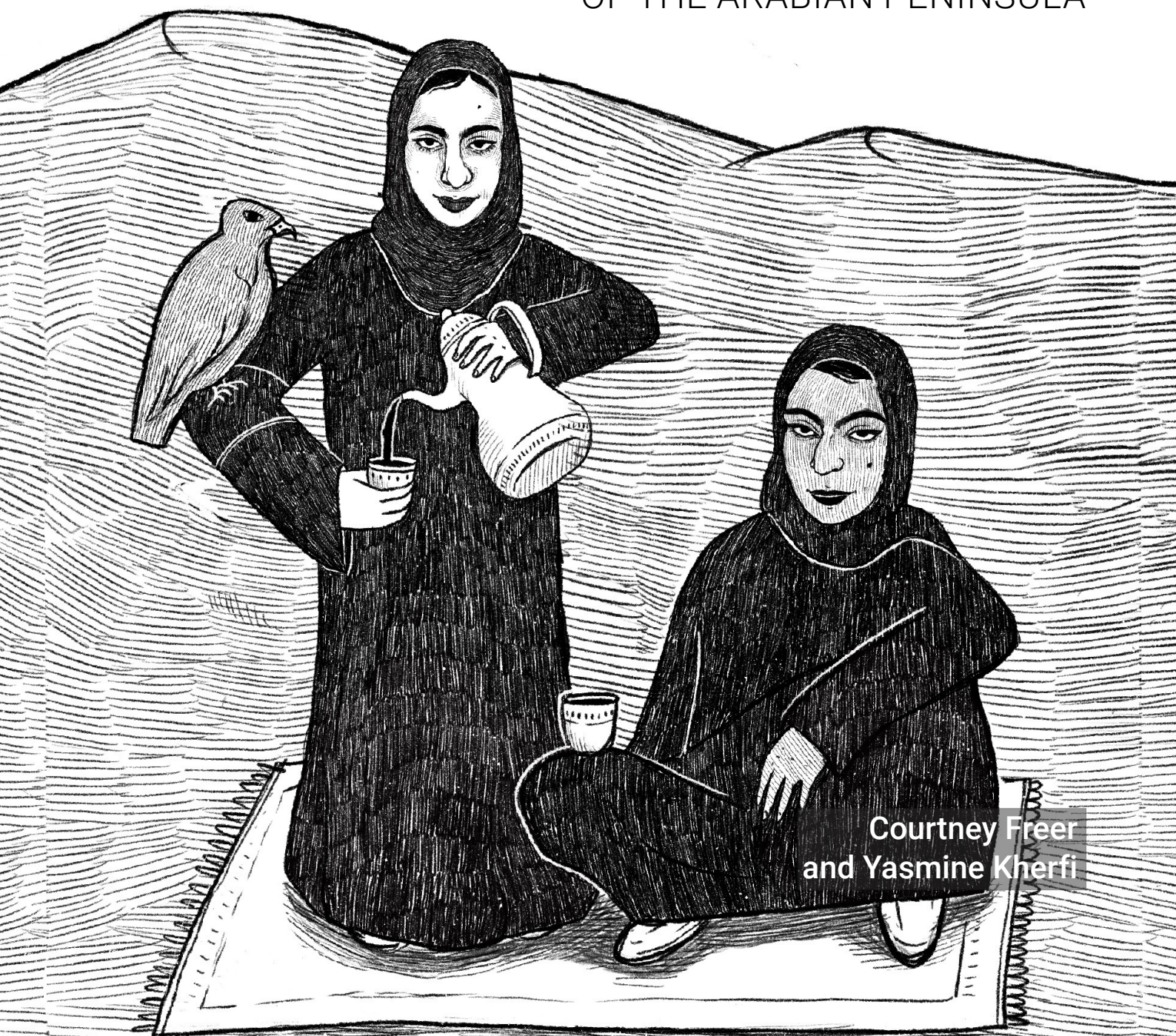# WHOSE STORY?

NARRATIVES OF NATIONALISM IN HERITAGE PRODUCTION OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

**Courtney Freer
and Yasmine Kherfi**

About the Middle East Centre

The Middle East Centre builds on LSE's long engagement with the Middle East and provides a central hub for the wide range of research on the region carried out at LSE.

The Middle East Centre aims to enhance understanding and develop rigorous research on the societies, economies, polities and international relations of the region. The Centre promotes both specialised knowledge and public understanding of this crucial area and has outstanding strengths in interdisciplinary research and in regional expertise. As one of the world's leading social science institutions, LSE comprises departments covering all branches of the social sciences. The Middle East Centre harnesses this expertise to promote innovative research and training on the region.

Whose Story? Narratives of Nationalism in Heritage Production of the Arabian Peninsula

Courtney Freer and Yasmine Kherfi

About the Authors

Courtney Freer is Assistant Professorial Research Fellow at the LSE Middle East Centre. Her work focuses on the domestic politics of the Gulf states, particularly the role of Islamism and tribalism. Courtney's book, *Rentier Islamism: The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gulf Monarchies*, was published in 2018 by Oxford University Press.

Yasmine Kherfi is Projects Coordinator at the LSE Middle East Centre. She has worked on heritage, nationalisms, and currently researches the biopolitics of conflict and contested sovereignties in Syria. Yasmine holds a BA in Political Science and Middle East studies from the University of Toronto, and a Master's in Development Administration and Planning from The Bartlett, University College London.

Abstract

Over the past decade, all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have invested considerably in the development of their local heritage industries. In parallel, these states have expanded their efforts at fostering home-grown nationalism. What scholarship exists on the topic of heritage production and development in the GCC tends to be predominantly anthropological, sociological or linked to museum studies, while literature on nationalism in this context tends to remain in the realms of political science. This paper addresses existing disciplinary gaps by interrogating how heritage interacts with nationalism, specifically with state-perpetuated national narratives about citizens' shared history and common identity. The piece draws particular attention to the state's key role in mediating this process and investigates the extent to which non-state actors and grassroots initiatives are involved in heritage production and national identity formation across the Arabian Peninsula.

