



Archaism in Iranian Nationalism During the Period of Reza Shah Pahlavi

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Abstract: Antiquarianism is one of the significant elements of Iranian nationalism that emerged through archaeological research and exploration by Iranian scholars and Western archaeologists in the realm of Iran's history and culture. It provided a fresh definition of Iranian history and identity, playing a crucial role in the construction of modern Iranian nationhood during the era of Reza Shah. Nationalist antiquarianism had a lasting impact on cultural, literary, and even political aspects, transforming the understanding of Iranian history and identity. As an intellectual and cultural movement, antiquarianism aimed to uncover the unknown aspects of Iran and its people beyond recorded history. Its purpose was to revitalize the material and spiritual culture of the historical Iranian nation, turning it into a source of pride and a foundation for constructing a new government-nation with a rich historical civilization. In this context, Reza Shah leveraged the Iranian antiquarian movement to construct a modern Iranian government-nation, utilizing the deep-rootedness of the monarchy system in pre-Islamic Iranian history as a legitimate link, presenting it as a legitimate pole against the backdrop of Islamic Iranian history. This research seeks to answer the question of the function of antiquarianism in the development of Iranian nationalism during the reign of Reza Shah, employing a descriptive-analytical method. It explores the coordinates of Iranian nationalist antiquarianism and investigates why Iranian nationalists conceptualized antiquarianism as the foundation of the Iranian nationalist movement.

Keywords: *Iran, Reza Shah, Antiquarianism, Nationalism, Nation-building.*

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Introduction

Reza Shah, through various means of power, managed to somewhat centralize the multi-ethnic society of Iran, aiming to overcome its scattered state. He sought to advance the ideal of nation-building and the enlightenment of intellectuals advocating national unity by promoting the ideology of antiquarian nationalism and instilling a collective identity known as "national identity." Nationalism played a significant role in fostering cohesion among the people, leading Reza Shah's government to incorporate antiquarian nationalism as a crucial component of its official ideology. Consequently, a new era in archaeological explorations and nationalist historiography emerged in Iran during this period.

Reza Shah's agenda extended beyond establishing order and security. He aspired to symbolize a centralized Iran with an ideology rooted in a return to ancient Persia. However, societal upheavals, marked by movements away from the center, compelled Reza Shah to focus solely on maintaining order and security. Despite his readiness to establish his ideological system, he refrained from openly endorsing his antiquarian beliefs. Antiquarianism offered a new framework for the rejuvenation of Iran, aiming to regenerate social, cultural, and political thought by revitalizing ancient traditions and beliefs, building new cultural and social foundations upon ancient traditions. Antiquarian nationalism, more than being an outcome of archaeological knowledge and related research, was a mental and ideological construct. It sought to discover Iran's past glory and greatness through a holistic perspective, naturally emphasizing Iran's decline upon the advent of Islam. In Reza Shah's era, an alliance formed between the government and Western-oriented elites, coalescing around the ideology of antiquarian nationalism. This alliance marked a significant political and social transformation after the constitutional revolution, providing historical and structural grounds for pursuing the idea of unity and preserving Iran's territorial integrity. Historically, factors such as World War I, foreign interventions, efforts to transform the country's independence status based on the 1919 agreement, the decline of central government authority, the emergence of centrifugal forces, and local and ethnic uprisings necessitated the establishment of a strong central government. Additionally, facilitating factors included the intellectual renewal movement, increasing awareness of the country's backwardness, the fragmentation of opposition to tyranny due to the reverse trend of the constitutional revolution, sectarianism, and extremist political struggles. The ideological legitimacy of nationalist demands and the ultimate desire to counter foreign influences and control further fueled nationalist aspirations. All these factors led people and intellectuals to seek solace in the ancient history of Iran, disregarding any scientific judgments about the ancient Iranian culture and civilization. They viewed it as a source of healing and comfort, providing a hopeful foundation for the construction of a modern state-nation. The research method in this article is a descriptive-analytical approach, in which historical data is collected from reliable historical sources. Subsequently, at two levels of description and analysis, the data is employed in line with the goal and question of the article. Based on these premises, this paper aims to answer the question: What was the role of antiquarianism in the development of Iranian nationalism during the reign of Reza Shah, and why did Iranian nationalists conceptualize antiquarianism as the foundation of the Iranian nationalist movement? Research findings indicate that, during Reza Shah's era, antiquarianism was more than just an outcome of archaeological knowledge for understanding the country's ancient history and culture. It served as an essential intellectual force in constructing Iranian nationalism, aiming to legitimize the Pahlavi monarchy by emphasizing the ancient Iranian system's continuity and ultimately contributing to the construction of a modern nation-state. However, given the intertwined identity of the Iranian people with Islam

and the formidable presence of religious institutions, this movement fell short and ultimately faded with the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution.

