as Khomeini, rather, used the unpopularity of the Shah and the negative image surrounding the Celebrations to successfully consolidate their opposition to him.

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[215] Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Shusha Assar, Hampshire, UK, 20 January 1986, Tape 3, Foundation for Iranian Studies, p. 67.
[216] Ruhollah Khomeini, 'The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islam', Speech at Najaf, 13 October 1971, in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. by Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1981) pp. 200-208.
[217] See David Menashri, 'Shi'ite Leadership: In the Shadow of Conflicting Ideologies', *Iranian Studies*, 13:1/4 (1980) p. 129.

There were also members of the non-clerical opposition to the Shah who were eager to stress their objection to the event. One very disgruntled Qajar Prince, Mozaffar Firouz, the great, great grandson of Abbas Mirza, who held positions in Iran such as Minister of Labour and Ambassador to USSR, before his exile to Paris in 1948, lamented the nature of the Celebrations:

> While we welcome with pleasure the glorification of the great Iranian and Aryan people and the contribution which they have made to civilization and humanity, we think that the entire conception of the celebration which was suggested to us is based on a fundamental historical error, and we regret that millions of dollars from an underdeveloped country, a poor and needy nation, will be wasted on celebrations which have nothing to do with the historical facts and the true interests and traditions of the Iranian people.[218]

He continues in this savage attack on the Celebrations for the book's 150 pages, stressing that Iranian Civilization is far older than the 2500 years celebrated in 1971. The history of the monarchy in Iran, he argued, actually began with the history of the Iranian people, which goes back many years before Cyrus. Firouz's objections to the Celebrations are unsurprising since he wanted to see Mohammad Reza Shah removed from power,[219] however his arguments against it were certainly felt by others. So, on the one hand the Celebrations were criticised for paying too much attention to pre-Islamic Iran and on the other they were criticised for not going far enough back into pre-Islamic history. In the end, in the light of mounting criticism from within Iran and the foreign media, the Shah became, in the years that passed, keen to distance himself from the matter of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.

Conclusion

The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations were not a passing moment in time, nor were they intended to be. They were supposed to leave a lasting legacy. The three reasons for celebrations discussed in the theoretical framework, that they are an expression of power, a quest for legitimisation, and an attempt to create national unity, are all relevant here. One might argue that by excluding Iranians from the festivities the Shah failed in his attempt to create a strong national bond, although this pursuit continued long after the Celebrations

[218] Mozaffar Firouz, *L' Iran face à l'imposture de l'histoire* (Paris: L'Herne, 1971) p. 15, translated from the French by Maria van Veldhuizen.
[219] Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the West: A Critical Bibliography* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1987) pp. 131-132.

ended. In the 1970s the Ministry of Culture founded the Council for the Preservation of Antiquities, which sought to 'acquaint the ordinary people of the neighbourhood with the value and importance of archaeological remains, as the most eloquent documentation of our national history.'[220] The Shah certainly left himself open to criticism with the lavishness of the banquet for the foreign dignitaries, however the cultural work of the Celebrations continued long after the event, even after the Revolution. Even today in the summer months one can see a sound and light show at Persepolis, presumably the same, or a similar one at least, that was created for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.

One of the most enduring legacies of the Celebrations was in the realm of academia and culture. The relationships that were cultivated, the projects initiated, as well as the many publications, represented valuable work and encouraged further studies. One example of this was the International Congress of Mithraic Studies which was held in Manchester in 1971 in conjunction with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, and then again in Tehran in 1975, along with two publications and an academic journal, all funded by the Imperial Court. Certainly there was a nationalist agenda to the Celebrations, however, passionate Iranian academics like Shojaeddin Shafa ensured that the cultural and academic aspects were not ignored. It is a great shame that the media chose to focus on the tent city and the foreign dignitaries, and not on the valuable cultural contributions, which formed the backbone to the Celebrations, both in Iran and internationally, but this was to be expected.

The Celebrations were intended to unite Iranians and create a bond between them and the regime, but they left a large number of them feeling isolated and detached. They were supposed to consolidate the Shah's power and lessen the influence of the clerics, but again they had the opposite effect. They were also intended to improve Iran's image abroad, but they generally drew criticism from the press for the perceived unashamed excesses of a third-world monarch. Some of the criticism was warranted, but some of it was very harsh indeed. Over 40 years have passed since the Celebrations and they are still generally remembered for the speech at Pasargadae, the parade at Persepolis, the tent city and the grand dinner, cooked by the chefs at Maxims. This, however, as we shall see over the following pages, is just one small part of the story.

[220] Quoted in Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979) p. 26.

Chapter 2: The Glorification of Cyrus and the Cyrus Cylinder

> 'Cyrus the Great, who reigned from about 559 – 529 B.C., was one of the most dynamic men in history.'
>
> - Mohammad Reza Shah[221]

This chapter explores the significance of the Cyrus legend to the Shah's nationalist ideology and discusses the evolution of the Cyrus Cylinder from a simple artefact into a symbol of the humanitarian values of an ancient king, and indeed, a nation. Furthermore, the controversial decision from the British Museum to allow the loan of the Cylinder to Iran will be investigated as a key aspect of the British contribution to the Celebrations. In essence, there are two issues that are central to this study. Firstly we must look at the development and use of the Cyrus legend in Iranian cultural and political history, questioning the very origins of this, and discussing the contributions of foreign travellers to Iran, particularly the British. How was the Shah able to adapt and make use of the Cyrus myth, which was so central to the Celebrations, to his great advantage and how important was the Cylinder loan to the Shah's ideology? A secondary issue to be considered is the utilisation of the artefact by the British. As Neil Faulkner has written, 'politics are about power. The politics of archaeology are about who has power over material remains from the past.'[222] In this sense we should begin to question who the Cyrus Cylinder belongs to. Is it a part of British colonial history or is it a relic of Iran's past? The Cyrus Cylinder provides the perfect case study to explore these questions in relation to the Celebrations and to the British contribution.

As approaches to heritage have evolved over the centuries, we have become more dependent on documentary evidence and less on tradition. Thus modern memory is archival. As Nora writes, 'the less memory is experienced from within, the greater the need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists qua memory.'[223] The birth of the modern archive and the insatiable need to record absolutely everything, has contributed to this shift in memory from personal or communal remembrance to a memory that relies on documentary evidence and hard facts. Ancient relics are material evidence of

[221] Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for my Country* (1961) p. 21.
[222] Neil Faulkner, 'Archaeology from Below', *Public Archaeology*, 1:1 (2000) p. 29.
[223] Nora, *Realms of Memory* (1996) p. 8.

heritage, but these are also open to change and reinterpretation. According to Lowenthal relics can undergo two types of transformation: one which affects them directly, such as location, enhancement or iconoclasm, and one which affects them indirectly, such as how the relic is interpreted, explained and appreciated.[224] The Cyrus Cylinder has thus evolved from being a simple building inscription found beneath a temple in Babylon to being tangible evidence of Cyrus' apparent humanitarian values and an important part of the British Museum's collection. Eventually the Cylinder, as we shall observe in the following chapter, became essentially a political tool, which the British saw as a potentially significant instrument in its relations with the Shah's government.

The Glorification of Cyrus Ceremony

The Celebrations were inaugurated on Tuesday 12 October at Pasargadae, where the Shah and his guests paid their respects at the tomb of Cyrus. It was a simple ceremony, yet it was presented as a serious affair, a sombre dedication to an important hero. The official programme for the day's event had a message from the Shah, which read:

> Twenty five centuries ago, in a world where ruling was based on threats, terror and fear, and where the conquerors beliefs were imposed on the conquered, the Iranian Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great on the highest human principles of mutual understanding among nations and religious freedom. The moral and spiritual life of my people has been based on these principles.[225]

The ceremony was remarkably straightforward, yet it was planned and executed to military precision. Their Imperial Majesties and the Crown Prince arrived by helicopter at around 11:00 after the guests had taken their seats, entering a royal tent at 11:20 on their way to the tomb of Cyrus. At 11:30 the Shah left the royal tent to the sound of the national anthem, played by the Imperial band, while the Imperial banner was lifted and 101 salute guns were fired. At 11:33 their Imperial Majesties and the Crown Prince entered the Imperial arena, just a short distance from Cyrus' grave. The Shah stepped forward, leaving his immediate family behind and placed a wreath at the foot of the tomb and, following a minute's silence, returned to his family. At 11:36 the Shah gave a speech, followed by the singing of 'the special hymn' by the Revolutionary Corps at 11:41, which included the following lines: 'Our everlasting

[224] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) p. 264.
[225] Programme: *The Glorification of Cyrus the Great Achaemenian King of Kings*, Pasargad, 12 October 1971.

happiness and prosperity derive from your Kingly glory, O King.'[226] The return of the Imperial Majesties and Crown Prince at 11:45 brought an end to the ceremony.[227]

Cyrus was the historical figure who had inspired the Celebrations, so that the Shah should pay homage to him at his tomb is unsurprising. Mausoleums can serve a political aim particularly well as they can provide undeniable evidence for the existence of a great event or a hero, in this case Cyrus the Great.[228] The words uttered by the Shah at Cyrus' tomb are now infamous and are often quoted as evidence of the Shah's megalomania. The speech was not, however, written by the Shah, but rather, along with most of his speeches, by Shojaeddin Shafa and it was accepted by the Shah with only minor alterations.[229] In a highly emotive and powerful speech, the Shah said:

> O Cyrus, Great King, King of Kings, Achaemenian King, King of the Land of Iran! I, the Shahanshah of Iran, offer thee salutations from myself and from my nation. At this glorious moment in the history of Iran, I and all Iranians, the offspring of the empire which thou founded 2,500 years ago, bow our heads in reverence before they tomb... Cyrus! We have today gathered at thy eternal resting place to say to thee: "Rest in peace for we are awake and will forever stay awake to guard thy proud heritage."[230]

Court Minister Alam later recalled that it was the most emotional that he had seen the Shah and that he was 'so emotional that he had to stop for a second.'[231] Later the Shah would be mocked for these lines and the speech is often dismissed as a source of ridicule.[232] However, that he also spoke of the promise to 'preserve forever the traditions of humanism and goodwill, with which you founded the Persian Empire' clearly illustrates the extent to which the Shah was attempting to, in the words of Ali Ansari, 'transfer the ideals of the enlightenment onto the relatively blank template that was Cyrus the Great.'[233]

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[226] Roger Savory, 'Iran: A 2500-year historical and cultural tradition', in Adams ed., *Iranian Civilization and Culture* (1973) p. 79.
[227] Programme: *The Glorification of Cyrus the Great Achaemenian King of Kings*, Pasargad, 12 October 1971.
[228] Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste"' (2004) p. 29.
[229] Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005) pp. 21-22.
[230] 'The Torch has Never Died', *Kayhan International*, 13 October, 1971.
[231] Quoted in Margaret Laing, *The Shah* (London: Sigwick and Jackson, 1977) p. 22.
[232] Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (London: Penguin, 1987) p. 327.
[233] Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 175.

The glorification of the Great King can be seen in the context of the development of the Cyrus legend, which began in the Hellenistic world with Herodotus, who called Cyrus a 'father' who 'was gentle, and procured them [Persians] all manner of goods.'[234] This was developed by Xenophon, who presented the perfect king in his *Cyropaedia*, and by Plato, whose admiration for Cyrus is clear in his *Laws*, when he writes:

> the king [Cyrus] was not jealous, but allowed him full liberty of speech, and gave honour to those who could advise him in any matter. And the nation waxed in all respects, because there was freedom and friendship and communication of mind among them.[235]

It is clear that there was, even at this stage, an attempt to present Cyrus as a model on which the ideals of a more modern, civilized state, in this case Greek, could be applied. A generation later Alexander the Great[236] was overwhelmed by the majestic sincerity of Cyrus' monument at Pasargadae, above which was an inscription that read: 'O man, I am Cyrus the son of Cambyses who founded the empire of Persia, and was the king of Asia. Grudge me not therefore this monument.'[237] So moved was he by the monument and its apparent neglect that he ordered for it to be put in a state of 'thorough repair.'[238]

It is quite possible that the Greek conqueror did indeed have a great respect for Cyrus, however a secondary motive of his visit to the tomb was an effort to galvanise support from the Persian population in his quest for legitimacy.[239] In adopting Persian dress and paying homage to a king considered a 'father' to the Persian people, Alexander was attempting to bypass the impossibility of relating himself through blood to the Achaemenids, and present himself as a sort of spiritual successor to the conquered dynasty. Perhaps the Shah's appropriation of the tomb of Cyrus in October 1971 could also be seen in the context of a king seeking legitimacy. The Pahlavi dynasty was still relatively young and had, 50 years earlier, succeeded a dynasty, the Qajars, who had ruled Iran for around 140 years. In

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[234] Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by George Rawlinson (London: Everyman's Library, 1997) III: 89.
[235] Plato, *Laws* III, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, available at <http://classics.mit.edu/> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[236] Who incidentally was educated by Aristotle, a student of Plato.
[237] Piotr Bienkowski, 'Cyrus', in *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*, ed. by, Piotr Bienkowski and Alan Millard (London: British Museum Press, 2000) p. 87.
[238] Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, trans. by Aubrey de Sélincourt (London: Penguin Books, 1971) VI: 29-30.
[239] Ali Mousavi, 'Pilgrimage to Pasargadae: A Brief History of the Site from the fall of the Achaemenids to the Early Twentieth Century', in *Cyrus the Great: An Ancient Iranian King*, ed. by Touraj Daryaee (Santa Monica, CA: Afshar Publishing, 2013) p. 29.

presenting himself as successor to Cyrus, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was, therefore, asserting his rightful place as Shah of Iran. Roger Savory, who observed the ceremony at Pasargadae, said:

> We are celebrating this anniversary because the present Shahanshah of Iran sees himself as being, in a very real sense, the heir of Cyrus the Great and the inheritor of his empire. No one, I think, who was present at the dignified and moving ceremony at the tomb of Cyrus, could doubt this for one moment.[240]

Indeed, a passage from a commemorative bibliography of Iran published on the occasion of the Shah's coronation in 1967 expresses this sentiment quite clearly: 'It has been said that what Xenophon wrote of Cyrus the Great in 401 B.C. could equally well have been written of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.'[241] Publications in Persian at the time stressed the similarities between the progressive ancient king Cyrus and the progressive modernist policies of the current king. Some books published in Persian on the occasion of the Celebrations featured, in their early pages, a gold-lettered translation of the text of the Cyrus Cylinder alongside text of the Shah's White Revolution, clearly linking Cyrus and Mohammad Reza Shah.[242] These texts were to be reproduced 160 times, engraved in stone and displayed in 160 different towns and cities, in Persian and cuneiform.[243]

Accounts of Cyrus before the discovery of epigraphical evidence came largely from biblical references[244] and from Greek historians.[245] From this early time, therefore, the idea of Cyrus as a benevolent king was influenced largely by Greek rather than Oriental tradition. Perhaps this is why he retained a special place in the hearts of enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson, who wrote to his son that the first book he should read in Greek should be Xenophon's Cyropaedia.[246] Xenophon's account of Cyrus is more philosophical than historical, but it contributed immensely to the idea of Cyrus as a model of kingship. Popular fictional historian Harold Lamb, whose *Cyrus the Great* was published in 1960 wrote in his introduction:

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[240] Savory, 'Iran: A 2500-year historical and cultural tradition' (1973) p. 77.
[241] Ardeshir Zahedi, 'A Memoir of His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Shahanshah of Iran', in *Bibliography of Iran*, by Geoffrey Handley-Taylor (London, Bibliography of Iran, 1967) p. xvii.
[242] For example *2500 Sal shahanshah-i Iran: az Kurush ta Pahlavi* (Tehran: Vizarat-i Bihdari, 1971).
[243] Although it is unclear as to whether this actually happened. See Norman Sharp letter to Paul Gotch, August 13 1967.
[244] *Isaiah* 44:24-45: 8; *II Chronicles* 36:22-3; *Ezra* 1 and 6: 1-5.
[245] Primarily Herodotus, Cstesias and Xenophon.
[246] 'Cyrus Cylinder: How a Persian monarch inspired Jefferson', *BBC*, 11 March 2013, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-21747567> [accessed on 7 September 2014].

> Cyrus is a very familiar name. In our grandfathers' day it was perhaps the most popular name for men in America. Yet it came from an almost unknown king of the East, who lived in the dawn of history.[247]

That Cyrus could influence the names of Americans over 2000 years after his death illustrates the pervasiveness and depth of the Cyrus legend in the West.

The idea of Achaemenid Persia permeated into the minds of British writers too. Around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many plays appeared with Cyrus and his successors as subjects, such as Colley Cibber's *Xerxes: A Tragedy* (1699), Sir William Alexander's *The Tragedy of Darius*, at least three plays on Cyrus the Great (including *The Wars of Cyrus King of Persia, against Antiochus King of Assyria, with the Tragical End of Panthaea*, published anonymously in 1594) and Thomas Preston's *Cambises, King of Percia*, first printed in 1570.[248] Other plays on Cyrus were performed such as John Banks' *Cyrus the Great: or, The Tragedy of Love* (1696), which unfortunately, due to the sudden death of the actor playing Cyaxares, was abandoned after only four nights.[249] That Persian kings were the subjects of drama in this period, however, is reflective of a growing, or already prevalent, interest in the early Persian Empire, in which Cyrus held a privileged position.

The increase in interest in Iranian history at the beginning of the nineteenth century can be seen in the numbers of visitors to Persepolis in that period. St John Simpson observes that there was a great increase in the amount of graffiti from 1800 to 1829, when 89 names were written on Persepolis' monuments, most belonging to British political missions serving in Iran.[250] It was also during these early decades of the nineteenth century that the first attempts were made to excavate the site by British passers-by, such as Sir Gore Ouseley (1770-1844) on his mission to the Persian Court in April, May and July 1811, continued by his attaché, Robert Gordon (1791-1847) and later by Colonel John Macdonald (1782-1830) in 1826 and in 1825 by Lieutenant-Colonel Ephraim Gerrish Stannus (1784-1850).[251] This

[247] Harold Lamb, *Cyrus the Great* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1960) p. vii.
[248] Parvin Loloi, 'Portraits of the Achaemenid Kings in English Drama: Sixteeth-Eighteenth Centuries', in *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by St John Simpson and John Curtis (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010) pp. 34-40.
[249] Hugh James Rose ed., *A New General Biographical Dictionary Vol. III* (London: Fellowes, 1841) p. 117.
[250] Simpson provides the data as so: 1804 (6 names), 1809/10 (39 names), 1821 (10 names), and 1826 (15 names). See St John Simpson, 'Making their Mark: Foreign Travellers at Persepolis', *Arta*, 1 (2005) p. 10.
[251] St John Simpson, 'Pottering Around Persepolis: Observations on Early European Visitors to the Site', in *Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire*, ed., by Chistopher Tuplin (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2007) pp. 347-351.

flurry of activity at Persepolis supposedly reflects that early travel accounts of Persia were sparking greater inquiry by curious British servicemen. According to one report at the time,

> English who wish to proceed overland from the East Indies, come by sea into the Persian Gulf... land at Bendarabas... proceed to Shiraz... and take pleasure in visiting the ruins of Persepolis...[252]

Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833) was one such traveller, who, during his service in Iran, in which he was charged with ensuring that Fath Ali Shah did not yield to the temptation of an alliance with Napoleonic France, declared that 'I employ every leisure hour in researches into the history of this extraordinary country, with which we are but little acquainted.'[253] Malcolm's *History of Persia* (1915) was the first full-length history of the country with the aim that 'the English reader should be made acquainted with the history and condition of a people, who have in most ages acted a conspicuous part on the theatre of the world.'[254] He had a deep respect for Persia, its wonderful people and its rich heritage, and displayed a clear desire that others should share in his profound appreciation. Indeed, British diplomats and officers seemed more (or just as) eager to explore local ancient sites than to have an audience with the Shah. One British traveller at the end of the nineteenth century expressed disappointment at the site, which failed to live up to his expectations, probably due to the fact that, he says, 'it has been crammed down my throat, upon every available occasion, ever since I landed in Persia.'[255]

The very same travellers and early excavators of Iran were influenced also by the development of European museums and the subsequent demand for items to go on display. One could interpret this development in Britain as a cultural response to Napoleon's grand endeavour of documenting Ancient Egypt. The British excavation around the Persepolis Apadana and the cast-making of visible reliefs can certainly be seen as a reaction to the French enterprise.[256] Casts and original fragmentary reliefs were transported to the British Museum and private collections, which gave the public access to Achaemenid imagery, previously unseen by most of the British public. Interest in antiquities was such, that by the

[252] Von Kotzebue (1819), quoted in St John Simpson, 'Making their Mark' (2005) p. 12.
[253] John Malcolm letter to his father from Shiraz, 17 August, 1800, in John William Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir John Malcolm,* Volume 1 (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1856) p. 124
[254] Malcolm, *History of Persia,* Volume 1 (1815) p. v.
[255] Quoted in Thomas Harrison, 'Reinventing Achaemenid Persia', in *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East*, ed. by St John Simpson and John Curtis (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010) p. 23.
[256] Lindsay Allen, *The Persian Empire: A History* (London: British Museum Press, 2005) p. 173.

middle of the nineteenth century, the British Museum saw up to 30,000 visitors per day, attracted by its collection which included the Persepolis relief acquisitions and the Cyrus Cylinder.[257] In addition, between May and October 1851 over six million people visited the Crystal Palace Exhibition, which had a section dedicated to Iranian arts and crafts.[258] We can certainly see in this period a greater exposure of Persian history to the public in Britain, as was happening elsewhere in Europe.

In the archaeological investigations of Pasargadae, particularly in developing an understanding of its monuments, British travellers were of considerable importance. Pasargadae was re-discovered by James Morrier (1780-1849), author of *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* and secretary in the British Embassy, in 1809, but he was unsure as to what the monument actually was. Robert Ker Porter (1777-1872) however, was able to ascertain the identity of the site through studies of descriptions in ancient texts, and produced the first sketch of the tomb of Cyrus the Great.[259] The first properly scientific excavations took place from 1961 until 1963 at Pasargadae under the direction of David Stronach of the British Institute of Persian Studies.[260] That Cyrus the Great was the focus of such investigations is unsurprising, given his position in Greek history as a model-king, as well as his importance to both Christians and Jews for the biblical references to him as the Lord's Anointed. To reinforce the ideas of humanism and benevolence encapsulated in the Cyrus legend however, a tomb was not enough, and nor were Greek and Biblical accounts. The Shah needed something tangible, seemingly unhampered by Western imagination.