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Over the past decade, as the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have invested in increasingly expensive and public heritage projects, a body of scholarly literature has emerged on their heritage, yet has largely failed to engage with the parallel emergence of more assertive nationalism across these states. Through this paper, we provide a much-needed analysis and acknowledgement of the power structures operating in the realm of heritage production as a means of addressing existing disciplinary gaps in heritage literature. In so doing, we interrogate how heritage interacts with nationalism, specifically through state-perpetuated national narratives about citizens' shared history and common identity; we also raise the question of why the heritage industry has become so important to GCC leaderships specifically and how it is used to foster nationalism. Indeed, heritage production is almost exclusively managed by central state authorities in the GCC, with limited grassroots initiatives having emerged in recent years. Still, by examining the founding myths and dominant tropes that governments propagate through heritage developments, we can reach a more comprehensive understanding of how GCC states shape national identity formation.

This paper is informed by two academic workshops held at LSE as part of a two-year project sponsored by the LSE Middle East Centre's Academic Collaboration with Arab Universities Programme, in collaboration with Dr Rima Sabban from Zayed University in Dubai, as well as fieldwork conducted in April 2019 in Kuwait and Qatar. Using this information, we aim to account for the role of the state in heritage discourse and practice, which we believe has been neglected in past studies of heritage production and preservation in the Arabian Peninsula. In effect, such studies have focused on findings from archaeological sites, the role of architecture and material culture more broadly in understanding the state's present through historical developments (dating back to the pre-Islamic era in some cases), as well as the notable proliferation of GCC museums, their role in heritage revival and shaping heritage discourses, and the dominant place cultural planning holds within national frameworks to promote sustainable economic growth and tourism development.

To varying extents, GCC governments have focused on sponsoring a multitude of heritage projects that concurrently serve their nation-building efforts and broader economic diversification strategies, including the expansion of their cultural and touristic offerings.[1] For instance, Qatar's new national museum, which opened in spring 2019, was commissioned at $434 million;[2] Dubai's Museum of the Future cost $136 million,[3] and the rehabilitation

---

[1] Suzi Mirgani, 'Introduction: Art and Cultural Production in the GCC', *Journal of Arabian Studies* vol. 7 (2017): 1–11.

[2] Suzanne Cords, 'Qatar's New National Museum: Inspired by the Desert Rose', *DW*, 28 March 2019. Available at https://www.dw.com/en/qatars-new-national-museum-inspired-by-the-desert-rose/a-48093214

[3] 'A Giant, Silver Loop in Dubai Will House the Museum of the Future', *Building Design and Construction*, 5 March 2015. Available at https://www.bdcnetwork.com/giant-silver-loop-dubai-will-house-museum-future

of the Kuwait National Museum is estimated at $6 million.[4] That so much investment has been made into such heritage sites in recent years is informative in itself and indicates a broader effort to foster nationalism. In effect, these relatively newly independent states have assiduously fostered nationalist sentiment, particularly in recent years. Some have gone to war in Yemen, building up concomitant military nationalism,[5] while Qatar has faced the initial challenges of a blockade by its neighbours by asserting increasing independence from the rest of the GCC.[6]

Kristin Smith Diwan has argued that the nationalist conceptions propagated by GCC leaderships are assertive, linked to military prowess, and require service of citizens.[7] With the implementation of large-scale vision plans meant to spur economic diversification away from hydrocarbons, there is greater pressure for citizens to become more active in their national economies. As Diwan explains, '[t]he rise of the "new nationalism" in the Gulf reflects the decline of the power of the welfare state to engender gratitude and loyalty. It also reflects the elevated demands by and on citizens: for a framework that allows for a more active contribution to public life, and for a better-trained and more enterprising citizenry.'[8] Citizens are expected to become active participants in local economies, rather than relying on public sector jobs that have dominated in the past. At the same time, however, space for political participation is not expanding in kind.[9] Furthermore, the

---

[4] 'Patient Restoration: The Kuwait National Museum', *Saudi Aramco World* vol, 51, no. 5 (September/October 2000). Available at https://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200005/patient.restoration-the.kuwait.national.museum.htm

[5] Eleonora Ardemagni, 'Gulf Monarchies' Militarized Nationalism', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 28 February 2019. Available at https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/78472

[6] Tim Adams, 'From Qatar's Blockade, A Bold Unexpected New Vision is Emerging', *The Guardian*, 6 May 2018. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/06/qatar-blockade-unexpected-new-vision-isolation

[7] Kristin Smith Diwan, 'Gulf Societies in Transition: National Identity and National Projects in the Arab Gulf States: Workshop Report', *Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, June 2016, p. 12. Available at https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/National-Identity_Web-1.pdf

[8] Ibid., p. 12.

[9] In Bahrain, the opposition was effectively banned from contesting the 2018 parliamentary elections (Patrick Wintour, 'Bahrain Election Condemned after Opposition Ban', *The Guardian*, 9 November 2018. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/09/bahrain-undemocratic-after-ban-placed-on-opposition); in Kuwait, a number of opposition figures were imprisoned in 2017 for storming parliament in a protest in 2011 (Hussain al-Qatari, 'Kuwait Sentences Lawmakers to Prison over 2011 Protest', *AP News*, 8 July 2018. Available at https://apnews.com/3509d3c8ddd74e3e814ce-15cc154f60a); in Oman, political power remains centralised in the hands of the sultan (Marc Valeri, 'Oman's New Sultan Faces Mammoth Challenges', *BBC News*, 21 January 2020. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-51112191); Qatar's Shura Council elections have been delayed (Simone Foxman and Abbas al-Lawati, 'Qatar Prepares for Legislative Elections after 15-Year Delay', *Bloomberg News*, 30 October 2019. Available at https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-31/qatar-prepares-for-legislative-elections-after-15-year-delay); Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is estimated to have imprisoned hundreds for their political beliefs, in addition to jailing several members of the ruling family (Michael Safi, 'Saudi Arabia: Arrests of Dissidents and Torture Allegations Continue', *The Guardian*, 4 November 2019. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/04/saudi-arabia-mass-arrests-of-dissidents-and-torture-allegations-continue); the UAE also continues to hold political prisoners and increase domestic surveillance ('UAE: Political Detain-

increasing military activity of GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, underlines the state's shift in requiring service of its citizens, and in so doing facilitates the emergence of military nationalism, rather than a nationalism linked to traditional heritage tropes elaborated upon in this paper. Indeed, since 2014, conscription laws have been passed in Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, and military spending continues to rise across the region, demonstrating that the new strand of GCC nationalism is, at least to a certain extent, linked to military prowess. The UAE in particular has come to be known as 'little Sparta'[10] for its military competence, yet, given the extent to which GCC militaries depend on external technology and expertise,[11] as well as manpower,[12] this does not seem to be a main referent for nationalistic tropes.