Research Method

The research is based on library studies conducted using a descriptive-analytical methodology and historical approach

Research literature

The topics of state-nation building during the reign of Reza Shah and Iranian nationalism are among the subjects that have been of interest to researchers in Iran, and several works have been produced in this field. However, there are still unknown aspects in this regard that require further investigation and in-depth study by researchers. Considering the title and the research question of the present study, the literature of the research can be summarized as follows: "The Genealogy of Ancient-oriented Nationalism Ideology" is the title of an article in which the authors discuss the consequences of five decades of the coalition of elites favoring Westernization and the Pahlavi regimes around the discourse of ancient-oriented ideology. This discourse transformed the Iranian worldview into arenas of ideological confrontations, with a prominent feature being the dominance of ancient-oriented thinking and the lack of institutionalization of rationality in the Iranian worldview (Rostami, Masoud; Zibakalam, Sadeq, 2018). "Reza Shah and the Nationalism Historiography Project in Iran" is another article in which the authors conclude that some of the writings of this historical period offer a particular interpretation and adjustment of the national and religious compositions, which is prominently evident in the historical works of this era. It highlights the changes in Iranian historiography and its approach, bringing it to light (Bigdeli, Ali; Afshar Razavi, Sepideh; Goljan, Mehdi; Ali Sofi, Alireza, 2018).

In an article titled "Nationalism Historiography of the Reza Shah Period and Emphasis on the Racial Continuity of Kurds and Iranians," the author believes that historians during Reza Shah's era, in order to strengthen Iranian nationalism among Kurds and counter efforts to depict them as non-Iranian, emphasized factors such as Aryan racial ethnicity, shared roots of Kurdish and Persian languages, patriotic feelings, and the common historical fate of Kurds with other Iranian ethnicities, contributing to the strengthening of national unity as one of the essential needs of society (Rasouli, Hossein, 2018). Despite the existence of articles and similar works that have focused on ancient-oriented thinking and nationalism during Reza Shah's era and are sometimes valuable, there are still some research gaps in this field that require exploration and in-depth investigation. The present study aims to address one aspect of this, examining the reasons and methods of utilizing archaeology and ancient-oriented thinking in the direction of Iranian nation-building. In this regard, efforts are made to critically examine the consequences of such an approach to the ancient Iranian era in the contemporary reconstruction of Iranian identity.

Rise to Power of Reza Shah

Destiny, the necessity of coincidences, or the natural course of events brought forth an individual named Reza Khan Sardar Sepah in the contemporary history of Iran from the year 1920. Typically categorized as the 16-year period of Reza Shah in the taxonomy of governance, it is interpreted as the era of absolute modern rule in Iran. This government, led by Reza Shah, undertook numerous actions towards the project of state-nation building as soon as it assumed power (Fiyuzat, 1996: 45-46). Reza Shah's government, in pursuit of its goals, dismantled or weakened various power centers and marginalized them. One such power center was the clergy. Initially considering the clergy as a reference group, the ideology of this era portrayed it as a nationalist

group. In a critical approach, Hossein Kachouyan writes, "The nationalist discourse of the Reza Khan era rejected Islamic beliefs and rituals, including the prohibition of mourning or unveiling of hijab. The nationalist discourse, with a Zoroastrian inclination, replaced Islamic ethics with the slogan of good speech, good deeds, and good thoughts" (Kachouyan, 2005: 98). Relying on nationalist ideology, the absolute government took actions such as the compulsory conscription system, judicial reforms, endowment law, registration of documents and properties law, and the expansion and development of formal education, significantly weakening the clergy (Akbari, 2005: 191-197). Additionally, other power centers included local and regional powers that Reza Khan had eliminated before the start of his reign. Creating a modern and extensive administrative system, building a powerful army, and establishing a modern government were among the actions of Reza Shah during his rule. In such circumstances, the government had the opportunity to advance the nationalism project parallel to state-nation building and cultural homogenization. However, within the framework of the legitimacy of the system, there existed a contradictory and ambiguous mixture of nationalism and Westernization (Foran, 1999: 339).