The Cyrus Cylinder

For the Celebrations the British Museum permitted the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder to Iran as the centrepiece of an exhibition at the Shahyad Monument in Tehran. The Cylinder itself had always been considered an item of significant importance, however it was not until the 1960s that it began to take on a different meaning. The Cylinder's initial function was to record the building work carried out at the Babylonian temple following Cyrus' defeat of King Nabonidus in 539 BC. Far from being a unique declaration, as Kuhurt informs, 'Such pious

[257] Compared with around 10,000 today, although opening times in 1850 were not as long. For the figure of 30,000 see Bill Bryson, *At Home* (Black Swan; London, 2010) p. 47.
[258] 'The Great Exhibition', British Library, available at <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/victorians/exhibition/greatexhibition.html > [accessed on 13 September 2014].
[259] Richard D. Barnett, 'Sir Robert Ker Porter: Regency Artist and Traveller', *Iran*, 10 (1972) p. 21.
[260] See David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A report on the excavation conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); and Ali Sami, *Pasargadae: The oldest imperial capital of Iran*, trans. R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Print Office, 1971).

acts of temple work were part of a standard process of legitimisation in Babylonia, and thus follow conventional forms.'[261] Recording such deeds was standard practice, particularly in this case to vilify the name of Nabonidus and present the foreign invader, Cyrus, as the liberator of Babylon, one who would respect their Gods and free them from a tyrant. To Wiesehöfer the Cylinder

> fits into the framework of the ideological conflict between the new and the old king, and says less about Cyrus's character than about his efforts at legitimisation and his ability to use local traditions and modes to serve his own purposes.[262]

So, taken out of political context and viewed solely as a historical document, the Cylinder is a vital piece of information on both Cyrus' invasion and the state of Babylon upon that invasion. However, the 'first declaration of human rights' it certainly was not.

The Cylinder was found by Hormuzd Rassam's excavations at Babylon on behalf of the British Museum in 1879 and was subsequently purchased by the British Museum in 1880.[263] There are questions over the exact place of discovery, but it appears to have been discovered in the mounds of either Amran or Jumjuma.[264] On 17 November 1879 Henry Rawlinson delivered a paper to the Royal Asiatic Society, of which he was President and Director, entitled 'Notes on a newly-discovered Clay Cylinder of Cyrus the Great', in which he gave the first descriptions of the Cylinder.[265] Certainly the Cylinder was seen with great interest as an item which could answer some important questions about Cyrus' reign, but there was no mention of the Cylinder as a declaration of human rights, or as evidence of Cyrus' benevolence. Indeed, historians were oblivious to the possible connection between human rights and the Cylinder. A.T. Olmstead, whose *History of the Persian Empire* was published in 1948, observed that the Cylinder was merely 'a model of persuasive

[261] Amelie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009) p. 72.
[262] Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, new edition, 2001) p. 49.
[263] R.J van der Spek, 'Cyrus the Great, Exiles and Foreign Gods: A Comparison of Assyrian and Persian Policies on Subject Nations', in *Extraction and Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper*, ed. by Michael Kozuh, Wouter F.M. Henkelman, Charles E. Jones and Christopher Woods (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2014) p. 234.
[264] For a discussion of the discovery of the Cylinder see Jonathan Taylor, 'The Cyrus Cylinder: Discovery', in *The Cyrus Cylinder: The Great Persian Edict from Babylon*, ed. by Irving Finkel (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012) pp. 35-68.
[265] Henry Rawlinson, 'Notes on a newly-discovered Clay Cylinder of Cyrus the Great', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 12:1 (1880) pp. 70-97.

propaganda.'[266] Richard Frye in his 1962 publication, *The Heritage of Persia,* also makes no mention of the humanist qualities of the Cylinder, but rather notes that Cyrus' inscription is 'characteristic of older conquerors in the Near East.'[267]

In *Mission for my Country*, the Shah makes acclamatory references to Cyrus, saying, for example, that

> wherever Cyrus the Great conquered, he would pardon the very people who had fought him, treat them well, and keep them in their former posts... While Iran at the time knew nothing of democratic political institutions, Cyrus nevertheless demonstrated some of the qualities which provide the strength of the great modern democracies.[268]

And that the

> empire founded by Cyrus the Great was not based on territorial acquisition alone, but also on international tolerance and understanding. The rights of all the subject nations were upheld, and their laws and customs respected. Indeed, I see in our first empire something of the United Nations of nearly 2,500 years later.[269]

As early as 1960, Arthur Upham Pope stressed the moral importance of Achaemenid Persia. 'For the first time in history', he wrote,

> an empire was built on a big scale on an *ethical foundation* with not only a superb political organisation (the Assyrians were competent in this field also), but also primarily because new principles, particularly those of *religious and racial tolerance*, were put into effect to build an empire that could command the loyalty and enthusiasm of its subjects by reason of the *human dignity* conferred [emphasis added].[270]

Perhaps Pope, for he was still at this time possibly the most influential foreign professor in Iran, had some influence in the development of the Cyrus legend during this period.

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[266] A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) p. 52.
[267] Richard Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (London: Cardinal, second edition, 1976) p. 89.
[268] Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for my Country* (1961) p. 164.
[269] Ibid, p. 21.
[270] Arthur Upham Pope letter to Amir Ebrahami, 4 December, 1960, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 427.

By the time of the Celebrations international scholars also spoke of the 'message of Cyrus', a message which transcends the ages. In a talk to the Congress of Iranologists in Shiraz for the Celebrations, for example, Argentine scholar Ismael Quiles declared:

> It is certain that Cyrus believed in a transcendent divine order, which goes above human and temporary events and governs the destinies of men, and which constitutes a guarantee of moral order for human relations. And that seems to us to be a fundamental and clear point in Cyrus' message, which gives great power, transcendental power, to his historical declaration of human rights made 2,500 years ago.[271]

This re-appreciation of Cyrus clearly affected the way evidence of his rule was evaluated. The Cylinder fit perfectly into this historical framework, and thus modern terms were applied to the artefact such as 'human rights', in accordance with the Shah's image of Cyrus, clearly articulated in his *Mission for my Country*. As the Shah came under pressure internationally for the increase in human rights abuses in his country,[272] he could now, in response, point to Iran's privileged position in the history of human rights. It also fit into the whole ethos of the Celebrations, which presented a glorified image of Iran's past, combined with a glorified image of Iran's present and future, displaying a modern society which was built on historic foundations and which remained true to its past greatness. The Cyrus Cylinder thus became the official symbol of the Celebrations and inspired a logo, which showed the Cylinder in a sort of blue halo, with the Pahlavi coat of arms above and surrounded by Persepolitan style lotus flowers.[273] This logo appeared on almost all items associated with the Celebrations, including academic publications.

The Cylinder was seen as evidence of Cyrus' message, one that could bring peace to the modern world. But although some were willing to conform to the Shah's presentation of Cyrus as some sort of Gandhi-type conqueror, using the Cylinder as evidence of this fact, some were less eager to indulge in this misrepresentation. Taking advantage of the interest in the Cylinder roused by the Celebrations, P.R. Berger from the University of Münster, for example, announced the identification of a fragment belonging to the Cylinder. The identification of this fragment was intended 'to emphasize the essential character of the Cyrus

[271] Ismael Quiles, 'La Philosophie Sous-Jacente au Message de Cyrus', in *Acta Iranica* Volume 1 (1974) p. 23, translated from the French by van Veldhuizen.
[272] In 1976 Amnesty International classed Iran as among the biggest human rights abusers in the world.
[273] John Curtis, 'The Cyrus Cylinder: The Creation of an Icon and its Loan to Tehran', in Irving Finke ed., *The Cyrus Cylinder* (2012) p. 88.

Cylinder as not a general declaration of human rights or religious toleration but simply a building inscription'.[274] This illustrates that there was valuable academic work done as a reaction to the nationalist interpretation of Cyrus espoused by the Shah's regime. So, while we may dismiss the Shah's obsession with Cyrus as a kind of fake history, this can sometimes encourage academics to work harder to uncover the real history, or stimulate important debates.

Lowenthal wrote:

> Simply to appreciate or project a relic, let alone to embellish or imitate it, affects its form or our impressions. Just as selective recall shows memory and subjectivity shapes historical insight, so manipulating antiquities refashions their appearance and meaning.[275]

Thus, as we have observed in the preceding paragraphs, the Cyrus Cylinder, like other relics of the past, has evolved and been re-interpreted. It has taken on different and multiple meanings since its discovery in 1879. In 1971 the Cylinder belonged to the British Museum as a part of its collection and served as evidence of Cyrus' invasion of Babylon. Thus it also existed as a reminder of the British Museum's colonial past. At the same time, the Cylinder belonged to Iran as evidence of the humanistic values of its past and current king, as well endorsing the ancient and enduring character of the Iranian people.

The British Museum and the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations

The British Museum had a history of involvement in Persian antiquities, with the Cyrus Cylinder, obtained by the museum in 1880, and the early Persepolis reliefs featured among its vast collection.[276] It had organised a number of exhibitions prior to the 1971 event, celebrating various aspects of Iranian history. These included an exhibition in 1922 on Indian and Persian paintings, one in 1931 held in conjunction with a Persian exhibition at Burlington House on Persian art, in which the Cyrus Cylinder was exhibited,[277] one in 1934 on Persian Manuscripts to celebrate the thousandth anniversary of Ferdowsi, one in 1955 entitled 'Art under the Mongol dynasties of China and Persia', and one which opened in late 1969,

[274] C.B.F. Walker, 'A Recently Identified Fragment of the Cyrus Cylinder', *Iran*, 10 (1972) pp. 158-159.
[275] Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) p. 263.
[276] Bonakdarian, 'Iranian Studies in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century' (2010) p. 270.
[277] St John Simpson, 'The Cyrus Cylinder: Display and Replica' , in Irving Finke ed., *The Cyrus Cylinder* (2012) p. 69.

running into early 1970 on Persian painting in the seventeenth century.[278] With a history of interaction with Persian history, therefore, it is unsurprising that the British Museum should host its own exhibition as part of the 2500th Anniversary Celebration. The exhibition presented various aspects of Persian history, furnished with antiquities from the Museum's collection.

The exhibition, *Royal Persia: A Commemoration of Cyrus the Great and his Successor*, ran from 29 October, 1971, until 30 January, 1972. Sir John Wolfenden, Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum, wrote, as an introduction to the exhibition's accompanying publication:

> This present exhibition is offered to His Imperial Majesty The Shahanshah and his people as the British Museum's contribution to this historic occasion... We hope that it will be taken as illustrating some of the events in Persia's long history and the achievements of her most illustrious rulers in the execution of their kingly office and in the fostering of learning and the arts.[279]

The exhibition was opened by Wolfenden and Amir Khosrow Afshar, the Iranian ambassador in London. It featured 270 items, grouped into six categories, which included: The Legendary Kings of Persia (1-16); Cyrus the Great and the House of Achaemenes (17-55); Alexander the Great, his Greek successors and the Parthian Kings (56-99); The Sasanian Emperors (100-160); The Caliphate and the Sultans up to the House of Timur (161-223); and The Shahs of Persia (224-270).[280] Despite the fact that the exhibition was enthusiastically supported by the Museum, it should be seen in the context of the more important loan of the Cyrus Cylinder to Iran, as we shall observe in the following pages.

Since there was apparently no organised central British committee for the Celebrations as there was for other nations, it seems most unlikely that the Museum received direct British Government guidance, yet gentle encouragement was possible. The Museum had cooperated with Iran previously for their national celebrations so it did not take much to prompt them to pay their respects once more. For example, as alluded to above, they put on an exhibition in 1935 to commemorate the thousandth anniversary of Ferdowsi. However, the

[278] Joanna Bowring, *Chronology of Temporary Exhibitions at the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 2012).
[279] Sir John Wolfenden in Ralph Pinder-Wilson, *Royal Persia: A Commemoration of Cyrus the Great and His Successors* (London: British Museum, 1971) p. iii.
[280] Pinder-Wilson, *Royal Persia* (1971).

exhibition in 1971 was organised at very short notice at the expense of another exhibition which had been planned for some time on *Cooking in the Orient*.[281] This suggests that a possible ulterior motive for the Persian exhibition was to ensure the safe return of the Cyrus Cylinder from Iran. Despite the intentions of the British Museum, their interaction with the event underlined their desire to maintain a positive dialogue with the Iranian Government, which could facilitate potential deals between them in the future. In the 1970s, for example, Shojaeddin Shafa purchased a manuscript that contained information relating to the 'Shirazi' Dynasty of the Daylami who reigned in East Africa for 500 years between the fifth and tenth centuries AD, in exchange for the loan of an item from Iran to travel to the British Museum for a period of time.[282] The British Museum's engagement with Iran for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations was, therefore, important in the context of the relations between the Museum and cultural institutions in Iran, including the Ministry of Culture. Furthermore, by extension this relationship served to advance British cultural relations with Iran.

The Loan of the Cyrus Cylinder

The story of the lending of the Cylinder is interesting for this study and illustrates complexities in the relationship between the Foreign Office and cultural institutions like the British Museum. It shows how the Cylinder was transformed from an object in a museum to a political device, which split even the loyalties of the British guests of the Shah. In the end, as we shall see, the British Prime Minister Edward Heath was forced to intervene in the matter; further evidence of the growing significance of this once simple artefact. What follows is an account of what happened which demonstrates the importance of the Cylinder, both to the British and the Iranians, as well as the political power of the historical artefact.

The idea of borrowing the Cylinder probably came directly from ministers close to the Shah and this request was relayed through the British Ambassador to the Foreign Office on 20 August 1971.[283] The request was rejected on a number of grounds, but principally that it would 'merely arouse Iranian cupidity.'[284] The Foreign Office was particularly concerned that the situation could become rather complicated if the Iranians made an attempt to keep the Cylinder for themselves and refuse to return it. It was not until 15 October 1971 when Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Denis Greenhill read about the loan in the newspaper that the Foreign Office became aware that the British Museum had gone ahead

[281] Simpson, 'The Cyrus Cylinder: Display and Replica' (2012) p.76.
[282] Correspondence with Claudine Shafa, June 2014.
[283] FCO 17/1529 Peter Ramsbotham letter to Sir Denis Greenhill, 21 October 1971.
[284] Ibid.

with the loan.[285] Peter Ramsbotham heard about the loan a few days before the Celebrations were due to begin and attempted to warn the British Museum against it, but by this point the Cylinder was already in Iran.[286]

As it happened, the British Museum's Board of Trustees had agreed to a request from the Iranian Ambassador, on behalf of the Minister of Court, to allow Iran to have the Cyrus Cylinder for the duration of the Celebrations.[287] Ramsbotham recorded that Richard Barnett, keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities, was invited to take part in the Iranology Conference in Shiraz and was asked to bring the Cylinder with him, an arrangement which was approved by the Board of Trustees on 24 July 1971.[288] From the Foreign Office correspondence it is clear that there was some anger that the loan went ahead without its consultation. In his letter to Denis Greenhill, Ramsbotham writes that 'My purpose in recording all this, apart from registering annoyance at the British Museum's failure to have kept us posted...'[289] Neither the Iranian Embassy nor the British Museum said anything to them about the loan, but 'if the latter had consulted us about the wisdom of loaning the tablet, we would probably have advised against it.'[290]

The Foreign Office's concerns were not unfounded and Ramsbotham became particularly concerned about the artefact, expecting a strong request from the Iranians to keep the Cylinder in Iran. That request finally came one day when Mehrdad Pahlbod, Minister of Culture and Arts, called Barnett at the British Institute of Persian Studies in Tehran where he was staying to request a meeting the following day for tea. At that meeting Pahlbod informally sounded out the possibility of the Cylinder remaining in Iran for a while longer, perhaps permanently. Upon hearing the request, Barnett informed him that unfortunately the Cylinder would be the centrepiece of an exhibition at the British Museum and pulled out of his pocket a leaflet for the aforementioned exhibition as proof.[291] The Iranians had been temporarily appeased, but another attempt was expected, possibly coming directly from the Shah to Prince Philip at the opening of the Shahyad Monument exhibition on 16 October at

[285] Martin Bailey, 'How Britain Tried to use a Persian Antiquity for Political Gain', *The Art Newspaper*, No. 150, September 2004, p. 18.
[286] FCO 17/1529, Peter Ramsbotham letter to Sir Denis Greenhill, 21 October 1971.
[287] FCO 17/1529, FCO Correspondence, 26 October 1971.
[288] Bailey, *The Art Newspaper* (2004) p. 18. In the interview with David Stronach, he mentioned that Barnett negotiated the loan of the Cylinder without the Museum's knowledge in order to secure an invitation to the Celebrations, although there is no indication of this in the archive documents relating to the Cylinder's loan.
[289] FCO 17/1529, Peter Ramsbotham letter to Sir Denis Greenhill, 21 October 1971.
[290] FCO 17/1529, 3 November 1971.
[291] Interview with David Stronach, April 2014.

which the Cylinder was to be displayed. The concern was that while Prince Philip was looking at the Cylinder and suitably overcome by the romance of the artefact, the Shah might approach him and ask 'don't you think it would be wonderful for the Iranian people if it could remain in Iran?' Eager to avoid such a potentially awkward situation Ramsbotham advised that the Prince should find a solitary place in the museum, as far away from the Cylinder as possible.[292] As it turns out, this quiet place was with Barnett in the Islamic section of the exhibition where they knew that the Shah would not be present![293] It is possible that the Shah urged Prince Philip on a subsequent trip to Iran, to campaign for the return of the Cylinder, however by this point the item was secure back in the British Museum and the Prince could be properly briefed on the matter.

Fears that the Iranians might refuse to return the Cylinder were allayed on the evening of 19 October when Barnett departed from Iran, with the Cylinder stored, as it was when he arrived on 8 October, safely in his holdall.[294] Firouz Bagherzadeh of the Iran Bastan Museum, who was aware of the situation, stayed with Barnett until the end, even walking him to his seat on the plane.[295] Lord Shawcross, a private guest of the Shah at the Celebrations, expressed his thanks to the Museum and to Barnett: 'It would seem therefore that, despite my earlier apprehensions, this has all worked out for the best. I am sure that your own tactful handling has made its contribution.'[296]

Indeed, it appears that in spite of the early communication problems the loan was a success, though almost immediately after the Cylinder arrived back in Britain, there were calls for its return. Sir Clive Bossom, also a private guest at the Celebrations, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, urging him to allow a permanent loan of the Cylinder: 'I feel by allowing this cylinder to be on permanent loan, it could greatly smooth the way before next year's problems arise.'[297] Sir Peter Agnew, chairman of the Iran Society, also urged the Prime Minister to intervene in the matter.[298] Lord Shawcross, for his part dispatched a letter to the Prime Minister in which he wrote that:

> The four of us [Jeremy Thorpe, Clive Bossom, Vere Harmsworth and himself] unanimously agreed (before we had seen the place given to the Cylinder in the

[292] FCO 17/1529, Peter Ramsbotham letter to Sir Denis Greenhill, 21 October 1971.
[293] Interview with David Stronach, April 2014.
[294] FCO 17/1529, Richard Barnett letter to Peter Ramsbotham, 5 November 1971.
[295] Ibid.
[296] FCO 17/1529, Lord Shawcross letter to Richard Barnett, 18 November 1971.
[297] FCO 17/1529, Sir Clive Bossom letter to Edward Heath, 18 October 1971.
[298] FCO 17/1529, Sir Peter Agnew letter to Edward Heath, 31 October 1971.

> Museum) that we would strongly recommend to you that the Cylinder should be presented to Iran... I realise that the British Museum enjoys a certain autonomy in such matters and that a Parliamentary Bill might be required. None the less and, inter alia, in view of the serious disputes which exist between Britain and Iran which will soon come to a head, we have no doubt that a decision to make the gift to Iran (and naturally the sooner the better) would immensely improve the atmosphere of our relations. I believe that our Ambassador shares this view.[299]

It was clear that the Cylinder could become, if it was not already, a powerful diplomatic tool which could both hinder and improve British relations with Iran. That the issue was deemed important enough to be handled by the Prime Minister himself is testament to the power of the Cylinder and its importance to Iran.

Internal pressure from prominent British figures and the idea that the Cylinder might prove useful as a bargaining instrument in Anglo-Iranian relations possibly led to Ramsbotham himself supporting the idea of a short-term loan. 'The Iranians' readiness to let the tablet slip through their hands this time suggests,' he argued, 'that we ought to be able to hold them to an understanding on the duration of any loan.'[300] British Museum chairman Lord Trevelyan, however, rebuking a proposal from the Foreign Office that the Cylinder could be on display in Iran every third year, argued that it would be 'incredibly unlikely that the Iranians would ever return the Tablet to the British Museum at the end of the first year's loan.'[301] Furthermore, he continued,

> The British Museum held so many historic relics from foreign countries that, if they agreed to the principle of permanent sharing in respect of the Cyrus Tablet, they would undoubtedly be flooded with similar requests.

Because of this issue, the British Museum was adamantly opposed to the returning of any object to their countries of origin, on loan or permanent basis. Besides, as John Curtis has pointed out, the Cylinder was inscribed by a Babylonian scribe and discovered in Iraq, so is

[299] FCO 17/1529, Lord Shawcross letter to Edward Heath, 20 October 1971.
[300] FCO 17/1529, Peter Ramsbotham letter to Sir Denis Greenhill, 21 October 1971.
[301] Bailey, *The Art Newspaper* (2004) p. 19.

as much part of Iraq's history as it is Iran's. 'In due course', he said, 'we might even consider lending it to the National Museum in Baghdad.[302]

The British Museum was very clear on the matter: the Cylinder belonged to them and another loan was out of the question. In the end, fearing a public campaign in Britain itself for a return of the Cylinder, Heath was forced to intervene personally in the matter, discouraging his friends from taking it further.[303] The Foreign Office was advised that if Ambassador Afshar brought up the question with the Secretary of State, then they should respond that, while appreciating the importance of the Cylinder to Iran,

> it forms too important a part of the British Museum collection for the Trustees to be able to agree to a permanent loan to Iran; they had already made a major concession in permitting it to leave the Museum for the Celebrations.[304]

In these correspondences the government was clear to stress that the Cylinder belonged to the British Museum, not the British Government, and as such it was a matter of which the Government had no power.