Undoubtedly, some aspects of GCC nationalism are shared across the Middle East and propagated globally, particularly with regard to the limited inclusion of the military in nationalistic tropes. Nonetheless, though this study is focussed on the GCC states, we hope to highlight ways in which their state-driven heritage industries differ from those of their neighbours. Is the GCC unique in its focus on state-led heritage discourse? And if so, why? Do such states provide space for grassroots heritage initiatives to emerge? While more substantive research is needed on the topic, this paper draws on visual data and discourse analyses of heritage narratives in museum spaces, broader cultural institutions and proclaimed heritage sites, as a preliminary step to better grounding analyses of heritage developments within their socio-political contexts and particularly within the expansion of nationalism in the GCC. The paper outlines the state's central role in mediating this process and incorporating heritage planning as an integral part and driver of the nationalist agenda. Through our review of literature, interviews, workshops and fieldwork in Kuwait and Qatar in April 2019, we have identified three main characteristics of the GCC countries that make them unique areas for the consideration of heritage discourse and the creation of heritage tropes: rentierism, tribalism as linked to monarchical rule, and the presence of expatriate out-groups. Below, we firstly elaborate on these points and come to preliminary conclusions about the consequences of these unique dynamics on the heritage discourse and industry in the GCC. Secondly, we look at the ways in which grassroots efforts at heritage production take place in the GCC, as well as the extent to which they affirm or subvert the hegemonic nationalist discourses.

ees Languish behind Bars', *Human Rights Watch*, 12 November 2019. Available at https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/12/uae-political-detainees-languish-behind-bars).

[10] Christian H. Heller, 'Little Sparta's Big Ambitions: The Emirati Military Comes of Age', *Real Clear Defense*, 17 September 2019. Available at https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/09/17/little_spartas_big_ambitions_the_emirati_military_comes_of_age_114748.html

[11] Zoltan Barany, 'Indigenous Defense Industries in the Gulf', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 24 April 2020. Available at https://www.csis.org/analysis/indigenous-defense-industries-gulf

[12] Zoltan Barany, 'Foreign Contract Soldiers in the Gulf', *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 5 February 2020. Available at https://carnegie-mec.org/2020/02/05/foreign-contract-soldiers-in-gulf-pub-80979

Rentierism

One component that has aided the transformation of GCC states into wealthy and asser-tive states with distinct national identities is the inception of oil wealth. Certainly, states of the GCC are distinctive in that practically all of them have access to financial resources to support what Nazih Ayubi calls 'the sources of their religious (or "traditional") legitimi-zation with substantial amounts of financial resources.'[13] This wealth alone, of course, is not sufficient to aid state-building or national identity, something which GCC states have increasingly realised and sought to address by financing the heritage industry. Nonethe-less, this wealth has been cited as having shaped the very character of GCC citizens, with reference to a 'rentier mentality' often used to explain citizen reliance on public sector employment and other aspects of the welfare state in the region.[14]

Wealthy rentier states of the GCC, despite their ability to provide materially for their citi-zenry, have increasingly focused on providing a ruling myth and sense of shared national identity for them as well. Hootan Shambayati highlights how, under non-rentier condi-tions, challenges to state authority tend to be economically motivated; due to the fact that rentier governments tend to provide handsomely for their citizens; however, moral and cultural issues come to the fore as potential challenges to state authority, making state involvement (and investment) in this field all the more important.[15] Nonetheless, the field of literature on rentier state theory largely neglects the importance of culture and heritage in states benefitting from natural resource wealth, relying instead on the unique economic characteristics of these states to explain their political and social systems. Courtney Freer's work has examined the ways in which rentier governments attempt to co-opt the religious sector and independent religious actors in particular, with varying degrees of success,[16] but this project looks beyond that, to the nationalistic tropes reproduced by heritage sectors managed by rentier governments in the Arabian Peninsula, which are often notably secular in character. While religion may be referenced, the content of museums we visited tended not to be, strictly speaking, religious, with objects in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha often linked to science and technology rather than to religion or religious content itself.

Owing to the fact that a large portion of GCC economies are reliant on hydrocarbon pro-duction, it is instructive to see how the discovery of oil is portrayed in national museums, if it is touched upon at all. The National Museum of Qatar, for instance, features a large display representing the discovery of oil, which ended a particularly dark period of Qatar's history after the decline of the pearl trade in the 1930s due to global recession and the introduction of cultured pearls in Japan.[17] Oil is therefore openly portrayed as having

---

[13] Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 1993), 118.

[14] Hazem Beblawi, 'The Rentier State in the Arab World', in Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (eds), *The Rentier State* (Routledge: London, 1987), 52.

[15] Hootan Shambayati, 'The Rentier State, Interest Groups, and the Paradox of Autonomy: State and Business in Turkey and Iran', *Comparative Politics* vol. 26, no. 3 (1994): 307–31.

[16] Courtney Freer, 'State Religious Authorities in Rentier Economies and the Management of Indepen-dent Islamism', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 47, no. 1 (2020): 42–61.

[17] Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cam-

saved Qatar from economic disaster. The Company House of Msheireb Museums in Doha, which itself is sponsored by hydrocarbon giant Shell, is entirely focused on the start of the oil industry and seems to upend the myth that GCC nationals have done little to earn their country's wealth,[18] by featuring oral histories from Qatari nationals who worked in the oil industry in its early days and recounted the harsh reality of their work. Although the oil industries in these states are today primarily staffed by expatriates, they were initially dependent on local labour.[19] The museum traces the discovery of oil and portrays in great detail the difficulty of extracting hydrocarbon wealth and the extent to which local (male) labourers were a part of this process. As a result, while oil is portrayed as being critical to the development of Qatar, it did not do so alone: Qatari labourers were a part of this process, thus undermining traditional understandings of the rentier state and rentier citizens, which is that, as Beblawi puts it, 'reward – income or wealth – is not related to work and risk bearing, rather to chance or situation.'[20]

In Kuwait, whose national museum is currently being renovated, we saw few references to the oil industry, perhaps due to the desire to portray its pre-oil past as the 'authentic' Kuwait. Nonetheless, the dedicated Kuwait Oil Company Ahmed Al-Jaber Oil and Gas Exhibition demonstrates 'ways that oil products help, make our lives better.'[21] Oil is thus once again portrayed as having saved these states from potentially darker economic fates after the decline of the pearling industry. Oman's Oil and Gas Exhibition Centre, created in 1995 through funding from Petroleum Development Oman, similarly explores the discovery and extraction of hydrocarbons, as well as their various uses, in that country. In 2012, Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC) unveiled the UAE's first oil and gas museum, again chronicling the oil industry in that state.[22] Bahrain also houses a permanent Dar Al Naft Oil Museum outside of Manama near the original Bahrain Petroleum Office. Far from seeking to hide their historical reliance on hydrocarbons for their wealth, then, the GCC states tend to have preserved it and even packaged it as separate tourist attractions and heritage sites in order to demonstrate the benefits of hydrocarbon wealth and the ways in which this wealth was extracted by local labour.

