



Traditional Music Patrimonialization in the United Arab Emirates: State of Play and Stakes of a Cultural Policy in Mutation (1971-2010)

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Introductory commentary

Since the original publication of this article in 2011, much has changed in the Persian Gulf. During its writing (2010), the Arab Spring emerged in major cities of the Middle-East, opening the door to an unprecedented wave of new cultural expressions throughout the Arab World. Six years later (2016), the result is very uneven effects from one country to another. Regarding the Gulf region, we were able to observe the appearance of Heavy Metal and Rap musical groups composed of local musicians who were using a shape of expression that until then had been unknown; however, this was done without being able to anchor their musical expressions in local societies over time. This is a situation that probably finds an explanation in the singular dynamic of the regional cultural landscape, but also in relation to the political foundations of the local nation-states and the way in which they signify their local culture and history with regard to the Western World.

This article is the result of an investigation from before the Arab Spring and the final reconfiguration of the cultural policies of the States Member of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The attempt is made to see the current situation of the patrimonial phenomenon in the United Arab Emirates and, more

broadly, in the Persian Gulf region, and the consequences of such dynamics on the underlying forces of local musical. Today, we can only note that the process of institutionalization of the "traditional culture" is progressing towards completion. Note also that most of the cultural institutions mentioned in this article have mostly changed names or integrated into other entities. For example, the *Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage* (ADACH), the central actor of the phenomenon described in this article, was dissolved in 2012 into a new state institution: the *Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority*. This penultimate sequence officially establishes the new paradigm associating Economy and Culture following direction given by the *Abu Dhabi Vision 2030 Master Plan* drafted during the 2000s.

Following the closure of the 4th meeting of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Abu Dhabi in 2009, the ADACH, Abu Dhabi's Authority for Culture and Heritage in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) launched a vast program of collection and archiving of oral traditions. However, this program appears problematic for these traditions. Indeed the surveys I have led in this frame since 2000¹ have revealed the following: 1) The generation of traditional musicians,² who were practicing their music and dances before the advent of the Emirates in 1971, wonders about the correctness of the current musical practice and the difficulty in passing on its knowledge to the younger generation. 2) The majority of traditional musical ensembles (grouped in associations under the supervision of the Federal Government) becomes poorer from 2002.³ Finally, the joint effect of opening to the tourism industry and the demographic pressure⁴ placed on society by immigrants upsets the markers that have previously composed the identity of the Nation.

¹ This article results from my research inquiry that has taken place in the UAE since 2000. Initially, I conducted an ethnomusicological study of the *leiwah* musical genre before I became interested in the political field of culture as a factor in the change process. A doctoral thesis is being written on the subject. My thanks belong to Mrs. A. Montigny, K. Morand and A. Anisensel for their review of this text.

² Indeed, this generation of musicians believes that in many cases, the current practice is no longer faithful to the aesthetic and musical codes which characterize each tradition, a situation which does not illustrate, in their eyes, the diversity of the cultural communities of the Emirates. Sources: Fieldworks 2002-2010.

³ Date after thirty years of such politics in which the Emirati State suspended its subsidies to the associations of traditional music.

⁴ In January 2010, immigrants represented about 86.7% of the total population. Sources: TANMIA (The National Human Resources Development and Employment Authority).

It is on the basis of these observations that I will try to show here that the ADACH program does not mark the emergence of a recent patrimonialization process, but rather fits into the continuity of an active cultural policy since the establishment of the Federation in 1971. In fact, we are witnessing a substantial change of the management standards in this country. This corresponds, as will be demonstrated, to the will of Abu Dhabi to regain its supremacy over the other emirates and to become, through culture, the first political and economic player in the Persian Gulf.