The Formation Process of the Archaism current in Iran

"Ancient-oriented or Archaeism" is considered a new element for the reconstruction of Iran, aiming to rejuvenate and revive ancient traditions and beliefs. Its goal is to generate a new order in social, cultural, and political thinking by establishing modern cultural and social foundations based on ancient traditions (Akbari, 1996, p. 188). The perspective of ancient-oriented thinking is to recreate the space related to the past. During the Pahlavi era in Iran, ancient-oriented thinking involved downplaying and sidelining Islamic culture and rituals in society, considering them as causes of backwardness. It sought to replace them with a new culture derived from ancient beliefs, highlighting the contradictions and differences between these two historical periods: Ancient Iran at its zenith and brilliance versus Islamic Iran, depicting a time of decline and regression. Ultimately, this ideology conveys a salvific message of discarding Islamic culture and restoring the glory of pre-Islamic Iran. For a more detailed examination of this topic, a concise look at the historical process and the evolution of Iranian culture and history in various epochs is necessary. According to Hegel, Iranians were the first nation to coexist and interact with diverse ethnicities and religions with tolerance and magnanimity (Hegel, 1957: 301). In the Achaemenid era, Iranians laid the foundation for a magnificent civilization, with its spirit persistently alive and enduring through subsequent periods. Despite Alexander's invasion and the Hellenistic Greek civilization's unique superiority, attempting to destroy Iranian civilization, the Parthians and later the Sassanians, as revivers of the Achaemenid culture, continued to preserve the Iranian civilization's distinct position among the few civilizations of that era. The Arab invasion marked the end of the four-century Sassanian rule, leading to the end of its political existence. However, Iranians embraced Islam while maintaining their ancient heritage and civilization (Zarinkoob, 1997: 275).

The Great French Revolution and the entry of nationalist ideas into Iran

The Iranian nation, despite the fall of the Sassanian Empire, Arab rule, acceptance of Islam, and abandoning Zoroastrianism, did not experience decline or historical discontinuity. Instead, by embracing Islam and preserving many aspects of its cultural heritage, customs, and traditions, it continued its historical journey. Iranians integrated their indigenous knowledge and intellectual achievements into the framework of Islam, significantly influencing the formation of Islamic civilization (Shariati, 1997: 146). Although Iranians accepted Islam, they resisted Arab invasion and dominance through various means. In contrast to other nations like those in the

Levant, Egypt, Syria, etc., who not only accepted Islam but also lost their language and many aspects of their national identity, Iranians maintained their Persian language as the most crucial pillar of their ethnicity. Persian, linking pre-Islamic Iran to Islamic Iran, continued to flourish in the intellectual realm of ancient Iranian thought and the administrative apparatus established throughout Iran's post-Islamic history. The Iranian masses, along with poets and writers like Abu al-Qasem Ferdowsi, the creator of the epic *Shahnameh*, played a vital role in preserving social and cultural traditions. Despite the collapse of the Safavid dynasty, the subsequent Afghan invasion, the Ilkhanate period's chaos, and the weak Qajar rule, Iranians witnessed the rapid rise of European and Western civilization compared to Eastern and Islamic civilization (Zibakalam, 1997: 161). In Europe, the Renaissance, followed by the Industrial Revolution and subsequent political and social revolutions such as the 1789 French Revolution and the independence-seeking revolution in America, led to the emergence of modern governments and democracies compared to the authoritarian Eastern regimes (Shamim, 1995: 84). The appearance of Iranian intellectuals educated in the West aimed to uncover the reasons for Iranian society's backwardness. These intellectuals became acquainted with new concepts such as nationality, nationalism, and patriotism and attempted to transfer these ideas and ideologies to Iranian society (Saramad, 1993: 37). Many of these intellectuals inclined towards antiquarian tendencies, glorifying ancient Iranian civilization and blaming the Arabs for destroying Iranian culture. They advocated a return to Iran's golden ages and the revival of civilizations like the Achaemenid and Sassanian eras. An example is Hossein Qoli Agha, who studied in Paris, participated in the 1848 French Revolution, considered the Turanians as Iranian enemies, and admired Zoroastrian rituals (Adamiyat, 1996: 252).