Monarchical Rule and Tribalism

Monarchy, due to the fact that it is based on bloodline, perpetuates both tribal influence and the stability of ruling families with tribal linkages; as such, ruling families and these countries' tribal pasts, whether real or imagined, play important roles in heritage sites.[23]

---

bridge University Press, 1990), 38–9.

[18] Beblawi, 'The Rentier State in the Arab World', 52.

[19] Ibid., 58–9.

[20] Ibid., 52.

[21] Ahmed Al-Jaber Oil and Gas Exhibition, Kuwait Oil Company. Available at https://www.kocexhibit. com/#/

[22] 'UAE's First Ever Oil and Gas Museum Attracts Visitors to ADIPEC 2012', Abu Dhabi City Guide, 13 November 2012. Available at http://www.abudhabicityguide.com/news/news-details.asp?news-id=10987&newstype=Company%20News.

[23] Lisa Anderson, 'Dynasts and Nationalists: Why Monarchies Survive', in Joseph Kostiner (ed.), *Middle*

Saudi Arabia is, after all, the only country in the world named after its ruling family – a testament to the primacy of family in the region, signalling also the predominance of ascriptive identity over, for instance, ideological affiliation as is the case in more democratic states.[24] Some scholars have gone so far as to dub the GCC states 'families with flags', demonstrating how central tribalism remains to political and social life in these states.[25] Indeed, the GCC monarchies have been remarkably effective in constructing modern nation states within only decades of their establishment due to their ability to gain central authority in the GCC states. In short, '[l]ike the regimes of seventeenth-century European absolutists, most of the regimes of the Middle East are centralized, personalistic, and actually or potentially coercive. These features are typical of (perhaps even required by) the project of state-formation.'[26]

Nationalism throughout the GCC remains linked to members of ruling families, whose photos are ubiquitous in the region. National Days are one important means of emphasising the personalistic nature of nationalism inside the GCC monarchies: all have the ruling family at their centre.[27] Such modes of emphasising monarchical authority help to fuse loyalty to the ruling family with loyalty to the state. Going beyond the flagging that Michael Billig describes,[28] across the GCC, a variety of 'national' markers have become inextricably linked to the ruling family, making it nearly impossible for a citizen to support the state without backing the regime. Indeed, across the UAE, 2018 was commemorated as the Year of Zayed, since it marked 100 years since the birth of Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, the country's first president and widely considered its founding father. Events were held across the emirates through the Higher National Committee for the Year of Zayed, demonstrating how institutionalised and how sustained the celebration of the former ruler was.[29] In a less institutionalised way, the image of Qatari Emir Shaykh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has become more prominent throughout Qatar after Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE cut ties with the country in June 2017; images of the emir remain

---

East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 57.

[24] Ibid., 58–9.

[25] Daniel Martin Varisco, 'When the State Becomes a Non-State: Yemen between the Huthis, Hiraq and Al-Qaeda', in Peter Sluglett and Victor Kattan (eds), *Violent Radical Movements in the Arab World: The Ideology and Politics of Non-State Actors* (London: IB Tauris, 2019), 145.

[26] Anderson, 'Dynasts and Nationalists', 55.

[27] Saudi Arabia's national day, for instance, observed on 23 September, commemorates the day on which King Abdulaziz pronounced the country as a Kingdom in 1932. Qatar's national day, on 18 December, marks the date on which Jassim bin Mohammed al-Thani became ruler in 1878 and is credited with having unified various tribes in the peninsula. Kuwait's national day, 25 February, marks the date in 1965 when Shaykh Abdullah became emir. Bahrain's Nation Day, 16 December, marks the date it declared independence, even though it was in fact 15 August, since that date corresponds with the coronation of former ruler Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa. Emirati National Day, 2 December, marks the UAE's independence and unification under Shaykh Zayed al-Nahyan. Omani National Day, 18 November, celebrates independence from the Portuguese in 1650, while the day following is former leader Sultan Qaboos' birthday, another state holiday.

[28] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 41.

[29] 'About the Year of Zayed', United Arab Emirates Ministry of Presidential Affairs. Available at https://www.zayed.ae/en/year-of-zayed/about/

a symbol of Qatar's resilience against external threat, with the image of 'Tamim al-Majd', drawn by a local artist, having become particularly popular.[30] Oman's Sultan Qaboos, who held a variety of positions in the government, was also widely seen as the father of the nation, and thus was mourned for 40 days following his death in January 2020, showing how widely the figure himself was associated with the state. Further, new forms of media allow different means to 'bring the flag across the contemporary hearth.'[31] Ruling family members have become increasingly adept at using tools of social media to communicate with their citizenry, making them the most visible representatives of the state in daily life as well as allowing rulers unofficial means of portraying certain political messages.

The national museum, itself a primary producer and promoter of national heritage, proliferated across the region during the 1970s, financed through the generosity of the region's ruling families. These institutions have sought to put in place singular linear historical narratives that form a cohesive whole and in Kuwait and Qatar were placed on the sites of rulers' homes. The objective was the establishment of an Andersonian 'imagined community' as a means of bringing together the disparate tribal, ethnic, and other sub-national identities of the GCC into more distinct national communities, united under the leadership of ruling families.

Yet it would be erroneous to assume that tribal affiliations and tribal politics are solely relevant to heritage discourses and discussions of the past. Indeed, in the present-day GCC, the tribal is 'not the traditional and certainly not the primitive,'[32] but instead 'is integral to the modern; it constitutes a crucial element in the GCC's modernity.'[33] This does not mean that it is, as miriam cooke suggests, merely instrumentalised by the state, but rather exists on its own as a key marker of social identity and sometimes a political marker as well. For example, at National Day celebrations throughout the GCC, tents tend to be organised by tribe, demonstrating the importance of such allegiances even at an event focussed on national identity. Further, during the protests of 2011, many prominent tribes in Bahrain and the UAE publicly voiced their support for ruling families and governments, demonstrating the persistent prevalence of subnational identities and their ultimate subservience to national authorities.[34]

Indeed, the cultural activities that are encouraged inside GCC states are largely managed by the government yet tend to affirm tribal identity – something which also confirms national belonging and can denote proximity to ruling elites. The creation of 'cultural'

---

[30] Promod Prabhakaran, 'Meet the Artist behind the Viral Image of Emir', *The Peninsula*, 11 June 2017. Available at https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/11/06/2017/Meet-the-artist-behind-the-viral-image-of-Emir

[31] Billig, 174.

