



The political elite's contribution to the construction of Ferdowsi's mausoleum

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Abstract

Research Problem: The need to pay attention to national identity and its various aspects was one of the critical concerns of some intellectuals of the Qajar period. By the second half of this period, the idea of honoring cultural figures who played a considerable role in preserving Iranian identity was revealed. In this historical context, Ferdowsi became a prominent figure and found a special place. While in the Qajar period, the importance of honoring historical-cultural figures and the Persian language was a significant concern among intellectuals, it was gradually transferred to the level of the political elite at the end of this period. It was reflected in different problems in Pahlavi I. One of these problems was the establishment of the National Relics Society (NRS). The establishment of this Society was the result of various factors, including efforts of some numbers of the political elite, and they paved the way for later developments. The NRS members' approach indicated that they were concerned about honoring Ferdowsi as a great Persian poet. The holding of the Ferdowsi Congress and the construction of his mausoleum as two significant events were the results of attention to this distinguished poet. Meanwhile, the contribution of the political elite of the Pahlavi period, their attitudes, and actions in the commemoration of Ferdowsi has been so significant. Many scholars who paid attention to Ferdowsi mausoleum's construction focused on the construction dimension and did not appropriate adequate attention to other fields. By bearing this in mind, the present study addressed an aspect of the problem by focusing on the political elite's contribution.

Research Question: The present study is based on three questions: What was the political elite's attitude towards the commemoration of Ferdowsi? How did this attitude lead to further actions? Moreover, what was the contribution of the NRS members in the process of building the mausoleum and in its architectural features? This study aims to identify the theoretical attitude and the behavior of the political elite in commemorating Ferdowsi and explain how this role occurs in the process of designing and setting up his mausoleum.

Research Method: This study is based on historical research methods, and the data of it is provided by the content of memoirs, magazines, published books of the National Relics Society, parliamentary approvals, and documents of the National Archive of Iran. This research will be organized in two parts: First, the political elite's attitude on honoring Ferdowsi and their pragmatism in setting up the NRS, and second, the NRS' operational efforts to find Ferdowsi's grave, provide funding, design, and building mausoleum.

The Most Important Results and Conclusion: The Research result shows that the importance of national identity and cultural figures in the post-constitutional era gradually attracted the attention

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of the political elite. Their attitude that reflected in the periodicals led to some activities like the establishment of the National Relics Society and the construction of a mausoleum for Ferdowsi. Just as Ferdowsi was considered to revive the history and language of Iran, the architecture of his mausoleum had a revivalistic style.

Keyword: Ferdowsi mausoleum. Political elites, National Relics Society, Cultural figures, Contemporary architecture, Reza Shah

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