Leaving aside the bureaucratic nightmare that came with the loaning of the Cylinder, on the whole the loan was a success. Lord Shawcross, speaking to the Iran Society on 4 November 1971, after being persuaded by Heath not to use the opportunity to make public his opinion that the Cylinder be given to Iran, said:

> And I shall remember a replica of the same Cylinder carried aloft on a carpet suspended from a hundred balloons as the finale of a great fireworks display and disappearing into the dark night. Where did it land? I do not know. The original has returned to join other treasures acquired from foreign places in the custody of the British Museum.[305]

This further illustrates the importance of the Cylinder to the Celebrations and how it was utilised by the Shah in order to show that Iran was creating his Great Civilization on strong ethical principles associated with Cyrus the Great. That Shawcross should remember this detail so fondly suggests that guests clearly perceived its importance to the Celebrations. By

[302] Ibid.
[303] FCO 17/1529, Edward Heath letter to Lord Shawcross, 4 November 1971.
[304] FCO 17/1529, 'Cyrus the Great Clay Cylinder (Defensive)', October 1971. At the bottom of this draft document is written in pen 'It looks as though the Iranians may develop a campaign about this, and we will be in for a long tussle.'
[305] FCO 17/1529 W126, Section of Shawcross' speech to the Iran Society, 4 November 1971.

the end of the Cylinder's loan to Iran, as we have seen, even the Shah's British guests, Jeremy Thorpe, Clive Bossom, Roy Thompson, Vere Harmsworth and Hartley Shawcross, an impressive collection of influential British figures, supported the idea of a further loan of the Cylinder to Iran. Either way, following the Celebrations, possibly as a sign of gratitude for their contribution, or as part of some other deal, the British Museum was presented with three uniforms from the Persepolis parade, complete with shoes, wigs and replica arms, those of an Immortal, an Achaemenid officer and a Parthian officer, as well as an illustrated volume of the parade at Persepolis.[306]

In addition to the loan of the Cylinder, numerous replicas were made and given to various institutions and individuals. A replica of the Cylinder was put on display in the United Nations building in New York and Geneva,[307] which was presented by Princess Ashraf Pahlavi to Secretary-General U Thant on 14 October. Speaking at the presentation ceremony, U Thant declared that 'in creating the ancient Persian Empire twenty-five hundred years ago, Cyrus displayed the wisdom of respecting the civilizations and peoples whom he "unified" under his sway.'[308] Another copy was obtained by the Reverend Norman Sharp which he presented to the Iranian archaeologist Ali Sami of the Persepolis Museum[309] and one was presented to Barnett himself when he brought the original to Iran for the Celebrations.[310] Dignitaries staying at the tent city received copies to take home as mementos of the occasion and further casts were distributed accordingly.[311] The one presented to the ruler of Umm Al-Qaiwain remains on show in its fort museum.

The loaning of the Cylinder illustrates clearly the poor planning and disorganisation of the British committee for the Celebrations. It seems that there was no structured central organisation committee to which different parties were required to communicate their plans and even established institutions such as the British Museum were able to influence proceedings according to their own agenda. That the Cylinder was able to leave the country without Foreign Office knowledge is quite extraordinary. Although one could call the

[306] St John Simpson, 'Parading Persian History at Persepolis: Glimpses into the Rediscovery of Iranian Heritage and the Role of the Reverend Norman Sharp', Paper for Edinburgh Conference, 2011.
[307] Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (1971) p. 30.
[308] United Nations Press Release, 'Iran Presents Replica of Ancient Edict to United Nations', HQ/264, 14 October 1971.
[309] 'The Cyrus Cylinder', The British Museum, available at <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=327188&partId=1> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[310] Simpson, 'The Cyrus Cylinder: Display and Replica' (2012) p. 82.
[311] Farah Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love: My Life with the Shah* (New York: Turnaround Distributor, 2004) p. 219.

Museum's actions careless, the Cylinder's custodian, Barnett, was certainly well enough acquainted with the Iranian bureaucratic system to feel sure that he could get the artefact out of Iran without any considerable trouble. So sure was he, in fact, and in no hurry to return the item, that he took a brief detour to visit his son in Israel before heading back to the British Museum with the Cylinder still stored in his holdall.[312]

The Legacy of the Cylinder

Long after the fall of the Shah in 1979 the Cylinder retained a special place in the heart of Iranians. Speaking at her Nobel Prize lecture in 2003 Shirin Ebadi said:

> I am an Iranian. A descendent of Cyrus The Great. The very emperor who proclaimed at the pinnacle of power 2500 years ago that "... he would not reign over the people if they did not wish it." And [he] promised not to force any person to change his religion and faith and guaranteed freedom for all. The Charter of Cyrus The Great is one of the most important documents that should be studied in the history of human rights.[313]

In the introduction to a recent publication released to coincide with the tour of the Cylinder to the US in 2013, Ali Razi, chairman of the Farhang Foundation, wrote:

> Cyrus the Great holds a special position in the history of civilization. His humanitarian values of freedom for all people, respect for cultural and religious diversity, and recognition of the fact that it is better to be loved than feared are remarkable attributes for any ruler. However, for someone who lived 2,600 years ago, such beliefs are truly exceptional.[314]

Such quotes serve to illustrate the stubborn pervasiveness of the Cyrus myth even in modern times and the exceptional ability of the Cylinder to provide material proof of this myth.

The Cylinder did not reach Iran again under the Shah's rule, though it did return in September 2010 for an exhibition in Tehran's National Museum. This time the Cylinder was brought in a metal case and chaperoned by various British Museum staff, including John Curtis, curator of Near East Antiquities, Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis who acted as translator, Ken

[312] FCO 17/1529, Barnett letter to Peter Ramsbotham, 5 November 1971.
[313] Shirin Ebadi, *Nobel Lecture*, 10 December 2003, available at <http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2003/ebadi-lecture-e.html > [accessed on 13 September 2014].
[314] Ali C. Razi, in the foreword to *Cyrus the Great* ed. by Touraj Daryaee (2013) p. xi.

Uprichard, head of conservation, and Dean Baylis, senior administrator in the Middle East Department.[315] Gone were the days of a lone curator transporting the Cylinder in a holdall; the Cylinder was now a major commodity for the Museum. Even President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited the Cylinder at the National Museum of Tehran during the loan in 2010, draping a Palestinian-style Keffiyeh scarf over the shoulders of an actor dressed as Cyrus in an odd ceremony, and interestingly referred to Cyrus as 'King of the World.'[316] This perhaps gives us some sense of the tremendous importance of this artefact and its significance to the Iranian national character.

The lure of the Cylinder remains powerful in the West too. In 2013 the Cylinder embarked on a trip to the United States where it appeared at five different museums. Thomas Campbell, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, said 'The tolerance embraced by the Cylinder's text has been applauded throughout history', while Jay Xu stressed that the Cylinder represents a 'touchstone for continued efforts to strive for common human freedoms.' Alireza Rastegar of the Iran Heritage Foundation, meanwhile, declared that 'The Cylinder and its message of respect for diversity and universal human rights carries a timely message about tolerance for all of us today.'[317] Around the same time as the tour, two volumes were published about the Cyrus Cylinder specifically[318] and two about Cyrus the Great.[319] One of the main points of the Celebrations was to display to the world Iran's importance to world civilization and the enduring message of its founder, Cyrus the Great. Through the loan of the Cylinder to Iran and its reproduction and gifting to various organisations, importantly the United Nations, the Cylinder completed its transformation. It was no longer a proclamation of a new King of Babylon, but a message for mankind and a powerful symbol of humanity and human rights.

[315] John Curtis, 'The Cyrus Cylinder: The Creation of an Icon and its Loan to Tehran' (2012) pp. 94-95.
[316] Ian Black and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, 'Iran Lays Claim to British Museum's Cyrus Cylinder', *The Guardian*, 15 September 2010, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/15/iran-cyrus-cylinderbritish-museum> [accessed on 13 September 2014].
[317] The British Museum, 'The Cyrus Cylinder travels to the US', Press Release, 28 November 2012, available at <http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2012/cyrus_cylinder_travels_to_us.aspx> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[318] Irving Finkel ed., *The Cyrus Cylinder: The Great Persian Edict from Babylon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); and John Curtis, *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning for the Middle East* (London: The British Museum, 2013).
[319] Reza Arghamee, *Discovering Cyrus* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2013); and Touraj Daryaee ed., *Cyrus the Great: An Ancient Iranian King* (Santa Monica, CA: Afshar Publishing, 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the power of relics, as well as the potential importance of culture in international relations. Relics can evolve, take on different meanings for different communities, and even, as seen in this instance, become national symbols. The fact that the Cylinder is still considered an Iranian national symbol, even by hardliners such as Ahmadinejad, illustrates just how hard the Shah's regime worked to promote this idea. The British, for their part, were able to contribute to this process through the initial loan of the Cylinder for the Celebrations. Of course, it cannot be proven that without the loan of the Cylinder by the British Museum to Iran in 1971, the transformation of the Cylinder would not have happened, but that it contributed is undeniable. It can, therefore, be seen as an enduring legacy of the Celebrations and an important aspect of the British contribution.

This chapter has also questioned not just the ownership of artefacts, but also the ownership of the past and knowledge. It began by discussing how historical narratives and relics can undergo transformations, and questioning who initiates this transformation. It would appear that Iranians were unaware of the king Cyrus, or rather he was not particularly important to their historical narrative. The European travellers to Iran, among whom the British were prominent and influential, brought with them stories of Ancient Iran, inspired by Greek accounts and biblical references. A Hellenocentric perception of the Achaemenid dynasty thus prevailed up to the point of the Celebrations, and archaeological investigations served as proof of the Greek and biblical literary commentaries. Thus, Europeans dominated the discourse of Ancient Iran, both literally, through their ownership of artefacts, in this case the Cyrus Cylinder, and figuratively through their dominance of historical narrative.

The move to bring the Cylinder to Iran helped the Shah to secure his possession of the Cyrus legend that he had promoted over the previous decade. The Cylinder's presence in Iran gave a certain credibility to the Celebrations and to the Shah's image of Cyrus, who was a progressive and just ruler, as he wanted himself to be seen. Of course, it is the British who own the artefact, but, since the Celebrations it has become a powerful national symbol of Iran. One might have perhaps expected a stronger effort from Iran to keep to Cylinder following the loan, but the fact that this did not come perhaps illustrates the goodwill created from the deal. While Britain had shown itself to be a supporter of Iran's cultural crusade, Iran had shown itself to be a trusted partner to the Museum, facilitating further exchanges of knowledge in the future.

Chapter 3: British Scholarship, Iran and the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations

'...it comes down to the problem of how serious is the scholar's ethical imperative. Is scholarship only a gorgeous kind of Chinese puzzle to amuse? or a responsibility?'

- Arthur Upham Pope, letter to Robert Payne, 29 May 1966[320]

Having already explored both the formation of the Iranian historical narrative and its implementation in the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, we can now look at the participation of the academics in the Celebrations. This chapter will look in detail at the purely academic aspects of the event, which were as important, if not more so, than the commemorative aspects. It will explore how foreign academics, principally the British, were able to work with Iranians. Early Western scholarship on Iran was in part, perhaps a large part, stimulated by colonialism, but this began to diminish as Iran developed into a more modernised state and became less reliant on the West. Moreover, scholarship in Pahlavi Iran seemed to become akin to development and therefore power. The many conferences organised and hosted by Iran, as well as the publications encouraged by the Imperial Court represented, in a sense, the Oriental reclaiming power from the Occident.

Scholarship and celebrations are generally closely linked. In the Augustus celebration discussed in Chapter 1, we saw that it was an Italian academic who originally conceived of the idea and played a key role in the development of the festival. Similarly, Iraq's Babylonian Festival was accompanied by scholarly workshops and lectures. In this vein, Japan's celebration in 1940, which sought to commemorate the 'organic inseparability of the Imperial dynasty and the nation', also featured an enormous academic programme, which included publications, lectures and exhibitions.[321] In the years leading up to the celebration, as Kenneth Ruoff has written, 'almost every imaginable means of shaping memories of the past was employed to transmit the historical significance of the 2,600th anniversary.'[322] Academia was seen as way in which a celebration could help to shape national identity and encourage

[320] Arthur Upham Pope letter to Robert Payne, 29 May 1966, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. ii.
[321] Kenneth James Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2600th Anniversary* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010) p. 3.
[322] Ibid, p. 28.

belief in the ruling power. Certainly this interpretation is relevant to the Iranian celebration too, but often the exploits of the central organising committee appear to suggest that academia was more than just an elaborate mechanism for the promotion of a nationalist historical narrative.

After exploring why British academics and explorers initially sought intellectual gratification in Iran, we will briefly look at the institutionalization of this scholarly interest through to the twentieth century, in order to provide an essential background to the British engagement with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. In exploring this early engagement we will uncover some attitudes that indicate a sort of intellectual superiority felt by the British over their Iranian counterparts. These attitudes seemed to change as the Pahlavi state engaged more with non-Iranian academics and academic institutions into the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, by the 1960s Iran was organising and hosting major academic conferences which were able to attract some of the world's leading Iranologists. Having looked at aspects of nationalism and ancient history in Iran in the previous chapters, it should be clear why Iran wished to promote studies of its past. What is not clear yet, however, is why non-Iranian academics were invited to the Celebrations, and why they were, for the most part, so eager to go. Was it purely intellectual curiosity? Did some see it as a genuine opportunity to draw attention to their academic field? Or was there some more self-serving motivation based on personal or perhaps institutional prestige, or even finance? These will be explored in the following chapter.

The Development of Persian Studies in Britain

The growing mercantile economies of Portugal, England and the Netherlands led to a great increase in travel to Iran from the sixteenth century, initially for reasons relating to commerce. Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-1576), the second monarch of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722) permitted foreigners access to markets within Iran, while Shah Abbas (r. 1587-1629) developed infrastructure such as roads, making it much easier for foreign merchants to travel more freely through the country.[323] It was during the reign of Shah Abbas that Robert Sherley (1581-1628) led embassies to Europe, including Britain, ensuring vital support for Iran against the Ottomans and obtaining trade agreements. Of Shah Abbas Sherley observed that he was: 'both one of the mightiest Princes that are, and one of the excellentest, for the true virtues of a Prince, that is, or hath been; and having come to this greatest, though by right'[324]

[323] Allen, *The Persian Empire* (2005) p. 168.
[324] Quoted in Ansari, 'Persia in the Western Imagination' (2005) p. 11.

Such praise for the King is countered by his scorn for the Persians themselves whose nature he observed was 'so vile in themselves', thus displaying an apparent sympathy for the oriental despot, ruling a clearly barbaric population.

Sherley's representation of the Persian character was by no means the definitive English account. One sailor, John Fryer (1650-1733), who was at the port of Gombrun in 1676, felt that the Persians were a most jovial bunch:

> It is incredible to see what Quantities (of wine) they drink at a Merry-meeting, and how unconcerned the next day they appear... they will quaff you thus a whole week together. They are conversable Good Fellows, sparing no one the Bowl in their turn.[325]

Therefore, while we find examples of English travellers' disdain for the Persians, it is important to note that there were those, like Fryer, who were happy to be in the company of such a convivial people. Such unfounded opinions and sweeping generalisations of the Persian character, as recorded by Sherley, crept into later European attitudes towards Iran. For example, Morier's satirical novel *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* presents Iranians as moronic cowards, scandalous and dishonest rascals, clearly illustrating European superiority over Oriental people. It is important to note, however, that the bumbling rogue in Morier's work was a figure of affectionate ridicule, not of hatred, perhaps an indication that there was some degree of positive union between the British and the Persians whom they encountered. Some scholars, such as Abbas Amanat, argue that this representation of the Iranian national character only diminished in the latter half of the twentieth century with the rise of Orientalist and post-colonial critiques.[326]

The view of Iran as decadent and backwards is evident in a number of writings throughout the proceeding centuries, when people often expressed generalised views of Iranians. A key tenet of the Western notion of superiority over Oriental people is modernisation, and certain writers suggested that Iran had changed little since ancient times. Malcolm wrote, for example, that 'Though no country has undergone, during the last twenty centuries, more revolutions than the kingdom of Persia, there is, perhaps, none that is less

[325] John Fryer quoted by Laurence Lockhart, 'Persia as seen by the West', in *The Legacy of Persia*, ed. by A.J. Arberry (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) pp. 352-353.
[326] Abbas Amanat, 'Hajji Baba of Ispahan', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XI/6, pp561-568, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hajji-baba-of-ispahan> [accessed on 16 February 2014].

altered in its condition.'[327] Similarly, the German philosopher Hegel asserted that Persians 'retained on the whole the fundamental characteristics of their ancient mode of life.'[328] Curzon too, felt that Persia was 'remote and backward', yet declared that it had great potential, writing that its future 'shall not be unworthy of its splendid past.'[329] As Chamberlin explains, these attitudes were influenced by the foreigners' reactions to Iran's ancient sites:

> The cultured tourist was obliged to indulge in a complex piece of mental gymnastics. He had come to admire the great monuments of the past – Baalbeck, Persepolis, the Parthenon, Ctesiphon, the Pyramids. Demonstrably, they were the work of a brilliant civilization: equally demonstrably, they could have no relationship with the feckless, unwashed, immoral, poverty-stricken 'natives' who lived near, and only too often on, these glorious monuments. Therefore, the present inhabitants of the country housing these monuments must themselves be not only decadent, but interlopers.[330]

The poverty of the local populations provided a stark contrast to the splendid monuments of centuries past. Furthermore, there appears to have been a commonly held belief among visitors that Persia, though once glorious, was stuck in the past, unable to develop and modernise. In this respect the Persians were inferior to the Europeans, for whom modernisation was equal to development.

An important figure in the development of Persian Studies in Britain was Sir William Jones (1746-1794): a poet, jurist, polyhistor and classicist, as well as a master of Arabic, Hebrew and Persian.[331] At one point he declared 'this is my rule: I hold every day lost in which I acquire no new knowledge of man or nature.'[332] He founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1783 in order to encourage studies into the literature, history, antiquities, arts and science of Asia.[333] A statement from the Society read:

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[327] Malcolm, *History of Persia*, Volume 2 (1815) p. 621.
[328] Georg W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree, Buffalo (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001) p. 207.
[329] Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question,* Volume 2 (1892) p. 634.
[330] Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past* (1979) pp. 20-21.
[331] Said, *Orientalism* (1995) p. 77.
[332] Quoted in David Blow, 'Background to the British Interest in Persian Literature', in *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1971) p. 22.
[333] For an account of the founding of the Royal Asiatic Society see Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 203-208.

> As to the literature of Asia, it will not, perhaps, be essentially useful to the greater part of mankind, who have neither leisure nor inclination to cultivate so extensive a branch of learning; but the civil and national history of such mighty empires as India, Persia, Arabia and Tartary, cannot fail of delighting those who love to view the great picture of the universe, or to learn by what degrees the most obscure states have risen to glory, and the more flourishing kingdoms have sunk to decay.[334]

Societies such as this offered a forum for those interested in discussing their views and engaging with other scholars and commentators. Furthermore, they reflect a growing interest in these areas in the late eighteenth century.

It can be argued that Jones was the founder of Persian Studies in Britain. His work *Persian Grammar*, published in 1771 when he was just 25, was used by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883) generations later, which stands as testament to its importance.[335] The Persian love of poetry greatly appealed to the British explorers of the enlightenment. They were not merely learning a language, but rather mastering it, through their grasp of and passion for the arts. Jones' work, as alluded to above, helped pave the way for Fitzgerald's influential translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, first published in 1859. Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) later contributed with her widely revered translation of the poems of Hafez, of which Arberry said in 1947, 'Though some twenty hands have put Hafiz into English, her rendering remains the best!'[336] High praise indeed, considering that she arrived in Persia in 1892 with just 'a smuttering of the language' and produced her first verse translation in 1897.[337]

Important developments were also made in archaeology, though while early writers and travellers to Persia can be said to have added to the sum of our knowledge of ancient civilization, particularly through their observations of monuments, they are not generally remembered for their interpretive framework.[338] Significant publications by Pietro Della Valle (1586-1652), Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), Jean Chardin (1643-1713) and Cornelius de Bruijin (1652-1726/7) offered the first records of the state of Persepolis and

[334] Ann Lambton, 'Major-General Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833) and "The History of Persia"', *Iran,* 33 (1995) p. 97.
[335] David Blow, 'Background to the British Interest in Persian Literature', in *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1971) p. 22.
[336] Quoted in Harry V.F. Winstone, *Gertrude Bell* (London: Cape, 1978) p. 37.
[337] Ibid, p33.
[338] For discussion see Thomas Harrison, *Writing Ancient Persia* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011) p. 92.

observed some curious 'arrowhead' writing, which would become known as cuneiform.[339] Invaluable contributions were made in this area by the British with the deciphering of Bisotun inscriptions, for example, considered by some to be the Rosetta Stone of cuneiform writing. This was undertaken by army officer and orientalist Henry Rawlinson (1810-1895). He originally copied the trilingual inscriptions at Mount Elwand near Hamadan and these early steps formed the basis of his eventual publication.[340] There were, indeed, a number of Europeans working on the decipherment of cuneiform, including Danish philologist Rasmus Rask (1787-1832), who made the first connection between the language (Old Persian) and Sanskrit, the Norwegian-born Christian Lassen (1800-1876), Professor of Indian Languages and Literature at Bonn, as well as Nils Ludwig Westergaard (1815-1878) and Edward Hincks (1792-1866), who carried out important studies on the Elamite inscriptions at Persepolis.[341] Genuine primary decipherment was achieved, however, by Georg Freiderich Grotefend (1775-1853), who concentrated on two particular passages from Persepolis to find a solution to the puzzle. This solution, Irving Finkel says, 'was characterized by straightforward logic and simplicity.'[342] Rawlinson, building on these breakthroughs, was the first to produce a translation of the Bisotun inscription, which he communicated to the Royal Asiatic Society in January 1838, and which was published in full in 1851. Hence, the scholarly interest in cuneiform can be seen in the context of the lust for knowledge of the civilizations of the near East that was developing during this period and the British were certainly part of this tradition.