Formation of Ancient-oriented Nationalism by Orientalists and Western Iranologists

The pioneers of ancient-oriented thinking in Iran believed that the onset of Iranian backwardness and misfortune, particularly after the Arab invasion and the perpetuation of this backwardness, was due to the Arab rule and teachings, essentially the Islamic doctrines. Regarding the connection between nationalism and ancient-oriented thinking in Iran, it is important to note that nationalism in Europe emerged as a result of the achievements of the French Revolution in 1789, introducing a new perspective on establishing government (Darvishpour, 1995: 25). Nationalism, in general, refers to an emphasis on nationality. A nation is composed of individuals who share a common language, culture, race, religion, and customs within a defined geographical area. The goals of the nationalist movement were national awareness and self-identity, seeking governance based on national interests. (Cottam, 1992: 53-19)

The topic of nationalism in Iran gained prominence due to transformations in Europe, Iranian lag, colonialism, and the emergence of new intellectuals. Iranian intellectuals, faced with Western civilization, elevated historical figures such as Cyrus and Darius as symbols of Iranian nationalism. After World War I, these Iranian nationalists attributed the causes of Iranian backwardness to the Arabs. However, Iranian nationalist thought faced challenges as it was primarily influenced by Western culture and technology, and some even succumbed to colonialism due to their intellectual dependence on Western achievements (Katouzian, 1998: 127-126). As a result, while nationalism in the West led to the creation of independent nations with democratic and legalized systems, in Iran, it led to the establishment of a dictatorial government, eliminating constitutionalism and democratic institutions. This nationalist trend, with an internationalist perspective, differs significantly and is contradictory, especially in the context of advocating national governance (Katouzian, 1992: 476). Another contributing factor to the rise of ancient-oriented thinking in Iran was the field of Orientalism and the hostility towards Islam.

The intellectual foundation of orientalists, their opposition to Islam and Muslims, and their negative portrayal of the Prophet played a role in shaping the discourse. Additionally, racial biases among orientalists, rooted in ancient Greek views of non-Greek nations as savage, barbaric, and uncivilized, further fueled these ideas (Saeed, 1992: 112). Many Iranian intellectuals were directly or indirectly influenced by orientalists, either as their students or through the dissemination of their ideas (Kaaveh, 1955: 3).

The use of the army and bureaucracy to implement Iranian nationalism

In the final years of the Qajar dynasty, due to the severe weakness of the central government, Iran's occupation by foreigners, and their extensive interference in domestic affairs, the regions faced insecurity and the country was in a state of turmoil. Many Iranian intellectuals attributed these conditions to the need for a strong and centralized government capable of ending the chaos, banditry, and foreign interference. The backbone of this strong and centralized government was nationalist beliefs. The aftermath of World War I and the occupation of Iran contributed to the emergence of this mindset. The idea of establishing a centralized government with a focus on national identity and Iranian nationalism is evident in the works of most intellectuals of that time (Avery, 1981: 255). During the power consolidation of Reza Khan and the coup d'état of March 1921, attributed in part to external factors and British interventions, the groundwork for this power acquisition, enthusiasm, and romantic nationalist tendencies among intellectuals and some segments of the population was laid. One of the hopes of these romantic nationalist figures was that Reza Khan would quickly adopt Western progress and break with tradition and religion, fostering secularism (Katouzian, 1998: 123).

Upon Reza Khan's rise to power, he embodied the intense nationalist aspirations of Iranians. Some sections, especially educated youth, showed great interest in his actions and reforms. Many people hoped for the resolution of problems and the removal of obstacles to progress. However, when intellectuals noticed contradictions between their ideas and Reza Khan's actions, as he transformed into Reza Shah, they began opposing him. They realized that their romantic nationalist ideals had given rise to a dictatorship conflicting with civil liberties and popular political participation. Despite opposition, Reza Shah remained a romantic nationalist extremist throughout his life, pursuing his goals (Kedi, 1990: 278). The official propaganda of the Pahlavi government aimed at promoting ancient-oriented ideas, such as research in literature and the language of ancient Iran, teaching Pahlavi language and script, and promoting ancient history (Dolat-Abadi, 1992: 436).

During Reza Shah's reign, a new and different system was established, marked by the establishment of a new government in Iran. Relying on the army and an extremist nationalist ideology, Reza Shah sought to maintain the Pahlavi monarchy by emphasizing the legitimacy of his rule. It's important to note that Reza Shah's thoughts and actions regarding nationalism contained a mixture of contradictions, reflecting a blend of intense nationalism and pro-Western sentiment. This contradiction was an ambiguous mixture of strong nationalism and Westernization (Foran, 1999: 337).