The patrimonialization and its processes applied to an intangible object such as music often involve institutionalized consensus on a shared identity. The approach presupposes a selection of the musical object transformed into a symbol, i.e. an entry into certain intemporality and conservation work. This at least is the approach that seems characteristic of the UAE in the last half-century of the building of this new nation-state. If the approach of ADACH corresponded to an inscription of the local Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in a new cultural and legal space, it seems urgent to know the specificity of the concept of "turāth", that can be considered as the crucible of the local patrimonialization and the Emirati cultural policy since 1971.

1. Harmonize the Musical Legacy of the Nation (1971-2004)

1.1 The emergence of the nation-states of the Gulf: the foundation of the UAE

On December 2nd 1971, the UAE Federation was proclaimed.⁵ This union of seven emirates emerged after tough negotiations beginning in 1968 (Heard-Bey 1991, 378-422). Beyond the features claimed by each emirate, a general consensus exists on an ideological point of view.⁶ Each emirate shared references with the others, and these references can be

⁵ Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (on 1918 - 2004) was the first president of the UAE and was the emir of Abu Dhabi from 1966, known as the father of the Nation.

⁶ In Dubai, besides the Bedouin, we find an important community of *'ajam* (Arabs native of Iran), Iranian (Persian) Shiites and the descendants of African and Balochi slaves. The composition and the distribution of these communities are different from one emirate to the next (see for example Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Short al-Khaimah [Handal on 1995]).

described as national identity markers: *Arabism, Islamic Heritage, Hospitality, Generosity, and Valour*⁷ – keywords which carry strong symbolic value that are circumscribed within Arab *Bedouin* customs.⁸

So, since the proclamation of the Federation and its interim constitution, the UAE has endowed itself with a Ministry in charge of Information and Cultural Affairs.⁹ Over the last 25 years, this institution has been the only institution that administers, on the federal level, the representation of the traditional legacy of the country.

1.2 The concept of *turâth*, a certain vision of society

In this context of national development, the concept of *turâth* (which means a legacy / a heritage in European language) was the basis for the construction of national identity.¹⁰ In fact, its use in the context of this cultural policy implies the idea of an object (musical or otherwise) that belongs only to the past, thus emphasizing its distance to the present. The institutional discourse promotes this concept of Heritage to the extent that it raises the awareness of the population about the material progress made since the existence of the nation-state, and lifts the adherence to a national sentiment. In this sense, traditional musical practices are conceived as cut off from present reality.

It is within this dialectic that musical performances are usually subject to an idealized representation during shows and festivals (Montigny 1998, 24-25; Khalaf 2002, 28-32). Above all, this phenomenon is an approach of the State Cultural Institutions that consists of the staging of musical traditions from different cultural communities (Bedu, '*Ajam, Shihuh*¹¹, Baluchs, Farsi, African). The cultural specificities of these traditions are not specified, which has the effect of erasing any particular element referring to a specific cultural identity of these communities. In this apparent homogeneity, it is difficult to distinguish one community from another and there is nothing to reflect the diversity of the population

⁷ Source: The ADACH Brochure 2008, Abu Dhabi.

⁸ Note that the ruling clans of the Emirate of Sharjah and Ras-al-Khaymah are related to *hûwalah* tribes, descendants of Sunni Arabs who migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to Iran and back.

⁹ Source: Article 58 of the Interim Constitution of the UAE Federation, 07.18.1971, in effect until 1996.

¹⁰ The Arabic term *turâth* has many meanings. In the nineteenth century, it referred to a property legacy or a financial legacy. Today, as part of Arab cultural policies, it has acquired more sense of Cultural Heritage (see more references and a historical definition of *turâth* by Joseph Massad [Massad 2007: 17-35]).

¹¹ A mountain population of the Musandam region (Strait of Hormuz) that speaks in an Indo-European language different from the Semitic language of the desert Bedouin.

that actually composes the Nation. On the other hand, the performances are decontextualized from their social and economic traditional framework.¹² There is no element indicating the interactions or the social stakes of these practices within and between the different communities.