The twentieth century saw a rise in the number of purely academic expeditions to Iran and more regular publications, however it was not until the reign of Reza Shah that systematic excavations were able to take place at sites such as Persepolis. From 1894 until 1931 the French Ministry of Public Education had a monopoly over the archaeological excavations in Iran, making it almost impossible for any non-French expeditions to be granted digging permits. [343] Their operations focussed mainly on Susa, largely ignoring the more famous sites of Persepolis and Pasargadae, while the monopoly forbade scholars of other nationalities from excavating there. In 1927 the Iranian Government managed to

[339] Simpson, 'Pottering Around Persepolis' (2007) p. 343.
[340] George Rawlinson, *A Memoir of Major-General Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson* (London: Longmans, Green, and co., 1898) pp. 65-66.
[341] Kevin J. Cathcart, 'The Earliest Contributions to the Decipherment of Sumerian and Akkadian', *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* (2011) p. 2.
[342] Irving Finkel, 'The Decipherment of Achaemenid Cuneiform', in *Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia*, ed. by John Curtis and Nigel Tallis (London: British Museum Press, 2005) p. 27.
[343] Hourcade, 'Iranian Studies in France' (1987) p. 2.

persuade the French to renounce its archaeological monopoly as payment for the organisation of the Antiques Services, and in 1931 excavations from non-French scholars were allowed to take place.[344] Ernest Herzfeld, the great German archaeologist, was commissioned to begin excavations at Persepolis in 1931, funded by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute and John D. Rockefeller.[345] One of the most exciting discoveries during Herzfeld's excavations was that of the fortification tablets which were to become indispensable for the study of the social, economic and administrative situation in Persepolis.[346] The excavations carried out in this period up to the beginning of the Second World War, first by Herzfeld and from 1934 by E.F. Schmidt, yielded positive results, transforming the site, in the words of Simpson, 'from a romantic picnic-spot into an archaeological park.'[347]

The American expedition, led by Schmidt left Iran in December 1939 after a period of fruitful discovery. From this time, excavations were led by the Archaeological Institute of Persepolis, under the direction of the Supreme Archaeological Department of Iran. Perhaps the most notable figure in this department was Ali Sami. Sami took charge of the excavation and restoration of the site from 1941, after a period working under André Godard, Director of the Department of Antiquities of Iran.[348] The lack of foreign archaeological missions in Iran allowed Sami to thrive and he created a great name for himself over the next few years. His works on Persepolis, Pasargadae and Shiraz became standard Persian texts on the subjects, and were translated into English by the Reverend Norman Sharp for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.[349] The Iranian archaeological mission 'carried out an exact and ordered programme, including scientific investigation' and arranged for the protection and repair of the Persepolis ruins.[350]

The principal British contributions to archaeology in the twentieth century should be seen in the context of the British Institute of Persian Studies' excavations that took place during the 1960s and 70s. The idea to set up a British Academy in Iran was formed in the late 1950s by Mortimer Wheeler, who was keen to rival the French archaeological domination of

[344] Grigor, 'Preserving the Antique Modern' (2005) p. 24.
[345] Ibid.
[346] Hubertus von Gall, 'Herzfeld and Persepolis', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XII/6, pp. 296-298, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/herzfeld-ernst-iii> [accessed on 13 September 2014].
[347] Simpson, 'Making their Mark' (2005) p. 15.
[348] Mousavi, *Persepolis* (2012) p. 193.
[349] Ali Sami, *Persepolis*, trans. by R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Printing Office, 1958); Ali Sami, *Pasargadae: The Oldest Imperial Capital of Iran*, trans. by R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Printing Office, 1971); Ali Sami, *Shiraz: The City of the Poets Sa'adi and Hafez, the City of Flowers and Nightingales*, trans. by R.N. Sharp (Shiraz: Musavi Printing Office, 1958).
[350] Sami, *Persepolis* (1958) pp. 112-113.

Iran and Afghanistan, and their Institut Français in Tehran. Once a decision had been made, and with the full support of the Foreign Office, the British Council and a former Iranian parliamentarian called Majid Movaghar, things moved rather quickly.[351] On 15 February, the Council of the British Academy in London officially appointed the first Governing Council of the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS), with Max Mallowan as President and David Stronach, who had worked with Mallowan in Iraq, as Director.[352] Stronach negotiated the new school's base in Tehran, presented by the University of Tehran and available rent-free for a period of five years.[353] The Queen and Prince Philip's state visit to Iran in March 1961 was seen as a great opportunity to formally establish the institute and on 10 and 11 December the school was officially inaugurated. The new institute was not to be confined to studying the art and archaeology of the ancient world, but would rather venture to study every aspect of Persian civilization, as Mallowan declared at the ceremony, 'in all its length and breadth, from the remote past to present times, in many aspects, in different disciplines.'[354]

Stronach led the first excavations at Pasargadae which began in October 1961 and his preliminary findings were published in the first volume of the BIPS annual journal in 1963.[355] The site was personally chosen by Stronach, who had been given a choice of three sites to excavate in Iran, Pasargadae, of course, being one of them.[356] Ezat Negahban, an influential Iranian archaeologist,[357] and advisor to the Shah on matters relating to archaeology, who had worked with Stronach on previous projects in Iran, was asked by the Shah for his opinion on the proposed BIPS excavation, to which he gave his unreserved approval.[358] Mortimer-Wheeler and Mallowan, meanwhile, did everything within their power to ensure sufficient support was given to Stronach during the course of his investigations.[359] Over the following years the institute went from strength to strength and scholars with a variety of interests and from eclectic backgrounds, including Islamic scholars, architectural historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, studied under the auspices of the institute.

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[351] Jacquetta Hawkes, *Mortimer Wheeler: Adventurer in Archaeology* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982) p. 295.
[352] Henrietta McCall, *The Life of Max Mallowan* (London: British Museum Press, 2001) p. 181.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Ibid, p. 182.
[355] David Stronach, 'Excavations at Pasargadae: First Preliminary Report, *Iran*, 1 (1963) pp. 19-42.
[356] Interview with David Stronach, April 2014.
[357] Ezat Negahban was the foremost Iranian archaeologist of his time and earned the informal appellation 'Father of Modern Iranian Archaeology.' See Kamyar Abdi, 'Negahban, Ezat O.', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2013, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/negahban-ezat> [accessed online on 13 September 2014].
[358] Interview with David Stronach, April 2014.
[359] Stronach, *Pasargadae* (1978) p. v.

There were other groups dedicated to the study of Iran in Britain, such as the Iran Society, which was founded in 1935 and has since held a regular programme of lectures in London. The Honorary Chairman was the Minister to the Court of St. James, Hussein Ala, and prominent academics served on the governing council such as Basil Gray, Sir Denison Ross and Laurence Lockhart. Among those present at the first Annual General Meeting in 1936 were Sir Percy Sykes and Arthur Upham Pope.[360] Members of the Governing Council in 1971, including President of the Society Lord Shawcross and Chairman Sir Peter Agnew, as well as former President Sir Alfred Bossom, were invited to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations as private guests of the Shah, which is perhaps testament to influence of the society at that time.

Formal academic Persian language training in Britain can be traced back to the seventeenth century with the founding of the first Chairs of Arabic at Cambridge and Oxford, by Abraham Wheelock and Edward Pococke respectively.[361] During the early periods, Britain lagged behind France, Italy and Holland in the development of formal teaching of oriental languages,[362] however the establishment of the East India Company and the integration of the 'Persian Question' into British 'Great Game' policy, led to an increase in the perceived importance of Persian in British foreign policy. Specialist study of Iran in the United Kingdom up until the 1970s was available through courses offered by the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Manchester and SOAS. At least one scholar from each of the universities was invited to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations as part of the British delegation.

We can observe a number of issues in the development of British interests in Persian Studies since the visits of Robert Sherley to the court of Shah Abbas. It will have been noted that from this early period it was largely Englishmen engaged in official business in Iran who were most actively engaged in exploring Iran and its history and presenting their findings to the English-speaking world. [363] This is a tradition that has lingered deep into the twentieth century with the likes of John Morris, Roger Wood, Denis Wright, and more recently Michael Axworthy, former head of the Iran Section of the FCO (1998-2000) and current

[360] Denis Wright, 'The First Sixty-Five Years: 1935-2000', *Iran Society*, available at <http://www.iransociety.org/sixtyfive_1.htm> [accessed on 13 September 2014].
[361]For a discussion of this see Bonakdarian, 'Iranian Studies in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century' (2010).
[362] Charles Melville, 'Great Britain x. Iranian Studies In Britain: Islamic Period', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XI/3 (2002) pp. 260-67, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/great-britain-x> [accessed online on 13 September 2014].
[363] Gavin Hambly, 'History', in *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1971) p. 5.

Director of the University of Exeter's Centre for Persian and Iranian Studies (appointed in 2008), though generally this tradition has weakened since the Revolution of 1979.

As mentioned before, Orientalist attitudes gave way in the beginning of the twentieth century as the Iranian state sought to interact with foreign academics and develop its own infrastructure. In a paper originally delivered in 1972 at the Third International Congress of Iranology in Tehran, Hamid Enayat discussed this process:

> as the bases of independence of the countries of the Third World grow stronger, and the signs of the Western civilization become more manifest, there has been a diminution in the thinly concealed pride and arrogance that characterized the older school of Orientalism.[364]

Moreover, the development of formal academic teaching through the twentieth century reflected both a politically motivated interest in the context of Imperial interests in the Great Game and later the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and an interest that grew out of genuine enlightened thinking and a passion to learn.

Commemoration and Academic Engagement

Scholarship was, from very early in the history of the dynasty, important to the Pahlavis. This has often been attributed to the American Iranologist Arthur Upham Pope, who is said to have initially sparked the first Pahlavi monarch's enthusiasm for Iranian heritage.[365] In a speech at which Reza Pahlavi, then Reza Khan, attended on 22 April, 1925, entitled 'The Past and Future of Persian Art', Pope evoked images of great Iranian kings, such as Cyrus and Ardashir[366] and urged Iranians to study their wonderful heritage.

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

[364] Hamid Enayat, 'Politics of Iranology', *Iranian Studies*, 6:1 (1973) p. 14.
[365] Elwell-Sutton, 'Reza Shah the Great' in *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, ed. by George Lenczowski (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978) p. 37.
[366] For full text of the speech see Arthur Upham Pope, 'The Past and Future of Persian Art', in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) pp. 93-110.

> If by instruction and by example these wrong theories, that retard the revival and development of real artistic sense can be corrected, then with the government's energetic support of practical measures, the future of Persian art is secure... The government and the people together must do everything possible to bring art again to life in Persia.[367]

The speech had a huge impact on those present, not least the future Shah, Reza Khan. It was quickly translated into Persian and widely distributed 'for the use of teachers all over the country.'[368] Furthermore, the principal suggestions for the revitalization of Persian art articulated in the speech were carried out by the Society for National Heritage (SNH), as his words, as Sadiq remembered, 'kindled fires within us like magic. We became proud of ourselves.'[369]

The SNH's push for this revival explains the rationale behind the 1934 celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the birth of the poet Ferdowsi which would, incidentally, 'have never succeeded without the efforts of Professor Pope.'[370] Between 4 and 14 October, 'extensive and elaborate' celebrations took place, which began with an International Congress of Orientalists, composed of 45 delegates from 18 different countries and which lasted for four days.[371] The congress received considerable coverage from the national press and, according to Afshin Marashi, 'was presented as an affirmation of Iran's national culture by the world.'[372] After a brief stop at Omar Khayyam's grave in Nishabur, where the Iranians and international scholars read excerpts from Khayyam and made a toast with wine in his memory,[373] they arrived in Tus, near Mashhad on 12 October, where the Shah inaugurated the mausoleum of Ferdowsi with a speech. The mausoleum honoured the great Iranian poet, yet also contained sophisticated reminders of Iran's pre-Islamic past. 'Morphologically,' Grigor writes, 'the structure was a synthesis between the Parthian mausoleum buildings and Cyrus's tomb as examples of Iran's pre-Islamic architecture.'[374] A link between Ferdowsi and Cyrus is tenuous, however the shrine clearly illustrates the revivalist attitude of the Pahlavi

[367] Idib, p. 110.
[368] Isa Sadiq quoted in Grigor, 'Recultivating "Good Taste"' (2004) p. 33.
[369] Isa Sadiq, in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 2.
[370] Rex Stead quoted in J Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 11.
[371] Arthur Upham Pope, 'The Celebrations of the Thousandth Anniversary of the Birth of Firdawsi, Epic Poet of Persia', *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology*, 7 (December 1934) p. 39.
[372] Afshin Marashi, 'The Nation's Poet: Ferdowsi and the Iranian National Imagination', in *Iran in the 20th Century*, ed. by Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009) p. 105.
[373] Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008) p. 110.
[374] Grigor, Recultivating "Good Taste" (2004) p. 37.

state, inspired, in part at least, by Western scholars. That the monument was prepared so beautifully is testimony to the efforts of the event organisers. Robert Byron, who visited the landmark around a year before the 1934 celebrations, wrote quite eloquently: 'When the ceremonies are over, and only the tinkling of goat-bells are heard again, the Firdaussi-lover may find a grateful peace in this unpretentious shrine.'[375]

The anniversary of Ferdowsi's birth was not celebrated solely in Iran; in Germany, Russia, France, the US, and Britain, celebrations were also held. In Britain, for instance, the British Museum held an exhibition of manuscripts and miniature painting of the Shahnameh,[376] Sir Percy and Lady Cox exhibited maps of Persia at the Royal Geographical Society, the Persian Club organised a special meeting under the auspices of the Persian Minister Hussein Khan Ala, and a special reception was held at SOAS in London on matters concerning Ferdowsi. Various other meetings and lectures took place, including one in the House of Lords organised by the Royal Central Asian Society. In Germany the occasion was marked with the opening of 'Persia Street' in North Berlin as 'a permanent memorial to the German-Persian friendship and to the one thousandth anniversary of the Persian heroic poet Firdawsi.'[377]

That the event was celebrated around the world illustrates that even in the early Pahlavi period, the international scholarly community were willing to engage with Iran. It is worth emphasising that the guests at the Ferdowsi celebration were not dignitaries, but primarily scholars; people, the regime could claim, who truly appreciated the efforts of the regime in commemorating such an important Iranian literary hero. These included such renowned scholars as Henri Massé, Jan Rypka, Arthur Christiansen, Vladimir Minorsky and the British Sir Edward Denison Ross, director of SOAS.[378] Western scholarship was, therefore, an important tool for Reza Shah in his promotion of the academic aspect of the Ferdowsi celebrations. European scholarship in particular was held in very high esteem in Pahlavi Iran, to the point that when local historians such as Pirniya and Foroughi attempted to utilize modern historiographical methods in the study of Iranian history, their works relied heavily on this Orientalist scholarship.[379] The utilization of foreign academics in nationalist

[375] Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (London: Pimlico, 2004) p. 99.
[376] Bowring, *Chronology of Temporary Exhibitions at the British Museum* (2012).
[377] Pope, 'The Celebrations of the Thousandth Anniversary of the Birth of Firdawsi' (1934) p. 42.
[378] For more on the Ferdowsi Celebrations see A. Shahpur Shahbazi, 'Ferdowsi, Abu'l-Qasem iv. Millenary Celebration', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, IX/5 (1999) pp. 527-530, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ferdowsi-iv> [accessed online on 13 September 2014].
[379] Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Self-Orientalization and Dislocation' (2011) p. 465.

events, therefore, gave them certain credibility. In the context of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations in 1971 this is also important. Academics accepted their invitations for a multitude of different reasons, be they academic or personal, yet each one of them by merely turning up gave legitimacy to the event.

Exhibitions and conferences were not unique to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, but are rather reflective of historic scholarly partnerships between Iran and the West that developed throughout the Pahlavi period. Leading up to the 1971 Celebrations there were two more large international conferences that deserve our attention. The First International Congress of Iranology was held in Tehran from 31 August until 7 September 1966 and, following a resolution of that first congress, the Pahlavi Library became the seat of the secretariat of the International Union of Iranologists.[380] The congress was well-attended and a commemorative stamp was issued to mark the event, testament to the growing political importance attached to such academic gatherings by the regime. Resident members of the British Institute of Persian Studies were invited to attend the event, as did Ilya Gershevitch, Anne Lambton, Laurence Lockhart and John Boyle. [381] David Stronach, Director of BIPS, contributed with a paper on 'Fire Altars and Fire Temples' and Assistant Director Brian Spooner presented a paper entitled 'The Iranian Plateau: An Anthropological View.'[382] Gherardo Gnoli later commented that it was at this conference where he met Ilya Gershevitch, who became his great colleague and friend until Gershevitch's death in 2001.[383] The date of the conference, just one year before the Shah's coronation is also potentially significant, providing international attention to Iran's heritage, which was central to the Shah's nationalist ideology, at an important moment in his reign.

From 11 to 18 April 1968 another grand conference was held in Tehran, the Fifth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology organised by the Asia Institute, which attracted over 200 scholars from nearly 30 countries. A commemorative stamp was issued depicting an archaeological find at Marlik, and the event was enthusiastically followed by *Kayhan International* and the *Tehran Journal.*[384] There was a large British delegation at the Congress which included Basil Gray and Ralph Pinder-Wilson, while Stronach contributed

[380] Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, in the foreword to *Acta Iranica* Volume 1 (1974), p. v.
[381] David Stronach, 'Director's Report June 1st 1966 to October 31st 1967', *Iran,* 6 (1968) p. v.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Gherardo Gnoli, 'Ilya Gershevitch: 1914-2001', *East and West*, 51:3/4 (2001) p. 400. Gershevitch and Gnoli were later part of a committee of seven scholars who were charged with founding what would become the Societas Iranologica Europaea.
[384] For extracts from these papers see Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) p. 516.

with a paper entitled 'Excavations at Tepe Nush-i Jan and Shahr-i Qomis: New Light on Media and Parthia.'[385] The presidency of the Congress was passed on to Basil Gray from Arthur Upham Pope and it was agreed that the Sixth Congress would take place in Oxford in 1972. Iran had now hosted two successful conferences which sought to bring scholars from around the world to engage in studies of Iranian culture and civilization. The Congress of Iranology which took place in Shiraz during the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations can be seen as the pinnacle of this rather exceptional effort on behalf of the Iranians to encourage such studies.

Organisation and Participants

In this growing tradition of academic gatherings the Second International Congress of Iranology was organised to coincide with the Shah's 2500th Anniversary Celebration. Richard Frye, head of the Asia Institute based in Shiraz, worked very hard alongside the Iranians to organise the conference, preparing invitations to relevant scholars. He had to provide other non-academic services too, such as helping to find guides and translators for dignitaries and other guests like US journalist Barbara Walters.[386] The Asia Institute was founded in 1928 by Pope, and was re-established as part of the Pahlavi University in Shiraz when Pope moved there in 1966.[387] The Institute was gifted the Naranjestan, a fine Qajar palace of 30 rooms in Shiraz, by Prince Shahram Pahlavi, son of Princess Ashraf, who also provided funds for restoration and repair.[388] The property was then renovated to create an atmospheric centre of learning. Frye, who took over as Director of the Asia Institute one month before Pope's death in 1969, spoke about the massive levels of bureaucracy he encountered in his role and that he was 'more or less a kind of civil servant who was free... for employment.'[389] He continues:

> I have always said that I – I think I mentioned --- that I learned more about Cyrus and Darius by being head of the Institute than in all my years of reading. And I think that's true, because you really have to live the experience of what the problems are in dealing with a bureaucracy and dealing with the whole chain of the hierarchy of influences.[390]

[385] David Stronach, 'Director's Report November 1st 1967 to October 31st 1968', *Iran*, 7 (1969) pp. viii-ix
[386] Richard Frye in an interview with Shahla Haeri, Cambridge, MA, 10 October 1984, Tape 3, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 10.
[387] Richard Frye, 'Asia Institute', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2011, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asia-institute-the-1> [accessed on 13 September 2014].
[388] Terence O'Donnell, 'The Naranjestan', in Gluck and Siver, *Surveyors of Persian Art* (1996) pp. 479-480.
[389] Richard Frye, Tape 3, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 9.
[390] Ibid, p. 13.

This is quite an illuminating passage and it gives us some idea of how organisations such as the Asia Institute functioned and integrated into the Iranian bureaucratic machine. Elsewhere Frye relates a story that he was ordered at a moment's notice by Shojaeddin Shafa to fly to Australia as part of an Iranian scholarly delegation to take part in a conference on Iranian history.[391] Perhaps not having to rely so much on Iranian funding meant that the British Institute of Persian Studies was not as vulnerable to such pressure, but they certainly still felt it.

The official programme records that scholars from 38 countries were present at the Congress, including 24 from the USSR, 22 from the USA, 18 from Germany, 17 from India, 15 from Britain, and 14 from France.[392] These numbers should not be taken as completely correct because we know that of the 15 named from Britain, four did not actually attend, and one attended who was not on the original list. Still on balance the list seems fairly accurate. The list of attendees includes some interesting, impressive and varied names, such as Felix Parja of Spain, a Jesuit professor of Islamology and Arabic, and Director of the *Instituto Hispano-Arabe de Cultura* in Madrid,[393] Japanese archaeologist Namio Egami of the University of Tokyo, who led expeditions to Iran during the 1950s and 60s,[394] the great Hungarian academic Janos Harmatta, who deciphered the Parthian ostraca and papyri of Dura Europos,[395] and the Austrian theologian Cardinal Franz König, to name but a few. To have such an impressive ensemble of academics gathered in one place to share their scholarly experience of the study of Iran was quite remarkable. The Congress seemed to be more than merely a tool by which the Shah could seek legitimisation by creating a spiritual link between himself and the Achaemenids, though this was certainly an aspect of it. It was also more than just a celebration of the continuity of a culture and civilization. The fact that such an effort was made to bring together such distinguished scholars to give their input illustrates just how eager the Iranian Government was to promote study and research into all aspects of Iranian civilization. The Celebrations represented a genuine opportunity to encourage such scholarly engagement.

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[391] Ibid, p. 10.
[392] Programme: *World Congress of Iranology: On the Occasion of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great*, Shiraz, 13-15 October 1971.
[393] James T. Monroe, *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship: Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) p. 235.
[394] See for example Namio Egami and Seiichi Masuda, *Marv-Dasht: I: the excavation at Tall-i-Bakun, 1956 and 1959* (Tokyo: The Institute for Oriental Culture the University of Tokyo, 1962). For more on the study of Iran in Japan, see Hisae Nakanishi, 'Iranian Studies in Japan', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987) pp. 131-159.
[395] Zsigmond Ritook, 'The Contribution of Hungary to International Classical Scholarship', *Hungarian Studies* 12:1-2 (1997) p. 10.

