

to Western pressures, but because it served *local* interests to make it so. While Hagia Sophia may loom large in the history of the field of heritage in Europe and the United States, Atatürk, one might argue, couldn't have cared less what European preservationists thought. He had his own agenda. It was a local one, to serve local interests.

The point here is not that we shouldn't critique the 'authorized heritage discourse' (AHD) as hegemonic heritage discourse that leads to a distorted and unequal allocation of heritage value and resources (we should), but that in making the AHD the main focus of our critique we also, perhaps ironically, risk according it more value than it actually possesses, certainly in local communities. One complement to a necessary critique of any hegemonic narrative is to build alternate narratives, and defining a notion of the 'Islamic' in heritage helps build and give depth, value and visibility to a local model for heritage preservation practices (Mahdy 2019). Yet it is important to clarify a still frequently misunderstood point: that in its current usage 'Islamic' does not *only* refer to spiritual practice or religious faith alone but to the long, 1,400-year history of the entirety of cultural production in the lands that fell under the rule of Muslim sovereigns. As Shahab Ahmed and Wendy M.K. Shaw have recently argued, in this context, heritage sites and objects that were created by Christians, Jews, Hindus and others can justifiably be called 'Islamic' (Ahmed 2015; Shaw 2019). Thus, as has recently been argued, the classical heritage of the Middle East and Europe was and continues to be claimed as a crucial factor in shaping Islamic heritage (Munawar 2019). And this troubling of the 'Islamic' also challenges the tidy orthodoxies we use to define the 'West' – since Islam always was, and continues to be, a vital shaping force in the history of the West – indeed, a critical part of the history of the European Renaissance in which Western heritage values ultimately find their roots (Trivellato 2010). As Ahmed puts it, 'Islam contains multitudes'; it has always been a vast sea of competing, sometimes contradictory, discourses. Its long history equally embodies a range of complex traditions with respect to heritage preservation (Rico 2020a; Mulder 2017). To define a site as 'Islamic' is not to fix it, then, within the narrow limits of a spiritual tradition – in fact, that narrow view of Islam is one forged by the Western intellectual tradition, and one I am certain that Rico would agree we'd do well to stop reinforcing. It's our notion of 'Islamic' that needs to be expanded, and in doing so, our understanding of Islamic heritage must expand along with it.

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In support of hybridity. A response to Stephennie Mulder, Ian Straughn and Ruth Young

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It is a very exciting time for the critical study of heritage discourse and practice for the MENA region, and the diverse and critical responses to my article stand as proof. In this article, I proposed to confront the challenges of studying and supporting regional traditions of heritage preservation in the era of heritage internationalism that sees the emergence and dominance of UNESCO as an authoritative and far-reaching ideology. It is true that there are other ideologies and institutions that we could and do consider in our work. As Mulder and Straughn point out in their interventions, our field-based observations continue to capture heritage making at different

locales that result from ingenuity, strategy and unique intellectual traditions that cannot simply be foregrounded with a formulaic anti-Western warning. Thinking exclusively in dichotomous terms around the existence of a dominant discourse (the infamous authorized heritage discourse, or AHD) undermines hybridity and disarms local agency. Nevertheless, ignoring the specific historical and political turns that make global heritage discourse uninviting to an entire region has done far worse. Young argues that the ‘global preservation tradition that is at the heart of Rico’s critique does not *just* stand at odds with Muslim communities, and it does not *always* stand at odds with Muslim communities’ (p. 124, my emphasis). I endorse this hypothesis, but argue that this assessment hinges on one’s tolerance for disciplinary hostility against the region brought by colonialist, imperialist and orientalist legacies. Mine is very low. As I argue throughout this article and in other pieces over the years (starting with Rico 2014), the predominant type of attention that the MENA region has received in the expanding field of heritage preservation, instigated by the policies, discourses and agendas of UNESCO’s heritage instruments, is extremely problematic and merits very close examination.