[32] miriam cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 7.

[33] Ibid., 9.

[34] Justin Gengler, 'Bahrain Drain: Why the King's Sunni Supporters are Moving Abroad', *Foreign Affairs*, 5 September 2014. Available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2014-09-05/bahrain-drain; Rym Ghazal, 'UAE Tribes Continue to Show Allegiance', *The National*, 4 May 2011. Available at https://www.thenational.ae/uae-tribes-continue-to-show-allegiance-1.387952

or 'heritage' cities,[35] as well as state support for 'heritage' sports like falconry and camel racing, highlight the unique pasts of GCC states and underline the fact that the regimes remain in control of tribal symbols and tradition. Interestingly, some so-called heritage sports, such as camel racing in the UAE, are not historically associated with the region, as is pointed out in the work of Sulayman Khalaf.[36] Regardless, stories of the (male) members of ruling families excelling in such sports serve to underline their aptitude as tribal leaders. Museums in these states, namely the Kuwait National Museum, Dubai National Museum, and Radwani House in Qatar's Msheireb Museums highlight tribal life through series of dioramas and recreations. In Kuwait, we see more of an emphasis on Kuwait City as a port and society's development within this trade centre entrepôt. Despite such emphasis on cosmopolitan pasts, there still remains a disconnect between national and non-national populations, who have long played a major role in the commerce-driven societies of the Arabian Peninsula.

Expatriates and In-Groups

Imbuing citizens with nationalistic sentiment is particularly encouraged in those GCC states where expatriates are the overwhelming majority, especially Qatar and the UAE whose citizens are estimated to be only around 10 percent of the total population.[37] As Ernest Gellner points out, nationalism 'maintains that similarity of culture is the basic social bond.'[38] As a result, outward social underpinnings of nationalism are emphasised inside the GCC, often through tribal tropes. Indeed, there exists 'a nationalist-type sensitivity to the impact of foreign residents, who are perceived as diluting local identity.'[39] Expatriates in GCC states are thus often dubbed 'transplants,' regardless of how long they or their families have lived there. The distinction is read through a focus on the (real or imagined) shared tribal past of nationals: the desert was once the home of citizen populations and the site of many heritage-linked activities, with this used as justification for citizens' privileged status and claim to the land.

Tribalism, through emphasising kinship links and thus the authority of ruling families,

---

[35] Qatar's Katara Cultural Village was opened in 2011 with the support of former emir, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani; Abu Dhabi's Heritage Village is another government-sponsored project meant to recreate traditional life in the emirate.

[36] Sulayman Khalaf, 'Poetics and Politics of Newly Invented Traditions in the Gulf: Camel Racing in the United Arab Emirates', *Ethnology* vol. 39, no. 3 (2000): 243–61.

[37] As of 2008, the proportion of non-nationals in GCC populations stood at 51 percent in Bahrain, 68 percent in Kuwait, 31 percent in Oman, 87 percent in Qatar, 27 percent in Saudi Arabia and 81 percent in the UAE. Martin Baldwin-Edwards, 'Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends', *LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States* no. 15 (March 2011): 10. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55239/1/Baldwin-Edwards_2011.pdf

[38] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), 3.

[39] Neil Partrick, 'Nationalism in the Gulf States', *LSE Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States* no. 5 (2009): 34. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55257/1/Patrick_2009.pdf

is a critical component of GCC nationalism. Examining the museum spaces of these states, there is very little mention of expatriate populations as part of these cosmopolitan entrepôts. Qatar's Bin Jelmood House seeks to address this issue by documenting the history of slavery in the Arabian Peninsula and Indian Ocean and thus approaching issues of race, nationality and class in the region. In particular, the museum showcases the history of slavery in chronological order and sheds light on the complicity of traders from the Arabian Peninsula. The museum also highlights the role Islam played in promoting the humane treatment of enslaved people and concludes by outlining the ongoing forms of human exploitation, including of migrant workers in the GCC, which must be challenged.

Because citizenship lines have tended to be drawn according to ethnic background, Ahn Nga Longva has dubbed the GCC states ethnocracies:

> the term describes the tendency for an elite to posit their own physical characteristics and cultural norms as the essence of the nation over which they rule, thus narrowing its definition and excluding all those within the polity who do not exhibit the same characteristics or embrace the same norms. In this sense, ethnocracy as a socio-political regime is the outcome of ethnonationalism, that brand of nationalism that views the nation as a 'natural' and ethnically 'pure' community, as opposed to its liberal conceptualisation as a community based on equal rights and duties.[40]

Longva goes on to explain this formulation in Kuwait in particular by examining the lack of social and political mobility for non-citizens who are excluded from local political life, and largely denied opportunities to enter it.

The work of Neha Vora has also highlighted the ways in which large populations of non-nationals have played critical roles in state-building exercises, yet are excluded from most official state histories. As Vora and Koch highlight, 'what makes nationalist discourse and nation-building agendas of the Gulf so powerful is the fact that they have relied heavily upon purifying the imagined citizen "self" from the non-citizen "other" – often through recuperating the Western Orientalist repertoire.'[41] Indeed, as they highlight, heritage sports and symbols of primordial culture, like pearling, dhows, windtowers and the desert, as well as the use of national dress, demonstrate in daily life the enforced and permanent distinction between citizens and non-citizens, which in turn shapes how heritage discourses are created and maintained.[42] Despite the prevalence of state-articulated nationalist and heritage discourses, however, there exist some important examples of efforts to up-end traditional tropes perpetuated by state authorities – some of which, importantly, include the contribution of expatriate populations.

---

[40] Anh Nga Longva, 'Neither Autocracy nor Democracy but Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait', in Paul Dresch and James Piscatori (eds), *Monarchies and Nations: Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf* (London: IB Tauris, 2005), 119.