The British academic delegation consisted of Richard Barnett, John Boyle, Hubert Darke, Ilya Gershevitch, Basil Gray, John Hansman, Bernard Lewis, Laurence Lockhart, George Morrison, the Reverend Norman Sharp, David Stronach and Laurence Elwell-Sutton. They were not, as we shall see, early-career academics, but established scholars with considerable experience in the study of Iran. Richard Barnett (1909-1986) was the keeper of Western Asian Antiquities at the British Museum at the time of the Celebrations and, as part of his invitation discussed in the previous chapter, he was asked to bring the Cyrus Cylinder with him from the Museum's collection. John Andrew Boyle (1916-1978) was appointed Senior Lecturer in Persian at the University of Manchester in 1950, gaining the promotion to a Readership in 1959 and the distinction of a Personal Chair in 1966.[396] He retained this position until his untimely death in 1978, upon which the Shah, even during the growing revolutionary turmoil in Iran, took the time to send a personal letter of condolence to Boyle's family.[397] Hubert Seymour Garland Darke (1919-1998) studied at Cambridge under Arthur Arberry and was appointed Lecturer in Persian at Cambridge in 1961, where he taught for the next twenty years. He retained a position as Editorial Secretary of the Cambridge History of Iran from 1970 until 1993, overseeing seven volumes.[398] Ilya Gershevitch (1914-2001) was considered to be one of the greatest scholars of Iranian Studies of the twentieth century. He was a Fellow of Jesus College in Cambridge (Emeritus from 1982), Fellow of the British Academy from 1967 and published extensively on a wide range of subjects.[399]

Basil Gray (1904-1989) was a highly respected art historian and keeper of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum from 1946 until his retirement in 1969. He was actively involved in the British Institute of Persian Studies from its inception in 1961, was elected Vice-President in 1969 and became the second President from 1987 until his death in 1989.[400] He contributed to the Celebrations also with the introduction and commentary for a special publication on the *Baysonghori* manuscript of the *Shahnameh*, preserved in the Imperial Library.[401] Bernard Lewis (born 1917) graduated with a PhD in Near and Middle East Studies from SOAS in 1939 and was made Professor of History of the Near and Middle East there in

[396] Laurence Elwell-Sutton, 'John Andrew Boyle', *Folklore*, 90/1 (1979) pp. 105-106.
[397] Ibid.
[398] John Perry, 'Darke, Hubert Seymour Garland', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2005, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/darke-hubert-seymour-garland-1> [accessed online on 13 September 2014].
[399] Gnoli, 'Ilya Gershevitch' (2001) p. 398.
[400] Ralph Pinder-Wilson, 'Basil Gray 1904-1989', *Iran*, 27 (1989) pp. v-vi.
[401] Basil Gray, *The Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, The Baysonghori Manuscript: An Album of Minatures and Illuminations* (Tehran: Central Council of the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, 1971).

1949, a position he would hold until 1974. John Hansman graduated from Cambridge and was an enthusiastic archaeologist, participating and leading a number of digs with BIPS through the 1960s and 70s. Laurence Lockhart (1891-1975) was educated at Cambridge under the supervision of E.G. Browne, yet despite completing a PhD at SOAS (1935) and publishing a number of volumes on various aspects of Iranian history, he never held a formal academic position at a university. He did, however, serve on the council of the Iran Society from its foundation in 1936, on the Governing Council of the British Institute of Persian Studies from its inception, and on the Editorial Board of the Cambridge History of Iran from its beginning in 1961.[402] The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations would be his final journey to Iran.[403] George Morrison (1919-1996) taught Persian at Oxford from 1953, in a post he occupied for thirty years.[404] He was the only representative from the University of Oxford to attended the Celebrations. Professor Robin Zaehner (1913-1974), Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford, was also invited, but did not attend.[405] The fact that this impressive group of scholars were invited provides further evidence of the perceived importance of British scholarship to the study of Iranian civilization.

The Reverend Norman Sharp (1896-1995) is an interesting case, both in his character and with regards to his invitation as a Persian scholar, because he did not hold an academic or cultural position with any British institution, nor was he a noted scholar per se. He arrived in Iran in 1924 as an Anglican missionary, having completed an M.A. from Cambridge, after which he founded churches in Yazd (1928), Shiraz (1938), Qalat (1944) and Bushehr (1944).[406] In 1954, after the sudden death of Middle Persian teacher Nikola Rast midway through a term, Sharp was appointed a lectureship at the University of Shiraz, on the proviso that he could teach Old Persian with the cuneiform characters, as well as the Pahlavi.[407] Respect for him in Iran was such that he was invited to create the University arms and its replacement when it changed names in 1962, thus becoming a royal institute, as well as the academic robes for a visit to the University by the Shah.[408] The design for the arms was sent

[402] Basil Gray, 'Dr. Laurence Lockhart', *Iran*, 14 (1976) p. iii.
[403] Ernest Tucker, 'Lockhart, Laurence', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2013, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/lockhart-laurence> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[404] 'Great Britain x. Iranian Studies in Britain, the Islamic Period', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, XI/3 (2002), available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/great-britain-x> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[405] George Morrison, 'Professor R.C. Zaehner', *Iran*, 13 (1975) p. iv.
[406] The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996.
[407] Norman Sharp letter to Zabih Ghorban, 17 January 1984.
[408] Norman Sharp letter to Zabih Ghorban, 17 January 1984. The design of the emblem was supposed to resemble the 'Door of Knowledge', with Old Persian cuneiform characters inscribed beneath. The words in

to Court Minister Hossein Ala to seek the Shah's approval, then to Asadollah Alam, who made suggestions for slight alterations, but the design can be attributed almost entirely to Sharp.[409] As a minister of the Church, as well as an academic, Sharp was a well respected figure both locally and internationally. The Queen and Prince Philip, on a visit to Iran in March 1961, for example, attended a service at his church in Shiraz, which he had to work hard to actually make happen.[410] Upon his death a commemorative event was held at the Iran Society in London at which the following words from Sharp were remembered: 'I had long ago given my heart to Persia and its splendid people'.[411]

Sharp wrote and translated a number of books on Persian history in the years before and after the Celebrations, under the auspices of the Iranian Government. He wrote one volume on Old Persian cuneiform, which remains to this day an important introduction to the subject. It was first published in 1966, translated into Persian and French, and thereafter reprinted on a number of occasions.[412] One leather bound copy of the second edition of this book was presented to the Shah for the occasion of his coronation in October 1967.[413] At an Iran Society event in Sharp's honour, Ferrier commented on the aforementioned volume that:

> It was a formidable task not just for the intellectual skill required but for his gifts of administration, persuasion and sheer hard work in acquiring the cuneiform alphabet from Germany with the support of his friend Hussein Ala, the court Minister, (who arranged for the amount of the customs payable). Norman supervised the printing of the text in three languages, Persian, English and French, with himself as compositor-in-chief, accountant and manager and other indispensable administrative concerns. It required all Norman's insistence and charm, not to mention his mastery of *tarof* and *partibazi*.[414]

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cuneiform were 'Kharathu', meaning wisdom, and 'Arawasta', meaning activity, two qualities ascribed by Darius the Great.

[409] Norman Sharp letter to Zabih Ghorban, 17 January 1984.

[410] The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996, p. 8.

[411] The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996, p. 1.

[412] Sharp, *The Inscriptions in Old Persian Cuneiform of the Achaemenian Emperors* (1966).

[413] Norman Sharp letter to Paul Gotch, 13 August 1967.

[414] The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996, p. 16.

He also translated Sayyed Mohammad Taqí Mostafaví's book on Fars province into English in 1978, having been invited to undertake the translation by the Society for the Protection of National Monuments, in light of 'his archaeological attainments and translations during his long residence in Iran.' Houchang Nahavandi, writing in the preamble to this volume states that 'The Society is sincerely appreciative of the efforts and services of this Iranologist and friend of Iran, for whom the Divine favour is sought.'[415] He was not just respected in academic and political circles; he also endeared locals. At the event in his honour one person said 'Yes I was only a schoolgirl, but I remember Mr Sharp on his bicycle – he was a bit of Shiraz.'[416] Sharp appeared to be, by all accounts, the absolute antithesis of the Saidian orientalist, one who completely immersed himself in the life and culture of Iran as well as mastered languages from different eras of Persian history.

In a letter dated 7 September 1971 Sharp expressed clear disappointment that he had not received an invitation for the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and felt that they were becoming far too politicized. 'I won't get an invitation', he wrote, 'for there are so many the Government must ask, and there can't be room for the many who would give anything to be present.'[417] He had already contributed a great deal to the Celebrations, having translated three works into English of the Iranian archaeologist Ali Sami and prepared an inscription in Old Persian cuneiform on a stone tablet cut from the original quarry of the palaces of Cyrus, near Sivand, to be unveiled in the Shiraz Church. This inscription read: 'God chose Cyrus, and made him king in this earth. May this land of Cyrus be always happy! Honoured be the good name of Cyrus!'[418] Sami had told Sharp a year earlier that he would probably be invited by the authorities to the Celebrations, but Sharp felt, since he had retired and moved from Iran, that 'It will be a case of out of sight out of mind.'[419] Given his contribution, his disappointment was understandable. In early October, however, Sharp sent another letter to Gotch, expressing happiness that

[415] Sayyed Mohammad Taqí Mostafaví', *The Land of Pars*: *The Historical Monuments and the Archaeological Sites of the Province of Fars*, trans. by R.N. Sharp (Chippenham: Picton Publishing, 1978).
[416] The Reverend Norman Sharp: A Tribute by Paul Gotch and Ronald Ferrier, Iran Society, 18 December 1996, p. 2.
[417] Norman Sharp letter to Paul Gotch, 7 September 1971.
[418] From the British Museum's Gotch collection.
[419] Norman Sharp letter to Paul Gotch, 13 November 1970.

> almost at the last moment the Persian Government have included me among their guests, and with a group of Iranologists, as they are called, I fly direct to Shiraz from Paris on October 11th in a special Iranair plane.[420]

While it is probable that some academics felt obliged to attend the event, even though they did not necessarily agree with it, Sharp's apparent enthusiasm was not unique. Indeed, it is clear that British scholars were eager to engage with Iranian officials in their scholarly endeavours. This can be observed in the preface to the first volume of the Cambridge History of Iran, where Arthur Arberry wrote:

> During the years when His Excellency Qods Nakhai was ambassador of Iran in London, I discussed with him on a number of occasions the desirability of having a full-length work on the history and cultural achievements of his country; and naturally (for His Excellency is after all a Persian, and therefore both poet and artist, and lover of poetry and art) our discussions disclosed an admirable unanimity of opinion.[421]

While we may, of course put Arberry's flattery down to *ta'arof*, this passage highlights British academia's unfaltering enthusiasm for Iran. Perhaps also there was a level of understanding that because the Iranian Government had some influence over publications such as these, or were willing in some cases to provide funding, it was necessary to flatter them at appropriate times. If this was the case then the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations were certainly such a time.

Another addition to the British delegation was Laurence Elwell-Sutton (1912-1984), who was a lecturer in Persian at the University of Edinburgh from 1952, gaining a personal chair in 1976. During the Second World War he worked for the BBC Persian Service which would broadcast derogatory stories about Reza Shah's corruption and greed, based on information supplied, in part at least, by Ann Lambton and her Foreign Office colleagues.[422] He also served as press attaché in the British Embassy from 1943 until 1947, following the long tradition of British academics' postings in Iran in an official capacity.[423] Though he essentially worked for the British Government for a large period of time, his writings on Iran

[420] Norman Sharp letter to Paul Gotch, 9 October 1971.
[421] A.J. Arberry ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Volume 1 (Cambridge, 1968) p. vii.
[422] See Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh, *Persian Service: The BBC and British Interests in Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014) pp. 39-43.
[423] Caroline Hillenbrand, 'L.P. Elwell-Sutton (1912-84)', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, 11:2 (1984) p. 212.

did not reflect British sympathies. His *Persian Oil* was controversial for its apparent empathy for the Iranian nationalists including Mossadeq and his criticism of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. He contributed chapters to volumes concerning Pahlavi Iran, including one entitled 'Reza Shah the Great'[424] and one general history of the Pahlavi era.[425] In the latter volume he mentions the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, refers to the Cyrus Cylinder as the 'first declaration of the rights of man', argues that the changing of the Iranian calendar in 1976 to date from the accession of Cyrus in 559 BC, making the year 1976 into the year 2535, was a 'fitting epilogue to this event', and concludes his chapter with a lengthy quotation from the Shah's speech at Pasargadae.[426] Elwell-Sutton's support for the conflicting politics of Mossadeq and the Pahlavis was explained by Floreeda Safiri as evidence of his

> sympathy and active support for the cause of nationalism and nationalist leaders so long as he believed that the leadership was moving the nation along the path of development and modernization.[427]

In spite of his understandable criticisms of the British and his siding with Iranian nationalists, it seems rather odd, however, that a British scholar would support the changing of the Iranian national calendar, an act that was quite offensive to many Iranians.

One explanation for this could be that the political and financial incentives to write for the regime were too large to refuse. In the 1970s, Peter Avery, for example, was asked by the Iranian Minister of Court to come to Tehran to write a biography of the Shah, with facilities provided and a £20,000 advance.[428] Avery turned down this offer, despite advice from a friend, who said: 'take the money if you need it, Peter, but don't bother to do any writing. This lot will be swept away in a year or two.'[429] With such large sums of money involved, it is hardly surprising that, in some cases, academic integrity might be called into question. In a review of *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, which included 12 chapters by mostly Western academics who generally paid tribute to Pahlavi regime, published shortly before the Revolution, Marvin Zonis asked how Western scholarship 'became bewitched by the Pahlavis as did

[424] Laurence Elwell-Sutton, 'Reza Shah the Great' in *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, ed. by George Lenczowski (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978) pp. 1-50.
[425] Laurence Elwell-Sutton, 'The Pahlavi Era', in *Persia: History and Heritage*, ed. by J.A. Boyle (London: Melland for the British Institute of Persian Studies, 1978) pp. 49-64.
[426] Ibid. p64.
[427] Floreeda Safiri, 'Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton (1912-1984)', *Iranian Studies*, 17:4 (1984) p. 486.
[428] Hugh Carless, 'Peter Avery', *The Guardian*, 18 October 2008, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/oct/18/history-iran-peter-avery> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[429] Ibid.

Western journalists and most Western governments.'[430] Richard Frye also seemed exasperated by this:

> There was an unlimited supply of money, and so you just go on. Everybody was coming up with this project and that project and trying to get some money for exhibitions, and so on, and so on. I mean, it was really chaos in the sense of everybody out, going wild, and trying to make influence, and so on.[431]

It is clear that money motivated some academics to a certain degree. Peter Avery, who, as we shall see below, declined to have anything to do with the Celebrations, contributed a chapter to the special edition of UNESCO's Courier in October 1971, entitled *Iran: Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 Years*.[432] This is perhaps illustrative of the fact that it was difficult for academics, even those who did not particularly agree with the politics of the Pahlavi regime, not to engage with it when it came to its cultural and scholarly programmes.

Elwell-Sutton clearly had a great respect for Reza Shah; indeed he had intended to write a biography of him before he fell seriously ill at the end of the 1970s[433] and wrote in 1978 that the great tragedy of Reza Shah's reign was that he was not allowed to finish his job.[434] One finds it hard to believe, however, that he genuinely felt that the changing of the Iranian calendar in 1976 by Mohammad Reza Shah was a 'fitting epilogue'. The book in which he makes that comment was a British Institute of Persian Studies publication, so perhaps there was an element of coercion into siding with the official government line on such matters. As an organisation that depended on support from the Iranian state, the Institute would certainly not wish to publish anything too critical of the Shah if they wished to retain that support.

While Elwell-Sutton drove to Iran with his family in a Volkswagen Camper,[435] some British academics had no intention of taking up their invitations. Those who received invitations but did not attend were Ann Lambton (1912-2008), Peter Avery (1923-2008), Robert Zaehner (1913-1974), and Frank Bagley (1915-1975). Lambton was probably the

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[430] Marvin Zonis, 'Iran Under the Pahlavis by George Lenczowski', *The American Political Science Review*, 73:3 (1979) p. 911.
[431] Richard Frye, Tape 3, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 34.
[432] Peter Avery, Iran: Cultural Crossroads for 2,500 Years, *The UNESCO Courier* (October 1971) pp. 4-12.
[433] C. Edmund Bosworth, 'Elwell-Sutton, Laurence Paul', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VIII/4 (1998) pp. 372-373, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elwell-sutton> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[434] Elwell-Sutton, 'Reza Shah the Great' (1978) p. 50.
[435] 'Alison Elwell-Sutton', *The Scotsman*, 16 June, 2009, available at <http://www.scotsman.com/news/modest-alison-was-renowned-for-hospitality-1-1209667> [accessed on 13 September 2014].

most well-respected and influential British Iran specialist of the second half of the twentieth century.[436] She had fallen out with the Shah over his White Revolution, drawing attention to the shortcomings of his reforms, and the Shah did not appreciate her criticisms.[437] Perhaps Lambton's animosity towards the Shah had an effect on her colleagues and made them feel less inclined to accept their invitations. Peter Avery was a student at SOAS during the immediate post-Second World War period where Lambton was a lecturer, and it was there that they formed a close relationship. They later served together on the Board of Editors of the Cambridge History of Iran. Upon her death and shortly before his, he remarked that she was 'one of the most remarkable people it was possible to know, the antithesis of humbug.'[438] Zaehner was Lambton's press attaché at the Tehran embassy during the Second World War and greatly revered her, so it is certainly possible that he followed her lead in declining to attend the Celebrations. In 1973 David Morgan, a student of Lambton's, was interviewed for a fellowship at the British Institute of Persian Studies by a panel which included Sir Max Mallowan, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Basil Gray and Zaehner. Morgan later found out that upon his arrival at the Institute that morning, Zaehner had declared: 'I have only come in order to support Professor Lambton's candidate',[439] evidence of the depth of his respect for Lambton. Indeed, such was the strength of understanding between Lambton and Zaehner that in the early 1950s during the oil nationalisation crisis, Lambton recommended to the Foreign Office that Zaehner be sent immediately to Iran to 'give the Persians confidence and to set the plan in motion.'[440] The plan was, of course, to mobilise opposition against Mossadeq.

It is clear that there might have been some collaboration or understanding between some of those who rejected the invitation, in light of their previous experiences together and their shared dislike of the Shah. There was also, however, a view that the Celebrations were a wholly unhelpful and unsavoury affair. Peter Avery recalled the event in a later interview:

> A lot of this flew very much in the face of Islamic tradition as well as in the face of historical accuracy. It was a party to which I was invited, but which I did not go to because I couldn't believe that it would be correct for anybody

[436] For an overview of her remarkable career see David Morgan, 'Ann K.S. Lambton (1912-2008) and Persian Studies', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 21 (2011) pp. 99-109.
[437] K.S. McLachlan, 'Professor AKS Lambton', *The Telegraph*, 8 August 2008, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/2524891/Professor-AKS-Lambton.html> [accessed on 18 September 2014].
[438] Carless, 'Peter Avery', *The Guardian*, 18 October 2008.
[439] Morgan, 'Ann K.S. Lambton' (2011) pp. 102-103.
[440] John Gurney, 'Ann Katharine Swynford Lambton', in *Bibliographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy, XII* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2013) p. 258.

> who thought of himself as a historian of Iran to support a so unhistorically, unauthentic event, in terms of history. It constituted a very grave affront to the principles of the nation... As for the P.R., it gave Iran a rather bad image abroad because a good many people did criticize it and didn't like the extravagance and didn't know what it was all about anyway. And those of us who did know what it was about did, in fact, know who Cyrus was and what the history was and, of course, realized that it was phoney history. So I don't think it achieved very much.[441]

Avery's criticism of the event is an overall objection to the idea of it as something with little, or no, redeeming features. His charge that it gave Iran a bad image abroad is valid to a certain degree, however that it was based on 'phoney history' is perhaps debateable. As Lowenthal has written, 'Heritage is not fixed but changes in response to our own needs. We need not fear or feel shame for imposing mutations on heritage, for they are innate to it.'[442] In this interpretation, therefore, history is forever open to change as it is adapted and interpreted by different people or societies. The Shah's regime's appropriation of Iranian history was not always received well by the academic community and it is perhaps unsurprising that the Celebrations were rejected by some scholars for this reason.

As noted earlier, many of the scholars engaged in Iran up to the Revolution had previously been involved in official business in Iran, be it for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, such as Laurence Lockhart, or for the British Government, such as Ann Lambton and Robert Zaehner. The writings of people such as Curzon and Browne were clearly designed, in part at least, to inform and influence government policy, a trend that certainly did not diminish as time passed. Elwell-Sutton's controversial *Persian Oil*, published in 1955, for example, criticised British interests and sympathised with the Iranian nationalists, much to the displeasure of the British Government. Such work, as with Browne's *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*, sought to force the government, as well as academics and other political organisations, to reconsider Britain's role in Iran. This was not confined to criticism of Britain. Lambton's criticism of the Shah's land reforms led him to declare to her relative, Lord Lambton, then parliamentary under-secretary at the Ministry of Defence, 'Your

[441] Peter Avery in an interview with Shusha Assar Guppy, Cambridge, UK, 9 and 10 October 1985, Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies, pp. 79-81.
[442] Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade* (1998) p. 250.

cousin has given me more trouble than any of my own subjects.'[443] The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations were important in this respect, therefore, because it was a scholarly gathering as well as a highly publicised political event, so presented an opportunity for scholars to further their political influence.