Zoroastrianism as Iranian Antiquarianism

During this period, we observe the efforts of Zoroastrians and Parsis in India, along with Zoroastrians from China, to collaborate with Reza Shah in reviving the culture, customs, and traditions of ancient Iran. Reza Shah considered Zoroastrians as a legacy of noble ancestors and the genuine descendants of this land (Avery, 1981: 355). Among these Zoroastrians, notable figures such as Arbab Khosrow, known for his contributions to the construction of Ferdowsi's mausole-

um and the Ardeshir Ripourter, played a role in teaching Zoroastrianism to the Bakhtiari people, and his involvement in the formation of Reza Khan's coup is worth examining (Shamim, 1995: 82-83). Antiquarianism in Iran during the Pahlavi era involved downplaying and setting aside the current culture and religion of society. It aimed to replace them with a new culture derived from past beliefs, emphasizing the contrast and differences between two historical periods: ancient Iran at its peak of glory and the Islamic era representing decline and regression. Reza Shah's antiquarian actions, especially in the latter part of his rule, were influenced by German Nazism. Germany had replaced the British as a major power in Iran during this period. Some argue that Reza Shah's new policies, particularly aligning with the Axis powers, were intended to counterbalance the influence of Russia and England (Foran, 2004: 368). Antiquarian and nationalism policies, or, in other words, Iranism, aimed to weaken religious-national tendencies. It portrayed a stark contrast between two historical periods: ancient Iran in its zenith and brilliance versus Islamic Iran in a state of decline and retrogression.

The Nationalism Approach of the Government in Enacting Laws

During the Pahlavi era, the discourse of modernism, emphasizing themes such as development and modernization in the European style, Iranian nationalism, cultural modernism, rationality of modernity, secularism, and the establishment of a universal identity for the Iranian people, prevailed. Iranian nationalism was considered an overarching identity that extended beyond all sub-national identities. It revered the cultural heritage of ancient Iran and Persian literature, while also emphasizing the Aryan roots. The Islamic part of Iran's history and historical experience were often denigrated, creating a dichotomy between nationalism and Islamic identity in the discourse of Pahlavi-era intellectuals (Bashiri, 2005: 120-124; Nafisi, 1993: 1/8; Ayrmlu, 2003: 312). In the era of Reza Shah, with the establishment of the modern state in Iran and the need for a motivating force for political and cultural reconstruction, a new political and cultural discourse emerged. Its goal was to grant a national identity to the Iranians. This ideological foundation aimed to connect us to a glorious past and sought unity in that illustrious past, mainly in the pre-Islamic era (Ashoori, 1998: 17). The inclination towards antiquarianism by Reza Shah became evident from his coronation ceremony. His choice of the name Pahlavi for his dynasty showcased his interest in the pre-Islamic and Sassanian era of Iran. His coronation followed the rituals and customs of the coronations of ancient Iranian kings (Sutton, 1956: 201-203). The enthusiastic speeches by Foroughi during these celebrations, referring to Reza Shah as the successor to the path of Iranian kings like Cyrus and Darius, are noteworthy. In many programs, actions, and functions, the Pahlavi government placed nationalist values at the core. Reference to the laws and regulations enacted during the Pahlavi era illustrates the existence of these values in many of them. The allocation of the budget in 1927 for the construction of Ferdowsi's mausoleum, the Civil Registry Law, the law transforming Arabic numerals to Persian names, the adoption of the solar calendar in place of the lunar calendar in 1927, the use of national costumes in 1928, changes in the names of towns and cities to Persian and ancient names in 1935, the establishment of the Education Organization in 1938, and the foundation of the Persian Language Society in 1935 are some examples (Ma'zampour, 2004: 179-180). Additionally, the approval of the Antiquities Law, the establishment of the Iran Ancient Museum in 1936, and several other museums in cities such as Shiraz, Isfahan, and Qom were inaugurated. In December 1934, Reza Shah announced to all countries worldwide to recognize Iran by its name (Digar et al., 1998: 117-118; Sediq, 1953: 236).

Establishment of the Language Academy:

One of the earliest manifestations of antiquarianism among poets and literary figures was the movement toward "serehnevisi" (writing in pure Persian) and the avoidance of using Arabic words. Pioneers of this movement included Jalal al-Din Mirza Qajar, Yaghmaei Jandaqi, and Adib al-Mamalek Farahani. During Reza Shah's era, scholars like Zabihe Behrouz and Arbāb Keykhosro collaborated with Foroughi and Hekmat to inform the Shah about purifying the language from Arabic vocabulary. Reza Shah, who had just returned from Turkey, where Turkish had undergone a purification process from Arabic and Persian terms, welcomed this idea (Hedayat, 1965: 207). An academy named Farhangestan (Language Academy) was established with the majority of its members having an extremist nationalist spirit, aiming to cleanse the Persian language from Arabic terms. However, instead of contributing to the vitality and preservation of the Persian language, the true intention behind its formation was to render it devoid of content. It also served as a tool to combat religion, ostensibly using Persian nationalism to fight against any manifestations of Arab influence, considering Islam as an embodiment of Arab culture. This academy essentially engaged in a struggle against religion under the guise of Persian nationalism, aiming to strip Persian of its common vocabulary (Katozian, 1998: 76).