[41] Neha Vora and Natalie Koch, 'Everyday Inclusions: Rethinking Ethnocracy, Kafala, and Belonging in the Arabian Peninsula', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* vol. 15, no. 3 (2015): 548.

[42] Ibid., 549.

State-Enabled Grassroots Initiatives

By largely operating as an extension of the state apparatus, the creative sectors of the GCC exercise control over cultural output, which is predominantly moulded to fit the univocal conceptions of national history and identity discussed at greater length above. The state's involvement in this area is important insofar as it is able to decide what heritage is and, significantly, what the citizen should look like. Still, there are government-funded institutions that demonstrate a commitment to preserving heritage, promoting inclusive cultural activities, and allowing local, independent initiatives to flourish – as long as they are state-approved first. For instance, the Sharjah government is notable for its efforts to preserve the historic character and architectural legacy of the city, which has also helped foster an arguably distinctive identity compared to its neighbouring emirates. The UAE's third largest city and popularly referred to as the cultural capital, Sharjah is known for prioritising investments in cultural infrastructure, namely through institutions such as the Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF), which not only plays a role in restoring some of the city's historic structures, but also engages local residents in inexpensive, accessible activities that allow them to experience local heritage and life in the area. For instance, SAF's community programme, though of course government-run, invites artists and urban practitioners to work on various activities for and with local communities in the historic neighbourhood, including curated excursions around the area, as well as sketching and calligraphy workshops.[43] According to the foundation's website, the 'SAF neighbourhood project reflects, celebrates and documents the narratives of people living and working in the area.'[44] By using a government initiative, the SAF has managed to cultivate a local community with more citizen and non-citizen independent artists, insofar as it enables cultural production in a more participatory and socially inclusive way. Still, activities associated with the SAF operate within red lines set out by the state and local governments.

Other prominent institutions include Art Dubai (formerly known as the Gulf Art Fair), an international art fair established in 2007 by art dealer John Martin and banker Benedict Floyd under the patronage of the ruler of Dubai.[45] Since its inception, Art Dubai has gained international acclaim for its engagement with galleries across the globe. It is prominently known as a local talent incubator, comprising different platforms designed to support emerging artists and to strengthen the 'local art ecology' of the UAE (understood as the web of institutions that facilitate cultural production).[46] Additionally, Art Dubai is regarded as an inclusive institution, insofar as expatriates and residents play an instrumental part in the management and curation of its programmes. Nonetheless, because it is managed by the state, censorship still exists, and creative freedom is by no means absolute.[47]

---

[43] Sharjah Art Foundation, 2020. Available at http://sharjahart.org/sharjah-art-foundation/programme/safneighbourhood

[44] Ibid.

[45] Elaine W. Ng, 'DIFC Gulf Art Fair', *Art Asia Pacific* vol. 53 (May/June 2007). Available at http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/53/DIFCGulfArtFair

[46] 'The Fair', *Art Dubai*, 2020. Available at https://www.artdubai.ae/the-fair/

[47] Tom Gara, 'Authorities Censor Art Dubai', *Financial Times*, 24 March 2012. Available at https://www.ft.com/content/1cb7747c-7506-11e1-90d1-00144feab49a; for specific examples, see 'Censorship Cases at

On the topic of state investment in national narratives, some initiatives across the GCC depart from hegemonic cultural discourse, by engaging with aspects of collective memory that are usually left out of public discussion and official narratives. Established institutions have tried to address alternative discourses that draw attention to migrant identities in heritage narratives for instance, although such efforts are still in early stages.[48]

In Qatar, for example, Msheireb Downtown Doha supported the launch of the Echo Memory of Art Project, which sought to document the life of migrant workers who formerly lived in the Msheireb area (one of the oldest neighbourhoods of Doha) due to Msheireb Properties' regeneration project in the area.[49] This community project was overseen by a national government organisation but was artist-led, namely by British curator Ben Barbour, Qatari artists, construction workers in the area, as well as employees of Msheireb.[50] While artefacts were collected and put on display in one of the heritage galleries of the area (the Mohammed Bin Jassim House), the project was more concerned with developing a historical record of the neighbourhood than shedding light on the lives and identities of the migrant labourers who lived in the area.[51]

Therefore, while some of the institutions that are more explicitly part of the state's cultural apparatus provide spaces for engagement with different identities, efforts have been marginal within the dominant cultural heritage framework. In the case of the Echo Memory of Art project, curatorial narratives have been limited in their deconstruction of the singular national identity and offer an almost tokenising account by glossing over the migrants themselves, and instead focusing on the history of the old neighbourhood. Still, it is an important effort to combat rapid development projects in the GCC, or Dubaisation, by telling the history of an expatriate-dominated space.

Nonetheless, some grassroots platforms enable further discussions to occur and for greater inclusions of citizens and expatriates. For instance, as part of his Hiwar project, Kuwaiti multimedia artist, Zahed Sultan, reimagines heritage and culture – particularly the rich yet troublesome recollections behind pearl diving music in an effort to counter the glamorised and sensationalised accounts that are often represented.[52] Hiwar – 'dialogue' in Arabic – uses live performance to try and portray the essence of pearl diving culture and what it could look, sound and feel like had it continued to evolve to this day.[53] The project has been successful insofar as different age groups have been drawn to the experience, stimulating the curiosity of younger generations and sparking in the older a sense of nostalgia. [54] Sultan's aim is to dig deeper and understand the roots of pearl diving culture in a more historically accurate

---

Art Dubai', *Art Leaks*, 27 March 2012. Available at https://art-leaks.org/2012/03/27/censorship-cases-at-art-dubai/

[48] Sarina Wakefield, 'Contemporary Art and Migrant Identity "Construction" in the UAE and Qatar', *Journal of Arabian Studies* vol. 7 (August 2017): 99–111.