However, although there was considerable participation from British academics at the Celebrations, there was no political impetus to engage with it as there was in Germany, for example. The German committee for the Celebrations was under the patronage of President Gustav Heinemann and members of the honorary committee included Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt and Minister of Foreign Affairs Walter Scheel. A conference was organised in Germany, the publication of which included the following words by Heinemann, stressing German contributions to Persian Studies: 'For a large part our knowledge of the 2500 year old history of the Persian Empire is due to German Iranian Studies',[444] while Brandt spoke of the work as 'an expression of our will to maintain and stimulate the traditional German-Iranian friendship.'[445]

The absence of a similar direct politico-academic aspect in the British contribution is unsurprising since, unlike the Germans, the British did not seem to have a particularly active committee. There are minor references to a British committee in the Foreign Office records, however this was not stated in the list of Cyrus the Great committees and its honorary President (prior to 1 July 1971), as published by the Iranian committee.[446] That list features as Presidents of national committees such names as King Baudouin (Belgium), Chang Kai-Shek (President of China), Franz Jonas (President of Austria), Patricia Nixon (First Lady of the USA), and Gen. Francisco Franco (Spain). According to a letter dated 4 May 1971, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, was invited to head the committee in Britain because 'the Iranians want a Royal personage to take part.'[447] From the fact that his name does not appear later, it is clear that this request was not fulfilled, or at least that it was not made public. In

[443] McLachlan, 'Professor AKS Lambton', *The Telegraph*, 8 August 2008.
[444] Eilers ed., *Festgabe Deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (1971) p. v, translated from the German by Maria van Veldhuizen.
[445] Ibid, p. vii.
[446] Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (1971) pp. 22-24.
[447] FCO 57/323, E.M. Westwood letter to A.L. Mayall, 4 May 1971.

most countries, we are told, heads of academic institutes, or cultural relations committees, were involved in organising their own country's offering to the Shah's Celebrations.[448]

It is not exactly clear who was part of the British committee, but it is evident from the records that it was not deemed particularly important.[449] Ramsbotham records that in the time leading up to the Celebrations the Iranians were clearly disgruntled by the lack of a chairman of the British committee. The Iranians even saw this as 'illustrations of the British Government's anti-Iranian policy'.[450] The absence of a committee may illustrate lack of interest from the British Government in the event, however, it is also evidence of the strength of the individuals and institutions engaging with Iran. They did not need to be prompted by the British Government or some organising committee; they were scholars working largely on their own initiative. Certainly there were some financial or political incentives to attend the Celebrations, but while this may have been the prerogative for some, there is not enough evidence to suggest that this was a primary motivation for the many who made the trip to Iran, or indeed for those who contributed in some other way.

World Congress of Iranology (13-15 October, 1971)

The Congress opened at 9am with the national anthem, followed by a message from the Shah delivered by Minister of Court Assadollah Alam.[451] The message read:

> The worthiest of our armies have, over the millennia, been those men and women who have kept the torch of knowledge and culture alight in the face of the storms of time and passed it on to posterity with growing brilliance. True victory to us lies in the recognition of this truth, for geographical and military ascendancy is inevitably followed by regression and decline, whereas intellectual and spiritual values never perish in the face of any force.[452]

The message stressed the fact that Iran's past glories lie not in its great military successes, but rather in the durability of its cultural achievements. The speech also stressed the 'exceptional significance' of the Congress to the Celebrations, since 'the Anniversary Celebration is, above all, the celebration of Iranian history, civilization and culture.' As such, it was

[448] Shafa, *Facts About the Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great* (1971) p. 24.
[449] David Stronach did not remember one existing.
[450] FCO 479/71, Ramsbotham Report, 11 October 1971, p. 4.
[451] Programme: *World Congress of Iranology*, 13-15 October 1971.
[452] Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, 'An Excerpt from the Message of His Imperial Majesty Shahanshah Aryamehr at the Inauguration of the World Congress of Iranology', *Journal of the Regional Cultural Institute (Iran, Pakistan, Turkey)*, 4 (1971) p. 8.

> only natural that the eminent scholars who have devoted their lives to research on the various aspects of our culture and history take a special place in this Celebration and in the hearts of the Iranian people.[453]

Then Deputy Minister of the Imperial Court and Permanent Secretary General of the International Union of Iranologists, Shojaeddin Shafa, read out the programme, after which the delegation of experts from around 40 countries gave their best wishes for the occasion.[454] The general theme of the conference was 'Continuity of Iranian Culture' and in the following three days 60 presentations were given, devoted to many different periods of Iran's history, from antiquity to the twentieth century. John Boyle, for example, delivered a paper entitled 'The evolution of Persia as a national state.'[455] The programme consisted of six academic sessions, each chaired by one of the esteemed scholars, with another acting as secretary, and lectures were limited to twenty minutes.[456]

The gathering was productive in the sense that it gave scholars with expertise on varied subjects and from many different countries the opportunity to engage with one another, where perhaps that would not have otherwise been possible. On one occasion, during some free time, a group of scholars decided they would like to see a nearby archaeological site. John Hansman had recently been excavating at Maliyun on the fertile plain of Bayda, which he proposed to be the city of Anshan.[457] David Stronach asked Shojaeddin Shafa for permission to take a minibus with a group of scholars to see the site, which was given, albeit at their own risk. All of the major roads in Shiraz were blocked to allow safe passage to dignitaries and people involved in the Celebrations around Shiraz, but the group left nonetheless. The minibus entourage included, among others, Stronach, Hansman, Roman Girshman, Ilya Gershevitch and Richard Frye, who was elected to sit in the front seat. At one point on the road the minibus encountered a roadblock and, as it was stopped and the passengers asked who they were by the security personnel, Frye responded that they were a group of Italian waiters heading for Persepolis, and on they went.[458] The group did eventually arrive at Meliyun and the trip was productive, allowing Hansman to show and discuss his findings with some of the world's leading experts on Ancient Persia. Meliyun is now the accepted site for the city of Anshan, the hometown of Cyrus the Great.

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[453] Ibid, p. 7.
[454] Dandamaev, 'Préliminaire', *Acta Iranica* Volume 1(1974) p. 1.
[455] From the University of Manchester Archives.
[456] Programme: *World Congress of Iranology*, 13-15 October 1971.
[457] See John Hansman, 'Elagmites, Aghaemenians and Anshan', *Iran*, 10 (1972) pp. 101-125.
[458] Interview with David Stronach, April 2014.

The programme for the Iranologists was packed with receptions and parties. In the late afternoon on 12 October, the Iranian and international scholars, together with members of the News Media, had an audience with Their Imperial Majesties in an afternoon tea and cocktail reception at Bagh-e Eram in Shiraz. 'One by one', it was reported,

> Iranologists from abroad approached the Shah, offering him scrolls and pictures as mementos of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire. He greeted each as personally as if he were in a private salon, switching easily from French to German and Persian to English.[459]

After this the international scholars left for Persepolis where they were treated to a *son et lumière* at the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, along with their Imperial Majesties.[460] The Iranian hosts' attention to detail on this occasion was remembered fondly by Elwell-Sutton. Not only were the guests given blankets to keep them warm in the cool evening air, but also miniature bottles of whisky and brandy 'to keep by one in case the effects of earlier potations should wear off too soon.'[461] It is clear that no expense was spared in ensuring the comfort of the Iranologists and this is testament to their important role in the success of the Celebrations.

Following the Congress an international committee was constituted on the initiative of the Imperial Court with a view to publishing the papers from the conference. The project was executed under the title of *Acta Iranica*, which contained both papers presented at Shiraz and other relevant original studies concerning ancient or modern Iran. These included papers by people who were not at the Congress, such as historian Arnold Toynbee, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (which is perhaps striking since Israel was supposedly excluded from the Celebrations in Iran so as not to upset the Arab monarchs and heads of state[462]) and John Hinnells, who had convened the conference on Mithraic Studies in Manchester in July 1971. Papers from the Congress appeared in the first three volumes in the *Acta Iranica* series. This series now counts more than 50 volumes on various aspects of Iranian Studies, with publications continuing in recent years (as late as 2007), an enduring legacy of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. In Iran contributing papers for the Congress, around 1000, had to

[459] Carlotte Curtis, 'First Party of Iran's 2,500-Year Celebration', *The New York Times*, 13 October 1971, p. 3.
[460] Celebration of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, p15.
[461] Laurence Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations', *Bulletin of the British Association of Orientalists*, 6 (1973) p. 22.
[462] According to Frye, Israelis were actually at the Celebrations, but in order not to cause any diplomatic incident with the Arabs, they were kept in a motel outside of Shiraz. See Richard Frye, Tape 3, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 35.

be published in phases in 100 volumes of 500 pages each. These priceless contributions were lost following the Revolution, along with other important collections of the Pahlavi Library.[463]

Scholarly Events in Britain

That the Iranian Government was keen to promote the study of the many aspects of Persian civilization can also be observed in the projects that they sponsored around the world. One such example was the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies, which was held at the University of Manchester from 13 to 20 July 1971. The event was officially held in association with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and Iranian Ambassador Amir Khosrow Afshar attended the opening ceremony.[464] The Congress was organised under the presidency of Professor Sir Harold Bailey and was convened by John Hinnells. The Congress had been long planned, but at the last minute, when the Imperial Court heard of it, through Shoejaddin Shafa, they provided considerable funds. This included trips for the delegates to go to the Mithraic sites on Hadrians Wall, and two receptions, plus a generous subvention for the publication of the proceedings, through the University of Manchester Press. The sole conditions for the funding were that Amir Khosrow Afshar be invited to open the Congress and that the proceedings be dedicated to Her Imperial Majesty, both of which the organisers were happy to go along with. Hinnells even had the pleasure of presenting the volumes to the Shahbanou in Tehran and at no point during the course of this venture did the Imperial Court interfere with the academic process.[465]

The organisers of the First Congress were invited to convene the Second Congress in Iran from 1 to 8 September 1975, under the patronage of the Shahbanou, Farah Pahlavi, who addressed the members of the Congress and received them at the Imperial Residence.[466] The Imperial Court also funded the publication of the Journal of Mithraic Studies, which ran successfully until the Revolution in 1979 when it had to fold. Both congresses seemed very successful and there were no conditions and no attempt at censorship from the Iranians.[467] Furthermore, the Congress illustrates the eagerness of the Iranians to facilitate scholarly engagement, as Hinnells wrote:

[463] See Farah Pahlavi, *An Enduring Love* (2004) p. 221; and Nahavandi, *The Last Shah of Iran* (2005) p. 46.
[464] E.D. Francis, Congress of Mithraic Studies, *Archaeology*, 25:1 (1972) p. 67.
[465] Personal Correspondence with John Hinnells, December 2013.
[466] Ugo Bianchi, 'The Second International Congress of Mithraic Studies, Tehran, September 1975', *Journal of Mithraic Studies*, 1:1, p. 77.
[467] Personal Correspondence with John Hinnells, December 2013.

> Such a generous invitation offers to the community of Mithraic scholars the opportunity to wrestle with these problems once more, to pool their knowledge and the fruits of their research in lively and close discussion. This generous patronage is warmly appreciated by all involved in the subject.
>
> It is my personal pleasure to record formally the deep gratitude of all involved in the First Congress to the Imperial Pahlavi Library for bestowing upon that Congress the honour of official incorporation into the Twenty-fifth Centenary Celebrations of the founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great... Without such support the venture could not have proceeded as it did or have achieved whatever success it did.[468]

It is clear that the 1971 Celebrations were not seen as a short-term attempt at stimulating academic studies, but rather as a long-term enterprise. This is evident in the fact that the organisers not only funded the First Congress of Mithraic Studies in 1971 to coincide with the Celebrations, but also the publication of those proceedings, the publication of the Journal of Mithraic Studies, and the Second Congress of Mithraic Studies in 1975.

The Iranians were also keen to offer assistance in other academic endeavours in Britain. The Ashraf Pahlavi Foundation, established in April 1976, for example, donated £250,000 to Wadham College Library, Oxford, towards a library to house a collection on Iran.[469] The library was, unsurprisingly, named the Princess Ashraf Library and the Princess was controversially decorated with an honorary fellowship as a gesture of appreciation.[470] The library survives today as the Firdousi Library and continues its relationship with Iran. In 2009, for example, the Iranian Government gave a bust of Ferdowsi to be set up in the Persian section of the Wadham Library to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.[471]

The Imperial Court was also keen to reproduce rare books and have them distributed to various institutions as gifts. These publications were often, though not always, released in conjunction with some commemorative event or other. In 1967, for example, as part of the coronation celebrations, the *Zafar Nameh* (Record of Conquests), originally written by the

[468] John Hinnells in the introduction to *Mithraic Studies*, ed. by Hinnells (1975) p. xiii – xiv.
[469] Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power* (Oxon: Routledge, 1978) p. 140.
[470] Bonakdarian, 'Iranian Studies in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century' (2010) pp. 285-286.
[471] 'Wadham receives early birthday present', University of Oxford, 19 May 2009, online at <http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2009/090519.html> [accessed on 16 September 2014].

court poet of Nader Shah, was published by the Malek Library of Iran. The Director of the library sent four copies to the UK, two of which were to be given to the British Museum and the Bodleian Library at Oxford.[472] Such gifts are illustrative of the good relations the Iranian Government had cultivated with British academic and cultural institutions. To cite another example, on occasion of the 50th anniversary of the coronation of Reza Shah, the Pahlavi Commemorative Reprint Series was published in 1976, comprising 50 titles in 63 volumes of rare and important books on various aspects of Iranian culture and history, some of which had been out of print for centuries. It included volumes in German, French, Persian, English, Italian, Latin, Arabic and Russian, and included such varied works as Sir Harford Brydges-Jones' *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia in the Years 1807-11,* Ernst Herzfeld's *Iran in the Ancient West,* and Sir John Chardin's *Le Couronnement De Soileman.*

Elsewhere in Britain, lectures and events were taking place to mark the occasion of the 2500th Anniversary. At St. John's Church, Smith Square on 29 September 1971, Sir Max Mallowan, President of the British Institute of Persian Studies, gave an illustrated lecture on Cyrus the Great. This lecture was the Iran Society's contribution to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations and was attended by the Iranian Ambassador Amir Khosrow Afshar.[473] It was subsequently published by the British Institute of Persian Studies[474] and later appeared as an amended version in the second volume of the Cambridge History of Iran.[475] In the foreword Mallowan spoke fondly of the Celebrations which provided a 'wonderful spectacle' and praised the fact that this 'evocation of ancient Iranian history has been stimulating to scholarly research.'[476] Having been a founding member of the British Institute of Persian Studies in 1961, Mallowan understood the need to flatter and pay the occasional lip service in order to get things done. This could perhaps explain the following comment: 'Our Institute thanks His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah for his generous hospitality of which we have been the beneficiaries ever since our Foundation ten years ago in 1961.' Such notes of gratitude usually appear in some form or other in most publications released around this time, so it appears that flattery had become normal protocol when dealing with the Imperial Court.

[472] FO 248/1637, British Embassy Tehran communication, dated 5 December 1967.
[473] Denis Wright, 'The First Sixty-Five Years: 1935-2000'.
[474] Max Mallowan, 'Cyrus the Great', *Iran,* 10 (1972) pp. 1-17.
[475] Max Mallowan, *Cyrus the Great*, in Cambridge History of Iran, Volume 2, ed. by Ilya Gershevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 392-419.
[476] Max Mallowan, 'Foreword', *Iran*, 10 (1972) p. xii.

If one wanted to continue to operate within the Iranian system, then one had to pay occasional tribute to the Shah for his generosity. Scholars were fully aware of this.

Other lectures were arranged to take advantage of the interest generated by the Celebrations. Ronald Ferrier, who was Assistant Professor at the Pahlavi University from 1962 to 1965, gave a lecture for the Royal Central Asian Society on 3 November 1971. He began with reference to the Celebrations in Iran, saying:

> In a tented compound placed before the massive ruins of the Achaemenian royal capital of Persepolis, the Shah of Iran and his guests in mid-October 1971 celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great.[477]

It was only a short lecture and did not offer any tremendous insight into the ruins, but that such a lecture was given is reflective of the opportunities seen to capitalise on the growing interest in Persian civilization. At the University of London there was a series of lectures on Persia, covering such subjects as 'The timeless value of Persian poetry' and 'Flowers and witchcraft in the Vis O Ramin of Fakhruddin Gorgani'.[478] One seminar at the University was hosted by the Royal Asiatic Society as their contribution to the Celebrations, with its President in the chair.[479]

Other exhibitions included the 'Turcoman of Iran', which began at the Abbott Hall Art Gallery in Kendal on 1 September 1971 and travelled around the country until 2 December the following year.[480] This exhibition was not organised in conjunction with the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, but it did follow a long period of research by Peter Andrews in Iran. Moreover, it can be seen in the context of the remarkable flurry of interest in Iran during this time, so is worthy of mention. In the 1970s there were archaeologists, historians, architectural historians and anthropologists all working on various projects in Iran, with many supported by the British Institute of Persian Studies. This is illustrative of the breadth of research being carried out on the study of Iran by British academics.

[477] Ronald W. Ferrier, 'Persepolis', *Asian Affairs*, 3:1 (1972) p. 23.
[478] FCO 17/1529, Cutting from *The Yorkshire Post*, 6 October 1971.
[479] 'Anniversary Meeting', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2 (1972) p. 183.
[480] Peter Andrews, *The Turcoman of Iran* (Kendal: Titus Wilson and Son, 1971).

Conclusion

From this chapter we should be aware that the academic aspects of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations were vast, included important scholars and institutions from around the world, and therefore should be considered a significant, or indeed fundamental, part of the Celebrations. If one argues that academia was only useful to the state in order to advance its own ideology, then one might question why the Imperial Court supported the Mithraic Studies Congress at the University of Manchester, or funded a wide range of publications, many of which had little to do with Achaemenid Persia, and in many instances were published in languages that most Iranians would not understand. It appears that there was a genuine eagerness from the Imperial Court to improve knowledge of Iranian civilization around the world. Indeed, academics who attended the Congress of Iranology in Shiraz included those from Japan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Brazil, Argentina, Tunisia, Egypt, Australia, Syria, Lebanon and Morocco, as well as Europe, Canada and the United States. This reflects both the work of the Imperial Court to encourage Iranian Studies in these countries, and the eagerness of academics from around the world to engage in the event and take advantage of opportunities presented.

While the commemorative aspects of the Celebrations were over in an instant, the cultural aspects were, as this chapter has shown, part of an historic process of international scholarly cooperation that continued throughout the 1970s. For example, the Conference held in Shiraz during the Celebrations was actually the Second International Congress of Iranology, following on from the First Congress held in Tehran in 1966. The Third Congress of Iranology was held in Tehran in September 1972, and each year thereafter. Many other conferences were held in Iran during the following years, including, for example, the First International Colloquy of the Conservation of Mud Brick Monuments (Yazd, 25 to 30 November 1972),[481] the First Annual Symposium of Archaeological Research in Iran (Tehran, 11 to 15 November 1972)[482] and the Second International Congress of Mithraic Studies (Tehran, 1975). There was the feeling that, in hosting these events, Iran could take charge of the studies of its history away the Orientalists, or indeed work with them on the same level. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations can be seen as a key event in this development. There was also an eagerness for Iranians to present the history of their country

[481] Organised by the National Organisation of the Restoration of Historical Monuments, the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Directorate General of Historical Monuments of Iran. See 'IsMeo Activities', *East and West*, 22:3/4 (1972) p. 385.
[482] Ibid.

to their people. When Richard Frye, for example, spoke to the Shah about the fourth volume of the Cambridge History of Iran, the Shah was delighted that there were Iranian contributors, unlike in volume five (which was published before) and volume one.[483]

It will have been noted that British academia, as significant contributors to the huge body of Orientalist literature on Iran, was well represented at the Celebrations. There is no evidence that anyone was coerced or forced into attending, and there appears to have been little retribution for those who rejected the invitation.[484] Indeed, in the cases of the Reverend Norman Sharp and Richard Barnett, who were both passionate and enthusiastic Iranophiles, it was an event that they were very eager to be a part of. From the very early British visitors to Iran to the academics present at the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, many shared in a common thirst for knowledge, and all were captivated by the romance and history of Iran's ancient land. Yet it must also be noted that the field of Persian Studies represented a distinct, yet varied discourse and in that sense academics were forced to abide by the rules and constraints inherent in such a system. Perhaps there was no punishment per se for non-attendance to the Celebrations; however, that it could not be ignored is evidenced by Peter Avery's participation through his contribution to the UNESCO publication, despite his turning down the invitation to the festivities in Iran. One British academic who truly had nothing to do with the Celebrations was Ann Lambton, whose absence was recorded by Peter Ramsbotham in his official report of the Celebrations,[485] though perhaps she enjoyed a unique position of power and influence within the field of British Persian Studies that would not be affected by an outright snub. Like the loaning of the Cylinder, the British academic engagement with the event could only serve to advance British soft power in Iran. Culture and academia were clearly important to the Shah's regime and the fact that British scholars were held in very high regard meant that they perhaps had opportunities to improve British interests in Iran.

This chapter has answered some important questions about British academia's interaction with the event, as well as providing further evidence of the importance of the cultural and academic aspects of the event. We have seen that British academics engaged in Iran have been, since early times, intimately involved in official government business. As such, although there was a distinct desire for enlightened learning, scholarship was also

[483] Richard Frye, Tape 5, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 17.
[484] Peter Avery, for example, as referenced in this chapter, was asked a few years later to write a history of the Pahlavi dynasty with considerable financial reward.
[485] FCO 17/1529, Ramsbotham report, 22 October 1971, p. 8.

motivated, in part, by a desire to be recognised by one's government. By attending high-profile events such as the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, British academics were being recognised by both the Iranian and British Governments as the leading scholars in their areas. From a career perspective then, the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations represented an opportunity that could not be missed. There was also the undeniable enthusiasm from a number of academics who were truly passionate about Iran and were eager to be involved in a celebration of a country that was so close to their hearts.

Chapter 4: Non-Academic British Involvement in the Celebrations

'there is no doubt that, under Divine providence and out of these happy auspices of friendship, we shall some day attain, both for yourselves and ours, an everlasting glory joined with the greatest advantage'

- James VI's letter to Shah Abbas[486]

This chapter will explore Britain's involvement in the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations on a political, ceremonial and cultural level. It is difficult to judge the effects of non-quantifiable factors in bilateral relationships, such as culture, academia and ceremonial institutions such as the British Royal Family, however, this chapter will study the political role of these within the Celebrations in order to determine their effect on British-Iranian relations. It will look at the role of the Foreign Office, the Royal Family and the British Council, which completed the British representation at the Shah's festivities, in order to understand the impact of these individual institutions. Having discussed the potential importance of nationalist celebrations to states, this chapter will explore this importance on an international level. Certainly having powerful nations represented at such a national celebration would serve to advance the Shah's sense of authority and power, but what purpose does this serve to the attending states?