For this task, and within the confines of this article, I discuss this challenge through a historic and discursive scale. The dichotomous distinctions that I proposed for my arguments, between a universal/secular and a local/spiritual epistemology, may be confined to heritage historiography but are accompanied by an important debate in heritage studies. A growing interest in the spheres of both ‘non-Western’ and ‘the spiritual’ that have characterized the ‘critical turn’ in heritage studies since the late 1980s failed spectacularly to engage with heritage traditions in the immensity and diversity of Muslim communities – until more recently. This absence is evident to anyone carrying out a literature review for the related fields of heritage, preservation, conservation and museum studies. My own experience in both Middle Eastern and Muslim heritage contexts through ethnographic research and collaborations with various international, regional and local heritage preservation initiatives for the better part of twenty years has led me to become deeply concerned with this omission. Still, I am very grateful to my colleagues for reminding me of the perils of analytically sidelining the complexities of locality in favour of demonstrating the ideological trends that I am most concerned with. There is much more to say, critique and celebrate in other approaches to heritage making and preservation that operate in the MENA region, through the work of ALECSO, ICESCO, the Aga Khan Trust and the Barakat Trust, to name a few, as well as countless national initiatives. However, we need to remain realistic: no other institution holds the excessive amount of influence that UNESCO and its advisory bodies (ICOMOS, ICCROM, IUCN) have had on heritage discourse and standards around the globe, and therefore there is no neutralizing antidote.

Examining the nature and limitations of such a game-changing authority does not take away from the foremost significance of building *alternative* narratives, as both Mulder and Straughn encourage us to do. However, I would argue, alterity as it is mobilized in heritage studies carries the burden of dichotomization and, inevitably, alienation. Defining the manicured place that MENA debates have had in early histories of global preservation is a necessary step towards empowering MENA-specific narratives that are much more than mere ancillary or exotic engagements with heritage making. Once this challenge is acknowledged, the possibilities for redressing a disciplinary tradition of misrepresentation are endless and extend well beyond the boundaries of this article. I embarked on that multipronged project myself through my ongoing ethnographic examination of contemporary heritage industries in Qatar (Rico 2017c; 2019a; 2020b; 2021). Still, when our intentions to localize remain entangled with the languages, standards, forms of expertise and expectations of a global heritage tradition, assessing the global from every critical standpoint is absolutely necessary. The close examination of archival sources that document a marginalization of regional (‘Arab’) and thematic (‘religious’) expertise on the global stage is one of the many angles of attack that one could take.

The nature of my contribution is informed by the discomfort and weak engagement in heritage studies – its histories and methodologies – with the subject of religion and, therefore, Islam (Rico *forthcoming*). The reaction of Young to my use of the analytical category ‘Muslim world’ is an

example of this mined territory and its gatekeepers – but what other categorical buttress is able to support unique disciplinary directions that could be generated in MENA and later reinforce the heritage integrity and agency of Muslim communities in Sumatra or Brazil? Naturally, what justifies my use of this category is not a desire to propose a coherent or unifying idea of ‘Islam’, but rather to recognize the circulation of a coherent global heritage ideology that fares poorly and indiscriminately around ‘Islams’ and to propose cross-regional possibilities. On this subject, Straughn expertly proposes more avenues that will enrich future encounters and regionalizations through thematic explorations in heritage and preservation debates for and from MENA and the Muslim world: the complexities of sectarianism, the mobilization of *awqaf* along nationalist agendas, and the anti-clerical doctrines that underpin global heritage mechanisms.

As for my contribution to this exciting redeployment, I have proposed simple but deliberate shifts in the way in which we embark on the study of heritage and preservation in the MENA region. Revisiting case studies that have been reproduced over and over in heritage histories is not rehashing the work already done. It is an intentional choice I make in my attempt to suggest, without the distractions of an unfamiliar context, how easily a religious tradition has been and can be undermined or erased in the process of heritagization for a global heritage assemblage. Following my colleagues’ reactions to these case studies, I realize I could have made my own rhetoric more clear: the case studies that I convene are intended to demonstrate how a global heritage authority uses and transforms site histories to give shape to its own aspirations. We should be concerned that these, in turn, condition the study and support of heritage preservation in MENA through allegedly neutral mediation. UNESCO’s endorsement of Hagia Sophia as a museum but condemnation of Hagia Sophia as a place of worship compromises this nonpartisanship. Why is museumified Hagia Sophia the benchmark for authenticity, and its secular management plan more in line with its significance than a management strategy revolving around *salat*? UNESCO’s aspirations for an apolitical heritage value obscure these distinctions as well as the political realities that informed such decisions and transformations on the ground, as Mulder describes. Therefore the complicity of heritage studies in perpetuating this and other institutional agendas needs to be confronted. I am grateful to my colleagues for engaging with my article and for their contributions towards a better and more reflexive field of study.

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