[49] Ibid., 104.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Zahed Sultan, Interview with Yasmine Kherfi, April 2019. More information available at https://www.zahedsultan.com/

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

way, particularly because the industry was dangerous and exploitative, having propagated a series of labour abuses.[55] According to the artist, this topic provides a good entry point to not only discuss heritage but also the hierarchies of citizenship and domestic worker treatment within Kuwaiti society.[56] In effect, many pearl divers were slaves, particularly of East-African lineage.[57] For the most part, this discussion remains taboo, and state-produced information disseminates a false sense of identity that ties a nationalistic purity to pearl diving. [58]

Other trends include an increase in poetry and spoken word platforms across the GCC states – many of which are enabled by residents through social media platforms. For instance, the Kuwait Poets Society was established in January 2016 to provide a supportive and collaborative arts space in which poets could meet, present their work and socialise.[59] The initiative began with a Twitter call-out, and evolved organically through an informal collective that coordinated monthly meetings over WhatsApp.[60] This initiative, like Madeenah, which arranges citizen-curated and grassroots-organised walking tours of downtown Kuwait City,[61] provides a space for both expatriates and citizens to participate on equal footing and to challenge state-propagated narratives. After settling on the name Kuwait Poets Society, the initiative became concretised as a broader supportive platform not only to facilitate meet ups and collaborative work, but also to draw attention to, and create new opportunities for, poetic and musical talent in Kuwait. [62]

The Society's activities include guided creative writing workshops and feedback sessions that offer the space for writers to discuss and get feedback on their latest works, and it hosts Open Mic nights that encourage spoken word artists, poets and others to perform, as long as the content presented complies with standards deemed fit for the local context.[63] This includes avoiding commenting on Kuwaiti politics and government, sharing anti-religious or blasphemous views, or expressing explicit sexual content, showing the presence of the state's red lines even in the cultural sphere.[64] Nonetheless, the society runs a literary magazine entitled *Ink & Oil*, which promotes literary and artistic talent from across the region, and prides itself upon maintaining inclusivity and diversity as high priorities.[65] Similar initiatives take place across GCC cities, including Blank Space, an open mic night in Dubai.[66] Qatar meanwhile has opened the Fire Station: Artist in Residence as a means of cultivating artistic talent and providing educational opportunities to local

---

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

[59] *Kuwait Poets Society*, 2020. Available at http://kuwaitpoetssociety.com/

[60] Ibid.

[61] Mai al-Farhan, 'Madeenah: Exploring Urban Development in Kuwait City', *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*, 20 March 2017. Available at https://agsiw.org/madeenah-exploring-urban-development-kuwait-city/

[62] *Kuwait Poets Society*.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Sherouk Zakaria, 'Blank Space: An Open Mic Event in UAE', *Khaleej Times*, 14 September 2016. Available at https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/general/blank-space-an-open-mic-event-platform-in-uae

residents interested in the arts.[67] Undoubtedly, then, efforts are being made to shift the balance away from state-led heritage and cultural initiatives and to increasingly involve local populations; still, these exist within red lines either explicitly enforced or internalised by participants in these projects.

Conclusions

Despite the proliferation of new state-led and independent heritage projects, the role of heritage and nation-building initiatives can be seen to reflect and institutionalise, rather than redress and overcome, the existing and contested distributions of power in society. Heritage projects embody a particular emphasis on 'Arabian Bedouin desert traditions' and a 'Bedouin-style cultural past,' despite the fact that the majority of the country's nationals belong to settled communities, while a large proportion of the national population hail from other parts of the world and speak different languages.[68] Government-curated heritage sites, instead of highlighting cases of difference, tend to focus on creating a singular narrative in which tribes have come together, under the leadership of ruling families, to create singular nation states. Nonetheless, even these government-funded heritage sites appear to be changing and becoming more inclusive, at least in some instances, of expatriate populations.

The importance of retaining indigenous cultural peculiarity and promoting nationalism is clear through examination of GCC states' national vision documents, although museum megaprojects appear to appeal primarily to international visitors. While the vision documents primarily aim to remove existing barriers to economic diversification and target specific sectors like tourism in which the government can invest to generate future revenues, as well as to build comparative advantage and global competitiveness, they all also note the importance of retaining local heritage and values.[69] Further, new areas of investment include the creative sector, namely the investment in arts and culture, which is not only emphasised in writing, but has arguably come to fruition in many cases through the development of specialised clusters across different industries, such as the Doha Fire Station and Dubai Design District.[70]

The UAE Vision 2021, meant to drive forward the state's diversification, notably also promotes the civic responsibility of upholding 'Emiratis' solid national character as a main source of inspiration for the protection and preservation of national identity' and describes the latter as a 'crucial matter of national pride and social stability (...) in the face of increasing multiculturalism.'[71] Qatar National Vision 2030 also includes a range of future objectives for the country, including the development of an education system that roots Qatari youth in 'Qatari moral and ethical values, traditions and cultural heritage.'[72] Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 similarly emphasises the need to ensure that economic growth does not come at the expense of preserving Bahraini cultural heritage, a common

---

[67] 'Fire Station: Artist in Residence'. Available at http://firestation.org.qa/en/about

[68] Partrick, 'Nationalism in the Gulf States', 16–17.

[69] Martin Hvidt, 'Planning for Development in the GCC States: A Content Analysis of Current Development Plans', *Journal of Arabian Studies* vol. 2, no. 2 (2012): 189–207.

[70] Ibid.

[71] UAE Vision 2021. Available at https://www.vision2021.ae/docs/default-source/default-document-library/uae_vision-arabic.pdf?sfvrsn=b09a06a6_6

[72] Qatar National Vision 2030. Available at https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/about-qatar/national-vision2030/

concern throughout the GCC, and outlines the need to 'encourage new generations of Bahrainis to gain experience and in-depth knowledge of their cultural heritage.'[73] Kuwait's Vision 2035 includes the project 'Preservation and Promotion of Kuwait's Cultural Heritage' under the leadership of UNESCO, UNDP, the National Council for Culture Arts and the Supreme Council for Planning and Development; it intends to 'conserve, promote, and modernize the current cultural infrastructure in Kuwait.'[74] Such vision documents, while initially presented as economic reform plans, also highlight the significance of preserving material cultural heritage and less tangible national cultural values as critically important to the future of these states.

Clearly, the GCC states provide unique sites for the study of heritage discourse and production due to the presence of rentierism, tribalism and monarchy, and large expatriate populations, and are certainly worthy of further investigation. Existing literature on the topic has neglected to focus on the ways in which heritage messaging is inherently political by examining in particular the three unique components of GCC heritage sectors, as discussed above. Where rentier state theory largely ignores the role of nationalism or heritage, scholarship oriented towards museum studies largely excludes the role of the state. We see this paper as a step toward redressing that balance, while keeping in mind ways in which the GCC states are each distinctive as sites of heritage production, and worthy of comparison with other countries in the broader Middle East.