Iran: Instead of Persia and the Influences of Nazi Germany

Ancient Iranian policies during the reign of Reza Shah, especially in the latter part of his rule, were influenced by Nazi Germany. Germans had replaced the British in Iran during this period. Perhaps Reza Shah's actions were driven by the strategy of aligning with the Third Reich to control pressure from Russia and England (Foran, 1999: 368). One of the primary factors in fostering these relationships was Reza Shah's personal interest in the dictatorial regime of Hitler and his Aryan racial superiority ideologies. Germans declared the racial superiority of the Norman and Iranian people, portraying them as Aryan. Secret relations were established between Reza Shah and the Nazis. Even before Hitler and the Nazi Party, Reza Shah, a nationalist believing in Aryan racial superiority, decided to reflect the nation's racial identity in the country's name. Instead of Pars, which represented a province of Iran, he propagated the use of the name "Iran," implying a racial connection to the entire nation. Based on this, in 1934, the Iranian government informed all foreign embassies in Tehran to use "Iran" instead of Persia. The aim was to emphasize the Aryan descent of Iranians (Avery, 1981: 65).

Changing Arabic Months to Persian and Shifting from Lunar to Solar Calendar

In April 1935, all government offices and institutions were obligated to use Persian months instead of Arabic months and the solar calendar instead of the lunar calendar. Yahya Dolatabadi highly praised this action in his works (Dolatabadi, 1992: 398).

Abolishing the Monopoly on Archaeological Excavations

Another action taken by Reza Shah to preserve ancient Iran and its heritage was the abolishment of the exclusive privilege held by France for archaeological excavations. He canceled this privilege and transferred it to the government. Reza Shah pursued two objectives with this action: encouraging archaeological endeavors to discover ancient historical remnants and enhancing Iran's glorious history, as well as demonstrating a national image in resisting foreign influence (Seddiq, 1961: 326).

Conclusion

Ancient-oriented nationalism in Iran, as discussed, is a product of various internal and external factors, driven by specific goals and purposes. Despite its expansion in Iranian society, deeply rooted in its Islamic culture, ancient-oriented and ancient ritual practices were never truly revived. Instead, this movement somewhat resulted in a cultural vacuum, leading to the substitution of Western culture, and more significantly, it leaned towards Westernization rather than ancient-oriented nationalism. In Iran, unlike the Renaissance movement in Europe, ancient-oriented sentiments were primarily emotional and romantic, proving impractical in a society deeply entrenched in religion and the East for over a thousand years.

During this time, Iranian intellectuals and writers, rather than focusing on their rich and rooted history for a forward-looking approach to building a society in sync with global civilization and technology, wrongly interpreted history to wage war against their own prevalent culture and traditions, blaming them for societal backwardness. Although nations with ancient cultures and histories, such as Iran, should determine their current and future positions based on their robust cultural foundation, ancient-oriented nationalism proved to be more of an imaginative and less pragmatic approach. The ancient-oriented movement, which Pahlavi-era intellectuals tried to portray as the essence of nationalism, was primarily aimed at instilling pride in Iranians, wounded by their history, to construct a modern and secular nation. Furthermore, it aimed to establish and legitimize the Pahlavi government, eliminating Iranian democratic and constitutional institutions in the pursuit of an authoritarian dictatorship. Ancient-oriented nationalism did not prioritize the pursuit of knowledge through archaeology to understand and unearth the history and heritage of ancient Iran. Instead, it functioned as a tool to construct Iranian nationalism, with the application of archaeology serving as the most critical means of achieving this goal. Therefore, the practical function of archaeology was mainly focused on constructing an Iranian identity. This emphasis on archaeology, as the primary tool for building Iranian nationalism, further highlighted the conflicted role of archaeology as a scientific discipline, which, in its mission, is to acquire knowledge and aid in better understanding the human system, but in this context, was in conflict.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they agreed to participate in the present paper and there is no competing interests.

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