These primarily political institutions are interesting to this study by way of comparison to the academic. Their motives, as we shall see, were similar, in that there was an element of political and cultural competition amongst states, as well as the fact that they realised that, although participation was officially seen as 'optional', in reality it was anything but. We have already observed in the previous chapter that academics were aware that there was something to be gained from actively engaging with the Shah. This was not, as we shall see, felt just by academics. Everyone who worked in Iran, be they politicians, academics or businessmen, knew that they had to conform to the norms of the system in order to improve their situation. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations was a grand occasion where there was a lot of power and money to be gained, so it is interesting to observe how these institutions competed for influence in this environment.

[486] James VI's letter to Shah Abbas, published in Arthur J. Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1942) pp. 31-32.

Britain and Iran: A brief background

Having looked at different aspects of the Iranian-British relationship, it is important to provide a historical context to the purely political relationship between Britain and Iran. Until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century this should be seen in the context of British and Russian Imperial competition. In the nineteenth century India was the principal concern for British interests in Asia and, in the words of Lord Curzon, 'without India the British Empire could not exist.'[487] According to Denis Wright, Persia was 'an outer bastion in the defence of India.'[488] Persia was caught up between two competing powers in Russia and Britain, each vying for influence in this important land. Russian control over Persia's Northern provinces would open the doors to Herat and Baluchistan, putting them on India's doorstep. Therefore, as Curzon noted 'the preservation, so far as it is still possible, of the integrity of Persia must be registered as a cardinal precept of our imperial creed.'[489] Lord Salisbury appreciated this too when he wrote, 'were it not for our possessing India, we should trouble ourselves but little over Persia.'[490]

At a time when railways were being built around the world, Russia and Britain refused to allow them to be constructed in Iran.[491] The British envoy in Iran, Scheel, wrote to the Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston that, 'of course the building of a railroad would awaken Iran's talents which, because of need and poverty have remained dormant.'[492] This is a theme that we also find in Lord Curzon's writings. He wrote of the remoteness, backwardness and debility of Persia, but also of 'a future that shall not be unworthy of its splendid past.'[493] Rather than colonise Persia, which the British seemingly had little interest in doing, they should engage in an 'intimate alliance' and take an 'honourable lead' in the future of the once-great empire. On the other hand, there was the opinion that Persia was too much trouble to colonise. It was too poverty stricken and backward, and as Valentine Baker observed, had 'fallen through misgovernment and corruption to almost the lowest point

[487] Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question,* Volume 1 (1892) p. 4.
[488] Denis Wright, *The English Amongst the Persians During the Qajar Period*, *1787-1921* (London: Heinemann, 1977) p. 171.
[489] Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question,* Volume 2 (1892) p. 605.
[490] Quoted in Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame*: *Britain, Russia, and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002) p. 11.
[491] Gad G. Gilbar commented that 'It is impossible to over-emphasise the deleterious effect of the condition of the transport system on the whole spectrum of the country's economic activity.' This can, therefore be seen as a deliberate attempt by the British to halt any substantial economic progress in Persia. Gad G. Gilbar, 'The Persian Economy in the Mid-19th Century', *Die Welt des Islams*, 19:1 (1979) pp. 177-211.
[492] Shireen T. Hunter, *Iran's Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Resisting the New International Order* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010) pp. 79-80.
[493] Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question,* Volume 2 (1892) p. 634.

which a once great nation can reach without dissolution.'[494] Persia up to the start of the twentieth century, it would seem, was geopolitically important due to imperial rivalry, but not significant enough to attempt to colonise.

The two principal British academics engaged in the 'Persian Question' were George Nathaniel Curzon and Edward Granville Browne.[495] They both travelled Iran extensively in preparation for their major publications on the topic, Curzon's *Persia and the Persian Question*, and Browne's *A Year Amongst the Persians*, though they differed significantly in their approach to the subject. Curzon spoke only to merchants and officials, ignoring locals and, as the dutiful Orientalist, stated:

> The peasantry have no articulate opinion. All they desire is to scrape through life without undue extortion from the nearest Governor. Or, if they have any political feelings, no mouthpiece exists for giving them expression. The duty of a British traveller is to describe things as they appear to Britishers.[496]

One can detect in his pages a certain admiration for Persia, but essentially to Curzon, Persia was merely a pawn in the game that was played out between Russia and Britain. This contrasts starkly with Browne's articulate and unfaltering appreciation of Persia which is abundantly clear in his writings. While Curzon ignored the locals, Browne was not deterred by status or rank, and conversed freely with whomever he pleased.[497] He stayed in Cambridge from his election as a fellow at Pembroke College until his death in 1926, yet retained a deep love for Persia. Indeed, Sir Denison Ross said of Browne that 'He so loved his Persians that he forgave everything, and only stayed to praise and admire.'[498] He believed in and supported the Constitutional movement and his book *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909 (1910)* was supposed to encourage change in British foreign policy in Persia.[499] The Foreign Office,

[494] Valentine Baker, *Clouds in the East* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1876) p. 336.
[495] For a discussion of these two remarkable yet very different men see Christopher N.B. Ross, 'Lord Curzon and E.G. Browne Confront the 'Persian Question'', *The Historical Journal*, 52:2 (2009) pp. 385-411.
[496] Curzon, 'Workers and their work', 13 May 1893, Quoted in Ross 'Lord Cuzon and E.G. Browne' (2009) p. 392.
[497] For a discussion of his attitude in this regard, see Edmund Bosworth, 'E.G. Browne and His "Year Amongst the Persians"', *Iran*, 33 (1995) pp. 115-122.
[498] Sir Denison Ross, into to Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (London: Century Publishing Co., 1984) p. xxi.
[499] Hasan Javadi, 'E.G. Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement', *Iran*, 14 (1976) p. 136.

however, was more eager not to endanger the status quo with Russia and their agreement of 1907, rather than support the Persian people and Browne ultimately failed to move them.[500]

British involvement in Iranian affairs continued into the twentieth century, importantly with the First World War and then the coup d'état which brought Reza Khan to power, ultimately signalling the end of the Qajar era and the beginning of the Pahlavi reign. Britain had a small role to play in the coup of 1921, but following it they were important in facilitating Reza Khan's seizure of the crown in 1925[501] and throughout the Reza Pahlavi period Britain retained its reputation for meddling in Iranian affairs.[502] This imperialist encroachment in Iran can be seen in the activities of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and with the British invasion of Iran in 1941, however, Britain also contributed to the ceremonial character of the Pahlavi monarchy.

The question of Iranian nationalism and state celebration has been addressed in the first two chapters. However, the role of the British in the construction of a royalist tradition, which can be seen in the Pahlavi coronation ceremonies, has yet to be discussed. The creation of a monarchy as a form of governance was a very British enterprise, since they had also established a monarchy in Jordan and supported the one in Egypt.[503] The incorporation of traditional British practice in the colonised world led to an amalgamation of 'Oriental' and colonial expression in state festivities. The crowning of Faisal in Iraq in 1921, for example, closely resembled a British coronation, yet it was presented as a traditional Islamic ceremony.[504] Similarly, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's coronation in November 1967 was 'a curious amalgam of invented 'Persian' tradition and European, specifically British, appropriation.'[505] The Shahbanu wore a long, white dress, designed by Christian Dior, not too dissimilar in style to Queen Elizabeth II's at her coronation in 1953. The luxurious horse and carriage was made in Vienna and the red carpet and accompanying military escort smacked of European tradition. As Ali Ansari has noted, even the guardsmen looked remarkably like British Life Guards.[506] This was not an accident. The Shah had sent Mehdi Sami'i from the

[500] See David McLean, 'A Professor Extraordinary: E.G. Browne and His Persian Campaign 1908-1913', *The Historical Journal*, 21:2 (1978) pp. 399-408.
[501] See Michael P. Zirinsky, 'Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the Rise of Reza Shah, 1921-1926', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 24:4 (1992) p. 655.
[502] For further examples of how this distrust affected popular opinion, see Stephanie Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921-1941* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[503] Kwasi Kwarteng, *Ghosts of Empire: Britain's Legacies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011) p. 392.
[504] Podeh, 'From Indifference to Obsession' (2010) p. 185.
[505] Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921* (2003) p. 169.
[506] Ibid.

Foreign Ministry to London to seek advice from the Duke of Norfolk regarding royal ceremony and he brought back with him to Iran a video tape of the Queen's coronation.[507] There was, however, a distinct Persian flavour to the event. The Shah placed upon his head a crown that was modelled on a Sasanian design, with a feather protruding from the top, all the programmes and invitation cards were printed only in Persian and themes from classical Persian literature were expressed in accompanying dramatic performances.[508]

Despite efforts to stress the 'Persianness' of the occasion, upon watching footage of the coronation one is struck by how familiar it all seems; how European it appears. Lack of royal lineage perhaps compelled the Shah to adopt foreign traditions and who could blame him? The British were the authority when it came to such things. Vita Sackville-West articulates this sentiment very well in her account of the preparation for the coronation of the Shah's father, Reza Pahlavi:

> These ideas were European, and novel. The Persians themselves cared not at all whether the paint in the throne-room betrayed patches of damp, or whether the china for the state banquets matched, and said so quite frankly. "You see", said one of them, "it is only recently that we have begun to sit on chairs." Their anxiety to impress the Europeans was endearing; there was no point, however humble, on which they would not consult their English friends.[509]

It seems more likely that the Persians did not wish to *impress* the British, but rather to learn from them, since they had a strong and successful monarchical tradition based around an ancient institution. So, in their eagerness to follow the British model, the Persians adopted certain traditions which were perhaps contrary to their own.

In the same vein the Persians also sought foreign help when fine-tuning the details of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. Hormoz Qarib, a former ambassador, travelled to England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and France to discuss details relating to protocol.[510] Britain was willing to offer assistance in such matters and the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations were no different. Ramsbotham, for example, was asked to help with the seating arrangements for the gala dinner at Persepolis. Qarib admitted to British Ambassador

[507] Denis Wright, in an interview with Habib Ladjevardi, Haddenham, England, 10 October, 1984, Tape 4, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 4.
[508] FO 248/1637, Sir Denis Wright to Mr Brown, Coronation of His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah, 30 November 1967.
[509] Vita Sackville-West, *Passenger to Teheran* (London: Leonard and Virginia Wolff, 1926) p. 140.
[510] Cyrus Kavidar (2002).

Ramsbotham that 'the English, we acknowledge, are better than anybody in the world at protocol and arranging these things.' He continued:

> We are new to this, Western style; we could do it, of course, our own way, but we are having everybody here. We would like you to advise on this.[511]

Eager to avoid offending any of the guests by sitting them far away from the hosts, the British and Iranians devised together a seating plan, setting the table out, in the words of Rambsbotham, like a 'big snake' with 'five big sweeping points'. At each of the nodal points was positioned a member of the Shah's family; either the Shah himself, the Shahbanu, or their young son, or even the Queen mother, it did not matter. Every guest was seated near someone of honour and the layout made it difficult to judge whether someone was better placed. It was done in a way that caused minimal offence. [512] Iran was well aware that this was an important event and the fact that they were willing to seek help from their British friends is indicative of both the political relationship that existed between Iran and Britain, and the British influence on Iranian tradition.

The influence of Britain can also be observed in the account of Abdolreza Ansari, who held many high posts under that Shah's regime, such as Minister of Interior, and played a key role in the organisation of the Celebrations. According to Ansari, upon a tour of Persepolis in 1969, the British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, commented that:

> Your Empire was founded by Cyrus. Xerxes extended it and Darius preserved it... Your present ruler seems to me to possess something of the qualities of all three of these mighty kings.

Upon hearing this report from Court Minister Assadollah Alam, the Shah revived his interest in holding the Celebrations.[513] Certainly the international community was well aware of the Pahlavi obsession with Ancient Iran and this influenced the way they dealt with Iran diplomatically. For example, on the occasion of the Shah's Coronation in 1967, the Shah was presented with a gift of a 1:200 scale model of Persepolis, by President Heinrich Lübke of the Federal German Republic, built in wood and plaster by German Iranologists. According to a newspaper article it was so big that it had be put together in the hall of the Saadabad

[511] Peter Ramsbotham, Tape 1, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, pp. 26-27.
[512] Peter Ramsbotham in an interview with Shusha Assar, 20 January 1986, Hampshire, UK, in the Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation of Iranian Studies, pp. 65-66.
[513] Kadivar, '2500-Year Celebrations Revisited'.

Palace.[514] Denis Wright, who served as British Ambassador to Iran from 1963 to 1971, suggested that there was a realisation from those working within Iran that the Shah was the one who could make things happen. Therefore, if you wanted to influence what happened in Iran, then you had to flatter the Shah and pay him the occasional lip service when the opportunity presented itself.[515] Massaging the Shah's ego with brazen comparisons between himself and the Ancient Kings amounted to nothing more than false piety, but it became an effective way to deal with him.

Official British Participation

In a certain sense, it could be argued that one country's fortunes in terms of their relations with Iran could be determined by their contribution to the Celebrations. Generally, there seemed to be some eagerness for countries to be officially represented at the event. According to Abdolreza Ansari, the organising council had originally planned to invite around 30 heads of state, but, he says,

> as our intentions leaked out to the foreign embassies we were flooded with requests and soon our list had grown by another 34 bringing the total number of world leaders expected to attend to 64.[516]

The list of royal dignitaries included Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, King Frederik IX and Queen Ingrid of Denmark, King Baudouin I and Queen Fabiola of Belgium, King Hussein and Princess Muna of Jordan, King Olav V of Norway, Emir Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al Thani of Qatar, and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. Heads of state and prominent political figures included President Nikolai Podgorny of the Soviet Union, President Emilio Garrastazu Medici of Brazil, Vice President Spiro Agnew of the United States and Bundestag President Kai-Uwe von Hassel of West Germany. That such high dignitaries attended is illustrative of the magnitude of the event and diplomatic opportunities on offer.

Despite the assertion that countries flocked to take part in the event, there were some who were not so eager. Even before the invitations were handed out, the British, French, Dutch and Germans, were warned that the non-attendance of their heads of state would have consequences for their future economic ventures in Iran.[517] The German Ambassador flew home to persuade the Government that, for the sake of Germany's commercial interests in

[514] FO 372/8162, Newspaper cut out.
[515] Denis Wright, Tape 3, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, pp. 10-11.
[516] Kadivar, '2500-Year Celebrations Revisited'.
[517] Milani, *The Shah* (2011) p. 325.

Iran, they must send President Heinemann to the Celebrations.[518] Indeed, so important was this issue, Ramsbotham observed that 'Representation at the celebrations became for a time the touchstone of the Shah's foreign policy.'[519] The Shah was certainly not bluffing and when French President Pompidou pulled out, it put a definite strain on Franco-Iranian relations. The Shah reacted particularly angrily to this snub and the French Ambassador in Tehran was called to make a report.[520] Denis Wright recalls that 'he [the Shah] cancelled all the big orders given to the French, and for a number of years the French were in the doghouse.'[521] Even though the French had contributed so much to the event, this was enough to dampen the mood. The Shah also failed to secure the US President Richard Nixon, with the White house sending Vice President Spiro Agnew instead. There was further evidence that some had to be persuaded to attend. Ramsbotham records, for example, that the Vatican representative, Cardinal Maximilien de Fürstenberg, had been 'specially winkled out of the Pope' by Ardeshir Zahedi.[522]

The Shah was also adamant that Queen Elizabeth should attend the Celebrations, but the British were not keen to let her go. Outgoing Ambassador Denis Wright, who left his position a few months before the Celebrations, advised his successors that the Queen should not accept the invitation. The reasons he gave were twofold: firstly, the Queen had been asked twice previously only for the Celebrations to be postponed. Secondly, Britain was experiencing some bad press over their actions in the Persian Gulf, so 'why should we, having all this abuse hurled at us in the press, bring our Queen out just to please the Shah?'[523] Peter Rambsbotham, who succeeded Wright, says that he was under instructions that 'the Queen does not go on international jamborees', and the FCO records show that there were concerns about the length of the Celebrations and the Iranians' inability to ensure the comfort of the Queen.[524] The British monarchy was important to the Shah as an enduring emblem of the ancient monarchical tradition, so its representation at the event was essential. He had invited the Queen to his coronation in 1967 but she had not been available. This led directly to his no-heads-of-state policy. According to Denis Wright 'He couldn't get the Queen of England, therefore he wouldn't have anybody.'[525] The Shah's enthusiasm for Queen

[518] FCO 17/1529, Ramsbotham Diplomatic Report, 22 October 1971, p. 4.
[519] Ibid.
[520] Anthony Mann, 'Shah Attacks Pompidou for Missing Party', *Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1971.
[521] Denis Wright, Tape 6, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 44.
[522] FCO 17/1529, Ramsbotham Diplomatic Report, 22 October 1971, p. 6.
[523] Denis Wright, Tape 4, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, pp. 6-7.
[524] FCO 57/323, Sir Philip Adams to A.L. Mayall, 20 January 1971.
[525] Denis Wright, Tape 4, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 5.

Elizabeth, however, does not seem to have been reciprocated and she found him 'rather a bore' and 'very heavy going.'[526]

The Shah was, therefore, understandably disappointed at the Queen's refusal of his invitation, so he requested Prince Charles instead. The invitation was apparently extended to Buckingham Palace, but was rejected on account of the beginning of the Prince's naval training programme. Denis Wright calculated that the Shah's reaction to this rejection would be very strong: 'He will regard refusal as a personal slight (as you know, he was much put out by the Queen's decision not to attend)'.[527] He advised, therefore, that the Queen should personally write to the Shah informing him of the change. The Queen did this, addressing the Shah as 'Sir My Brother' and writing,

> I am deeply conscious of the disappointment this news will cause to Your Imperial Majesty, as indeed it has to His Royal Highness who has asked me to say how greatly he appreciated your invitation and how sorry he is that he cannot visit your country on this occasion.[528]

So in their place, Prince Philip and Princess Anne were sent, who were graciously accepted by the Shah. Prince Philip and Princess Anne seemed to have a great time, as Ramsbotham remembered,

> [Prince Philip's] great friend was the King of Jordan. They were all about the same age. King Constantine of Greece... and... Baudouin of Belgium – were all about the same age. And they had fun. They would go to each others' tents and have drinks in the evening. They loved it. It was all a great success. And Princess Anne liked it very much.[529]

Indeed, Philip became good friends with the Shah and was invited back to Iran again after the festivities. The Shah, for his part, was greatly appreciative of Prince Philip and Princess Anne's attendance and he rewarded Princess Anne with a three year-old Pahlavian stallion as

[526] Ibid, p. 7.
[527] FCO 57/323, Denis Wright, FCO Telegram, 9 January 1971.
[528] FCO 57/323, Queen Elizabeth letter to the Shah, January 1971.
[529] Peter Ramsbotham, Tape 1, Iranian Oral History Collection, Harvard University, p. 25.

a gift upon her visit to the Royal Stables. Prince Philip was also given a mare and a stallion Caspian horse for breeding in Britain by one Mrs Louise Firouz.[530]

The British Council

As articulated above, it is clear that there were political advantages to making a positive contribution through high-level representation. Even the business community were well aware of this. A commemorative edition of *Anglo-Iranian Trade* was published by a British Industry conglomerate entitled 'British Industry Salutes Their Imperial Majesties Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Aryamehr Shah and the Shahbanou Farah of Iran and Their Nation on the Historic Occasion of the 2500th Anniversary of the Founding of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great: Long Live His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah Aryamehr!'[531] Its pages are full of sycophantic praise by British business leaders, yet it serves to illustrate the importance of such efforts. This sentiment was certainly translated to cultural and academic institutions also. An interesting case in this sense is the British Council, which was, as we shall see, both political and cultural in its outlook.

The British Council was founded in 1934 by the Foreign Office, intended to counter German and Italian propaganda by means of expanding British cultural propaganda activities abroad.[532] Its aim was to promote British language and culture overseas in order to develop 'closer cultural relations between the United Kingdom and other countries, for the purpose of benefitting the British Commonwealth of nations.'[533] The Council has a distinct status in that it receives significant funding from the Foreign Office, yet it is autonomous on an operational level. Robert Phillipson argues that this perceived independence is important to how it functions. 'The ideological significance of the notion of autonomy is', he argues, 'that it serves to strengthen the myth that the Council's work is non-political.'[534] Despite its

[530] There ensued an uncomfortable situation as the relevant authorities refused to allow the horses into the UK. Ramsbotham was clearly worried when he wrote: 'I am concerned at this situation which could easily go sour... once having made his [the Shah's] gesture and the gift having been accepted he could now take offence if it had to be rejected for reasons which he would not regard as insuperable in his own country. The local press could also make much of an apparent slight on Iranian bloodstock, especially from the Shah's own stables.' See FCO 57/323 Ramsbotham telegram, 27 October 1971.
[531] FCO 17/1529, Anglo-Iranian Trade publication.
[532] Maryam Borjian, 'The Rise and Fall of a Partnership: The British Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran (2001-2009)', *Journal of Iranian Studies*, 44:4 (2011) p. 545.
[533] Annual Report 1940-1941, quoted in Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 138-139.
[534] Ibid, p. 142.

professed self-sufficiency, however, the Council simply could not function properly 'unless it was attuned to the needs of government and to relevant sectors of private business.'[535]

The first representative was appointed in Iran in 1942 while the country was still occupied by British and Soviet troops. The Council's priority was the teaching of English language as a counter to German operations in Iran, with a budget of £1.3 million provided by the Foreign Office. Its aim was to influence proceedings in Iran through persuasion and the English language. Sir Reader Bullard, Ambassador to Tehran, stressed the importance of the Council in this regard: 'politically the extension of the British Council should be valuable because they give us contact with the younger generation and an opportunity to influence them in the pro-British direction.'[536] At around the same time as this, in December 1940, the BBC Persian Service put out its first broadcasts in Iran. Its aims, at this stage, were similar to those of the British Council and it acted as a counterweight to what had been rather successful Nazi propaganda in Iran. As the British occupation advanced from 1941, BBC Persian began to report on Reza Shah's cruelty and was strongly critical of his rule, a campaign that certainly contributed to the ease with which he was eventually dismissed.[537]

The Council's operations in Iran continued to grow and by 1944 it had over 4000 students.[538] The Anglo-Iranian oil dispute of the early 1950s forced the Council to cease operations, yet they resumed again in 1955 under the directorship of Derek Traversi, who managed to expand their activities considerably. In a report from Peter Ramsbotham in 1972, he confirms that the focus at this point was still on developing the English language:

> The council still sees its prime task as the teaching of the English language and, given Iran's voracious demand for Western technology, most of it in the English language, I am sure this emphasis is right.[539]

Though it was primarily a cultural institute, it remained closely tied, particularly through funding, to the Foreign Office, so there was always a potential for a political link to its activities. The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations presented a good opportunity for the Council to advance British cultural interests in Iran and it took advantage of this.