Lastly, it is important to examine state-promoted heritage discourse and projects to understand the significance of curatorial and narrative choices, such as the decision to highlight particular national figures and events based on hegemonic perceptions of their historical value.[75] It is equally relevant to keep in mind that, regardless of context within or outside of rentier states and the Arabian Peninsula, an inevitable process of editing takes place to create cohesive national narratives and values, all of which contribute to a singular cultural heritage associated with the state.[76] Governments of GCC states, uniquely positioned to invest considerable resources and attention to reforming cultural heritage discourse, therefore inevitably take an active political role in managing the demands of both state-sponsored and grassroots narratives.

Despite the demands of government-led heritage projects and vision documents, an increasingly vibrant local scene engaging with cultural and heritage production is now emerging, albeit within government red lines. While government institutions across the GCC may use their substantial funds to promote univocal conceptions of their national history and identity, we see some democratisation of access to cultural production and efforts to include grassroots and expatriate voices in both state-led heritage discourse and discussions at the grassroots level.

---

[73] The Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain. Available at https://www.moic.gov.bh/en/Ministry/Documents/Vision%202030.pdf

[74] 'Final Evaluation of the Project "Preservation and Promotion of Kuwait's Cultural Heritage"', *UNDP*, 2020. Available at https://www.openigo.com/vacancies/final-evaluation-of-the-project-preservation-and-promotion-of-kuwaits-cultural-heritage/

[75] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 14–30.

[76] Ibid.

LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series

Abdelrahman, Maha, 'Social Movements and the Question of Organisation: Egypt and Everywhere', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 8 (September 2015).

Abdolmohammadi, Pejman, 'The Revival of Nationalism and Secularism in Modern Iran', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 11 (November 2015).

Al-Ali, Nadje and **Tas, Latif**, 'Dialectics of Struggle: Challenges to the Kurdish Women's Movement', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 22 (March 2018).

Alhashel, Bader S. and **Albader, Sulaiman H.**, 'How do Sovereign Wealth Funds Pay their Portfolio Companies' Executives? Evidence from Kuwait', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 24 (June 2018).

Alkazemi, Mariam, 'Regulation of Healthcare Advertisements: Comparing Media Regulation of the Pharmaceutical Industry in Kuwait and the GCC', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 23 (April 2018).

Al-Najjar, Abeer, 'Public Media Accountability: Media Journalism, Engaged Publics and Critical Media Literacy in the MENA', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 35 (June 2020).

Al-Rasheed, Madawi, 'Divine Politics Reconsidered: Saudi Islamists on Peaceful Revolution', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 7 (May 2015).

Al-Rasheed, Madawi, 'Is it Always Good to be King? Saudi Regime Resilience after the 2011 Arab Popular Uprisings', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 12 (December 2015).

Al-Sarihi, Aisha, 'Prospects for Climate Change Integration into the GCC Economic Diversification Strategies', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 20 (February 2018).

Anderson, Charles, 'Will the Palestinian Peasantry Please Stand Up? Towards a New History of British Rule in Palestine, 1917-36', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 10 (November 2015).

Ansari, Ali, 'Iran's Eleventh Presidential Election Revisited: The Politics of Managing Change, *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 17 (November 2016).

Azmeh, Shamel, 'The Uprising of the Marginalised: A Socio-Economic Perspective of the Syrian Uprising', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 6 (November 2014).

Bardawil, Fadi, 'Theorising Revolution, Apprehending Civil War: Leftist Political Practice and Analysis in Lebanon (1969–79), *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 16 (October 2016).

Beinin, Joel, 'Political Economy and Social Movement Theory Perspectives on the Tunisian and Egyptian Popular Uprisings in 2011', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 14 (January 2016).

Colombo, Silvia and **Voltolini, Benedetta**, 'The EU's Engagement with 'Moderate' Political Islam: The Case of Ennahda', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 19 (July 2017).

De Smet, Brecht, 'The Prince and the Minotaur: Egypt in the Labyrinth of Counter-Revolution', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 36 (June 2020).

Dionigi, Filippo, 'The Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon: State Fragility and Social Resilience', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 15 (February 2016).

Freer, Courtney, 'Rentier Islamism: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gulf', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 9 (November 2015).

Gotts, Isadora, 'The Business of Recycling War Scrap: The Hashd al-Shaʿabi's Role in Mosul's Post-Conflict Economy', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 34 (May 2020).

Hamilton, Alexander, 'The Political Economy of Economic Policy in Iraq', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 32 (March 2020).

Hinnebusch, Raymond, 'Syria-Iraq Relations: State Construction and Deconstruction and the MENA States System', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 4 (October 2014).

Jabar, Faleh A., 'The Iraqi Protest Movement: From Identity Politics to Issue Politics', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 25 (June 2018).

Jawad, Saad, 'The Iraqi Constitution: Structural Flaws and Political Implications', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 1 (November 2013).

Kaya, Zeynep, 'Gender and Statehood in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 18 (February 2017).

Mabry, Ruth, 'Urbanisation and Physical Activity in the GCC: A Case Study of Oman', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 21 (February 2018).

Maghazei, Malihe, 'Trends in Contemporary Conscious Music in Iran', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 3 (June 2014).

Manby, Bronwen, 'Preventing Statelessness among Migrants and Refugees: Birth Registration and Consular Assistance in Egypt and Morocco', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 27 (June 2019).

Muhanna-Matar, Aitemad, 'New Trends of Women's Activism after the Arab Uprisings: Redefining Women's Leadership', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 5 (November 2014).

Roberts, Hugh, 'The Calculus of Dissidence: How the Front des Forces Socialistes Became what it is', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 26 (October 2018).

Saleem, Zmkan Ali and Skelton, Mac, 'Assessing Iraqi Kurdistan's Stability: How Patronage Shapes Conflict', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 38 (July 2020).

Toffano, Priscilla and Yuan, Kathy, 'E-Shekels Across Borders: A Distributed Ledger System to Settle Payments Between Israel and the West Bank', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 28 (April 2019).

Tripp, Charles, 'Battlefields of the Republic: The Struggle for Public Space in Tunisia', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 13 (December 2015).

Wang, Yuting, 'Being Chinese Muslims in Dubai: Religion and Nationalism in a Transnational Space', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 33 (May 2020).

Watkins, Jessica, 'Iran in Iraq: The Limits of "Smart Power" Amidst Public Protest', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 37 (July 2020).

Watkins, Jessica, 'Satellite Sectarianisation or Plain Old Partisanship? Inciting Violence in the Arab Mainstream Media', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 11 (April 2019).

Young, Karen, 'The Emerging Interventionists of the GCC', *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series* 2 (December 2013).