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[535] Ibid, p. 143.
[536] Quoted in Sreberny and Torfeh, *Persian Service: The BBC and British Interests in Iran* (2014) p. 45.
[537] Ibid, pp. 32-47.
[538] 'British Council: Activities in Iran 1942-79', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, IV/5 (1989) pp. 455-456, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/british-council-activities-in-iran-1942-79> [accessed on 17 September 2014].
[539] BW 49/31, Peter Ramsbotham letter to Rt Hon Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 25 July 1972.

As we have seen, the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations was a perfect occasion to solidify friendships and advance one's own country's interests in Iran. This certainly extended to the international cultural and academic aspects of the event. In introductory remarks to the publication of a conference that took place in Germany entitled *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans,* Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt wrote:

> The work that you have in front of you bears testimony to the open-minded interest of the German Iran scholars in the past and present of the Iranian Empire. They have thereby made an important contribution to the deepening of our understanding of the history of Iran and its development into a modern state. For our Iranian friends, this work can serve at the same time as a demonstration of the respect we have for their country, and as an expression of our will to maintain and stimulate the traditional German-Iranian friendship.[540]

Echoing this sentiment, the Ambassador to Germany, Hossein-Ali Loghman-Adham, wrote that

> from the deciphering of the Achaemenid cuneiform script by Gotefend at the start of the last century to the outstanding achievements of the academics of our day, it has always been the German scholars who have done the pioneering work in the area of Iranian studies.[541]

Similarly, the Canadian committee published its own conference proceedings, also with an enthusiastic foreword by Governor General Roland Michener. It is clear, therefore, that the cultural aspects of the Celebrations were seen by some as an opportunity to deepen political relations with Iran. Although the Shah was not personally present at most of these events, his cultural ministers would have made him aware of the contributions. The British Council, which receives significant backing from the FCO, also contributed in this regard, with two touring exhibitions around Iran, to be discussed in the following pages.

Exhibitions: *Henry Moore* and *British Contributions to Persian Studies*

The Iranian Ministry of Culture invited several countries to arrange exhibitions in Iran as part of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations. It was decided, therefore, that the British Council

[540] Eilers ed., *Festgabe Deutscher Iranisten zur 2500 Jahrfeier Irans* (1971) p. vii, translated from the German by Maria van Veldhuizen.
[541] Ibid, p. viii.

would present two exhibitions to coincide with the Celebrations, including one on Henry Moore, which toured the main centres before the Celebrations began properly 'so that it would not be overshadowed by the actual celebrations in October.'[542] This exhibition consisted of 36 bronzes, some of which were five or six feet high or long, and 36 drawings. Some of the exhibits were the property of the British Council, but most belonged to the Henry Moore family. That the British Council should wish to promote British culture as part of the Celebrations is unsurprising, given the ethos of the Council, however it is perhaps a little striking that they should choose such an obscure subject for this tour. The reason for this decision was that apart from the reputation of the archaeological museum in Tehran, 'little was known about the facilities for showing original works of art in Iran.'[543] In a meeting between the British Council and Commonwealth Representations in the lead-up to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations, the Australian Ambassador also informed the meeting of a proposed exhibition on the 200th anniversary of Captain Cook as part of the Celebrations.[544] This reflects the opportunities that were offered by foreign cultural institutions to prosper from the Celebrations in Iran.

The Henry Moore exhibition opened in the new wing of the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran on 5 May 1971 where it ran until 23 May. The exhibition was reportedly 'a most successful event' and the presence of the Shahbanou ensured great publicity in the Iranian media. Apparently Queen Farah also declared her intention to purchase a Henry Moore sculpture that she had seen on a photograph of recent work entitled 'Working model for Oval with points', although the same document that reports this also writes that 'This purchase, however, after nearly a year, has yet to be confirmed.'[545] Following a successful run in Tehran the exhibition went to the Municipal Museum in Isfahan, from 12 to 24 June, where it was opened by Dr Kaipur, the Governor General, in the presence of around 150 guests. Following a run in Isfahan the exhibition went to the British Council Institute in Shiraz where it ran from 23 August until 4 September. It had originally been planned to coincide with the Shiraz Festival of Arts and Drama, but because the exhibition had been premiered in Tehran, the Ministry of Arts in Shiraz refused, at short notice, to allow it to be advertised on the Festival programme. According to the 1971 British Council report,

[542] BW 49/31, FAAC (72) 1, 1971, p.8.
[543] Ibid.
[544] BW 49/31, Report from J.G. Briton, 1971.
[545] BW 49/31, FAAC (72) 1, p. 9.

> it is doubtful if the exhibition would have received any notice at all if it had not been arranged that H M Ambassador's first visit to Shiraz should coincide with the opening.[546]

The opening served as a sort of welcoming party for the new Ambassador Ramsbotham, so it was fairly well reported and around 300 people turned up. The subsequent attendance figures were 'dismally low' with around 730 visitors in total.[547] Following this run in Iran, the exhibition went on to Istanbul where the attendance figures were much higher, though by Istanbul standards still rather low.[548]

The second exhibition was entitled *British Contributions to Persian Studies*, which opened on 19 October 1971 at the Iran Bastan Museum, followed by a tour of the country until Spring 1972. According to the BIPS report, the opening ceremony, which occurred during the proper Celebrations, was made memorable by an address by Dr Isa Sadiq (1894-1978), during which he 'evoked memories of E.G. Browne and other noted British scholars.'[549] Sadiq was one of the principal founders of Tehran University in 1935 and was fundamentally involved in both the foundation of Tabriz University in 1947 and the renovation of Shiraz University in 1964. He was a distinguished scholar in his own right, served as Minister of Education for six terms and enjoyed a lifetime appointment to the Iranian Senate.[550] To have such a respectable personality speak at the event was testament to its organisation and the regard in which it was held. That he should speak so well of Browne is unsurprising. During the First World War he worked as instructor of Persian at Cambridge under the supervision of the aforementioned British scholar.[551] Writing a foreword to the first volume of *Iran*, the journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies, in 1963, Sadiq paid tribute to British intellectual achievements in the field of Iranian Studies, praising both the founding of the Institute and the British Council. 'For the present time, heart-felt thanks are due to those who have initiated and been instrumental in the creation of the Institute,' he wrote, 'in particular the British Academy, the learned members of the Governing Council

[546] Ibid.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Ibid p. 10.
[549] David Stronach, 'Director's Report November 1st 1970 to October 31st 1971', *Iran*, Vol. 10 (1972) p. xi.
[550] Mottahadeh, The Mantle of the Prophet (1987) p. 64.
[551] Ibid, p. 55.

whose names appear in this issue and the British Council.'[552] The British Council was, it appears, seen as a helpful tool in the promotion of Persian Studies.

The exhibition consisted of a book display and a series of fifty panels that traced the evolution of Persian Studies in Britain over the course of the past four hundred years.[553] It travelled for longer and further afield than the Henry Moore exhibition, including a stint in Ahwaz. The exhibition was opened in Ahwaz on 11 March 1972 by the British Council Deputy Representative and Mr Monjazeb, the Director of Management Services of the Iranian Oil Exploration and Production Company, and the Governor-General of Khuzestan was also present. The British Council had identified Ahwaz as a potential destination for the establishment of a new Council centre. Ahwaz was expanding rapidly at this point, benefiting from the foreign investment in Iranian oil. Its population was around 300,000, but was expected to grow to around half a million within a few years, possibly even surpassing the population of Tabriz, which was the second most populous city in Iran, within a decade.[554] With growing foreign investment in Khuzestan, it would be more important for local business leaders to be proficient in the English language, so perhaps the exhibition would provide the Council with an opportunity to develop relationships in that region, ready for the opening of a new centre in the future. In this respect, the exhibitions served multiple purposes, both political and cultural.

The exhibition stressed the contributions Britain had made through the ages to the study of Iran and included panels on such subjects as: numismatics; travel, history and the pioneer archaeologists; ancient history and modern archaeology; and sections on the academic institutions of Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Durham, Edinburgh and SOAS. In addition, a brochure was released in conjunction with the British Institute of Persian Studies entitled, as the exhibition, *British Contributions to Persian Studies*. This was by no means an exhaustive account of British contributions to the field of Persian Studies, but included a number of short, yet insightful articles by Sir Max Mallowan, David Stronach, David Blow, Basil Gray and Gavin Hambly.[555] A number of years earlier in 1942, Arthur Arberry had written his *British Contributions to Persian Studies*, which was also published for the British Council.[556] It seems that stressing British academic involvement in Persian Studies was

[552] Isa Saddiq, 'Foreword', *Iran*, 1 (1963) p. iv.
[553] David Stronach, 'Director's Report November 1st 1970 to October 31st 1971', *Iran*, 10 (1972) p. xi.
[554] BW 49/37, Report on visit to Ahwaz by Deputy Representative 10-12 March 1972.
[555] Max Mallowan and others, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1971).
[556] Arthur J Arberry, *British Contributions to Persian Studies* (1942).

nothing new for the Council, but the 1971 event presented a valuable opportunity to further articulate this point. As we have seen above, Germany organised its own exhibition that stressed German's contributions to Persian Studies, as did Italy, with a touring exhibition, not too dissimilar to the British Council's, which consisted of a photographic display of Italian excavations and restorations in Iran.[557]

How should we view these two very different exhibitions? The showing of original British art certainly fits into the soft-power objectives of the Council in promoting British Culture abroad, even during this celebration of Iranian Civilization. Unfortunately, although the opening nights seem to have been fairly well attended and received ample publicity, the turnout afterwards seemed to dwindle into insignificance. Perhaps this can be attributed to lack of interest in this form of British art, or this particular artist. The Director of the British Council Institute in Isfahan wrote about the opening night of the exhibition in that city: 'I took Dr Kaipur round the exhibition. He seemed quite appreciative of Henry Moore's art, and not as baffled as some of the other guests.'[558] That the guests were 'baffled' sums it up quite well; it was probably a bit too different. Moreover, Ramsbotham's report on the British Council said that it was 'particularly important for the British Council's reputation that some special activity should be mounted last year to mark the 2500th Anniversary of the Persian Monarchy by Cyrus the Great'.[559] Perhaps the content of the exhibition was not as important as the fact of actually making an effort to do something. In the report, Ramsbotham goes on to say that both exhibitions were 'a distinct success' and recommends that 'one or two well-prepared and well-mounted exhibitions each year carry more weight than a succession of small manifestations.'[560]

Conclusion

From the evidence presented in this chapter it is clear that the British Government was very eager that Britain should make a considerable contribution to the Celebrations. There was a very plain realisation that if one wanted to succeed in Iran, be it financially, politically, or culturally, one had to appeal to the sensitivities of the regime. The fallout from the Pompidou rejection illustrates how important the Celebrations were to the regime and what the repercussions for a perceived lack of effort could be. In this regard, we can clearly see that the Celebrations could affect one's fortunes in Iran, both positively and negatively. There was

[557] 'IsMEO Activities', *East and West*, (1972) p. 390.
[558] BW 49/31, FAAC (72) 1, p. 9.
[559] BW 49/31, Peter Ramsbotham letter to Rt Hon Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 25 July 1972.
[560] Ibid.

a clear realisation that the Shah was the one in charge and appealing to his sensitivities was essential to a successful political partnership. Despite Britain's historical relationship with Iran in general and the Pahlavi dynasty in particular, as well as the British Royal Family's importance to the global monarchical institution, of which the Shah saw himself as a member, it was vitally important for Britain's interests that they were successfully represented at the Celebrations.

The British Council in Iran, as an organisation with clear ties to the British Government, was also eager to take advantage of the situation to improve their position in Iran. Had they done nothing, perhaps questions would have been asked of them, however their participation showed the Shah's Government that the British Council were joining in the cultural aspects of the Celebrations, which clearly appealed to the Shah and relevant associates. The choice of exhibitions appealed to people such as the Shahbanou, Pahlbod, the Shah's son-in-law and cultural attaché, as well as Shojaeddin Shafa, who was eager to stress academic cooperation. Although their offerings were modest, they were able to generate some high-level interest and certainly served to advance British interests in Iran.

Conclusion: The Academic Legacy of the Celebrations

It is clear from the evidence presented in this thesis that there is a different side to the 2500th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great to the one commonly presented by historians of the last Shah's reign. It cannot be denied that some of the charges against the Celebrations are as relevant today as they were then. They clearly provoked a reaction from the Shah's enemies, both at home and abroad, which contributed to political tensions over the next decade and beyond. This dissertation has argued that although the Celebrations are remembered for the Shah's extravagance and his regime's blatant ignorance of certain religious sensitivities, there were other aspects to the event that were just as important and much more far reaching, namely in the field of culture and academia. But what was the effect of the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations on Iranian Studies as a scholarly discipline? This concluding chapter will provide some comments on the legacy of this remarkable period in the history of Persian Studies as an academic discipline, a legacy facilitated by both the Iranians and the foreign academics and institutions that interacted with them.

Iranians were discouraged by the revolutionary regime to pay too much attention to Iran's pre-Islamic history, so heralded by the Shah as the epitome of Persian greatness. One Ayatollah, Khalkhali, who had already written *The Fraudulent and Criminal Cyrus*, which accused Cyrus of all kinds of heinous crimes, apparently led a bulldozer-equipped mob to Persepolis shortly after the Revolution, with the intention of destroying the ancient ruins.[561] They were deterred by locals, eager to protect their heritage which had been so valued in the decades before. On the other hand, negative memories of the Celebrations had a profound effect on post-revolutionary Iran in general. Streets named after pre-Islamic heroes, for example, were replaced with Islamic or more modern political heroes.

Despite clear ideological differences between the old and new regime, which clearly filtered down into the minds of Iranians, Iranian Studies were hampered primarily by more solid obstacles. Firstly, it became impossible to travel to Iran to undertake important work and when it was possible, it came with significant bureaucratic demands. Secondly, there was a distinct lack of investment in Iranian studies in the years that followed; money that was

[561] There is no official report of this, however Ali Mousavi reports seeing some vandalism at the site. See Mousavi, *Persepolis* (2012) p. 215. For a story of the mob at Persepolis see John Simpson, *A Mad World, My Masters: Tales from a Traveller's Life* (London: Pan Books, 2008) pp. 223-225.

freely available for cultural projects under the Shah's regime. The Journal of Mithraic Studies, for example, funded by the Imperial Court throughout the 1970s as part of the two congresses on Mithraic Studies in 1971 and 1975, was disbanded almost immediately. There was a significant funding hole that, in many cases, could not be filled.

Still, considerable work has been done since the Celebrations, much of which continued long after the fall of the Shah, and which deserves our attention. In his 1983 publication *Ancient Persia*, Cook wrote, 'In the last ten years or so, thanks partly to the interest aroused by the 2,500 year anniversary of Cyrus the Great and the publication of the Persepolis Fortification tablets, the modern literature on the Achaemenids has doubled itself.'[562] Others, as alluded to in the introduction, such as Perrot, who was incidentally invited to the Celebrations, perceived an increased interest in Achaemenid Iran as a result of the 1971 event.[563] This perhaps led some to question where their knowledge of Ancient Persia comes from. In 1981, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, a recent PhD graduate at the University of Leiden, along with Herman Wallinga of the University of Groningen began a research project with the aim of correcting the 'Hellenocentric' approach to the history of Achaemenid Iran. Greek perceptions of Iran had hitherto dominated scholarship not only because of the ease with which these were available, but also because it suited Western academics to see the Orient through the eyes of the Greeks. The research project initiated by Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Wallinga sought to rectify this problem by bringing together scholars from the fields of archaeology, Assyriology, Egyptology, Classics, as well as Old Testament Scholars.[564] This was done in the hope of 'dehellenising' and 'decolonialising' Persian History.[565] Writing in 2005, John Curtis and St John Simpson stated that, 'Achaemenid studies have undergone a revolution in the last 30 years',[566] a revolution which can be said to have begun in 1981 with the Sancisi-Weerdenburg research project.

It is difficult to argue that the Celebrations were the root cause of this, but that they were part of a larger process which encouraged academic studies is, as this dissertation has shown, very clear. The Shah's regime certainly sought to utilize the work of Western scholarship to his advantage and attempted to fit it into his nationalist agenda, however that there was also important academic work being done, encouraged and often funded by the

[562]Cook, *Ancient Persia* (1983) p. iii.
[563] Perrot, *The Palace of Darius at Susa* (2013) p. xii.
[564] J.T.P., de Bruijin, 'Iranian Studies in the Netherlands', *Iranian Studies*, 20:2/4 (1987) p. 173.
[565] Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, *Sources, Structures and Synthesis: Proceedings of the Groningen 1983 Achaemenid History Workshop* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987) p. 131.
[566] Curtis and Simpson, *The World of Achaemenid Persia* (2010) p. xiii.

Imperial Court, is undeniable. This could often serve two purposes. For example, the reconstruction work done by Italian archaeologists in the years leading up to 1971 was made possible because of the upcoming Celebrations and served that nationalist purpose, but it also represented academic work on an important ancient monument. Similarly, it was hoped the work carried out at Pasargadae by the British Institute of Persian Studies would contribute to the 2500th Anniversary Celebrations.[567] Indeed, with such enthusiastic patrons and large financial rewards there were bound to be some questionable pieces of scholarship, however it is clear that this was an exceptional period of scholarly research which, one might argue, contributed to the survival of Ancient Iranian Studies despite clerical forces that sought its obliteration.

Elwell-Sutton spoke at a conference shortly after the Celebrations, in which he said:

> In view of the discourteous tone of the bulk of the reports sent home by some foreign journalists – rivalled only by their discourteous behaviour on the spot – it may perhaps be worth while to attempt an objective assessment of this imposing and undoubtedly expensive operation.[568]

Even at this early stage it was recognised that there was a degree of misunderstanding over the Celebrations, fuelled by a vicious press, political opponents of the Shah and other discontented parties. A fair assessment of the occasion that takes into account the academic and cultural aspects, which this dissertation has shown were absolutely fundamental to the very nature of the Celebrations, is virtually non-existent in the secondary literature. That is not to say that criticism of the event is not warranted, for it certainly was, however, what this dissertation has shown is that to merely dismiss it as evidence of the Shah's megalomania, or as part of a revolutionary process that culminated in the Shah's downfall, is to ignore the important cultural work that was the essence of the Celebrations. There is further research to be done to uncover the full scale of the cultural work undertaken in other countries for the occasion, so it is hoped that this dissertation will provide an impetus for others to undertake such a task.

This dissertation has clearly shown that British scholars of Persia were fully engaged with Iran during the period in question. This stemmed, as we have seen, from an historical partnership that can be traced to the very early British travellers to Iran who were eager to

[567] Stronach, 'Excavations at Pasargadae' (1963) p. 173.
[568] Elwell-Sutton, '2500th Anniversary Celebrations' (1973) p. 24.

learn of the culture and civilization of the ancient land. Certainly there was a political impetus to their investigations, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Britain was engaged in an imperial competition with Russia. This political element of scholarly engagement with Iran to a certain extent never diminished, yet what we may observe throughout the history of British academia's relationship with Iran, is an unfaltering dedication to studying and learning. This is displayed best in the words of Malcolm, who declared in 1800 that 'I employ every leisure hour in researches into the history of this extraordinary country, with which we are but little acquainted.'[569] One must be careful not to present a romanticised view of academia, however, it is clear that love for their subject provided great stimulus for many academics. Certainly prestige, money and political motivation were considerations, however these were suitably balanced by enlightened ideas of learning, as well as a profound appreciation for Iran.

The 2500th Anniversary Celebrations were an event in the history of British Persian Studies. They were an event in which British academics were, by and large, willing participants. They were supported, through publications, exhibitions or lectures, by important institutions such as the British Institute of Persian Studies, the Iran Society, the British Museum, the British Council, as well as by individual universities and scholars. The central committee of the British in relation to the event does not appear, unlike other countries, to have been particularly active, as this dissertation has shown. Therefore, participation from academics and institutions can be assumed to have been on their own initiative, evidence of the strength of Persian Studies during this period. The chapters of this dissertation have clearly presented this. Through the loan of the Cyrus Cylinder we saw the British Museum interacting successfully with their Iranian counterparts in the short-term loan of a significant item in their collection. Then we saw the successful interaction from British scholars and academic institutions with the event through lectures and publications. Finally, in the fourth chapter, we saw the more non-academic aspects of British involvement, which still included two cultural exhibitions from the British Council, to provide a more complete picture of Britain's interaction with the Celebrations.

The academic publications for the Celebrations were numerous. In some cases they were supported directly by Iran, in others they appeared to occur of their authors' own initiative, yet in most cases they were declared to be an offering to the Celebrations. Many

[569] John Malcolm letter to his father from Shiraz, 17 August, 1800, in Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir John Malcolm,* Volume 1 (1856) p. 124.

examples have been cited in this dissertation, but perhaps one more is appropriate at this point. In the introduction to a book on the sacred fires of Ancient Persia, Carlo Paoloni declared that his intention to publish it occurred directly as a result of:

> the decision of the Iranian nation, to celebrate in October 1971 the 2500th anniversary of the foundation of the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, with the noble intention to spread this great celebration to all regions of the world, calling on the participation of all forces who love the beauty and the greatness of the past of the Iranian nation, thus opening a passage to Peace and International Friendship.[570]

The language was typical of the dedication of publications to the Celebrations, paying respects to the Shah and to the 'noble purposes if the celebration',[571] yet essentially it was an academic study that had nothing to do with Cyrus the Great, or indeed the founding of his empire. This dissertation has explored the many and varied reasons that academics might engage with the event, be it for prestige, money, or purely scholarly motivations. However, whatever the cause of their enthusiasm, that there was such an astounding response from the academic community is significant in itself. One would be hard pressed to find another nationalist celebration that inspired such a high level of interest from academics and cultural institutions, and sparked such an unprecedented array of exhibitions, publications, lectures and conferences worldwide.

[570] Carlo Paoloni, *I Fuochi Sacri Dell'Antica Persia* (Milan: Stampato A Cura Dell'Autore, 1971) p. viii, translated from the Italian by Maria van Veldhuizen.
[571] Ibid.

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