This is what we still see today in festivals where *Bedouin* traditions such as the *'ayyālah* or *al-harbiyyah* simultaneously coexist in the same space of the performance with the *habban* of the Persian origin communities (Persian, Baluch) and *leiwah* or *nubān* from the African slaves descendants communities. In fact, nothing allows one to locate or characterize such music and dance in connection to the social and political history of the country. This process contributes to formatting an ideal representation of a desired harmony by the State Cultural Institutions between the various communitarian groups that constitute the Nation. Indeed, the memory of this past refers to a period marked by permanent intertribal tensions and high poverty. Such a situation for the Emiratis today results from a context of subsistence economy and a lack of a strong central government. It is the well-being acquired through State action since the development of the Oil Economy, the gained social stability, and spread of improved living conditions after 1971 that above all else have justified this approach.

Thus, this process, used by National Institutions where nothing allows one to locate or characterize music and dance during festivals, hides a set of historical and cultural markers where the cultural groups particularities which make up the national society are attenuated.

It tries to defuse the cleavages between the various constituent actors of the Nation by integrating their traditional music into a whole symbolized in the notion of *turāth*. Being that until recently (in the beginning of the '90s) the society of the UAE has remained as yesterday – i.e. traversed by intercommunity jolts, such as between Arab *Bedouin* and *Shihuh*,¹³ or permeated by the often held idea that descendants of slaves are second-class citizens – it is only the economical growth and the oil windfall redistribution that have allowed the government to stabilize or appease.

We can therefore consider that this selective approach by the occultation of the differences through the cultural events – as will be the case later in the festivals – is not only the result of a reinterpretation of the past into the present, but also the main symbolic reference conveyed within the society of the UAE due to the aesthetic capability of the music to be projected beyond communitarian borders. In this sense, institutional Media (newspapers, radio, television and specialized books) have

¹² Source: Dubai Shopping Festival and Sharjah Festivals Fieldworks from 2002 to 2009-UAE.

¹³ In October 1994, violence erupted between *Shihuh* and *Bedouin* tribes on the border with Oman. Source: Government of Ras-al-Khaymah. Fieldwork: 2005.

widely diffused awareness programs favouring the anchoring of a normalized representation of Intangible Heritage.

Thus, any element referring to a particular discourse (warrior poetry,¹⁴ songs alluding to slavery in the *leiwah* dance, for example) has been systematically avoided. By contrast, everything has been done to magnify the *organizer role* of the State in the country's development and the social peace that ensues from it. Under these conditions, this selective cultural policy of the State would be based on three axes that define the institutional discourse widely disseminated in the country (a point of view expressed by Montigny [1998, 23-24] about Qatar that applies perfectly to the UAE): 1. Remember, but forget the traces of the past. 2. Hide historicity and empty the past of its contents. 3. Insist on the positive aspects of the present, projecting an image of society's progress.

In the end, the *turâth* is this symbolic space in which the State has built the collective imaginary of the Nation. By reworking the representation of history, i.e. orchestrating its articulation (through cultural events, festivals and commemorations), symbols that exacerbate the feeling of membership and unity throughout the Nation are emphasized (Khalaf 2000). It is through this process of decontextualization of these communities' musical practices, and to some extent their history, that a collective sense of cohesion and membership to a higher level – based on a new common basis that is the Nation – is promoted. In this way, it sets up a common basis for all communities and tribes in the country that only the State can provide.

1.3 The national construction, a stake in Traditional Music Patrimonialization

The staging of musical tradition involves State control of the involved actors. In the late '70s, the Ministry of Information and Culture federated the traditional musicale ensembles and inserted them into a vast network of Folk Arts Associations. The federal government then encouraged traditional musicians to join and participate in the preservation of Heritage and animate the cities cultural life.

The Popular Arts Associations (*jam'iyyat al-funun asha'biyyah*) are structures which depend both on the local government of the Emirate and on the Federation. Grants are awarded annually by the Federal

¹⁴ Thus, the historical references to the inter-tribal wars, dating from before the nation-state, in the poetic repertoire of *al-harbiyyah* dance (the warrior) are not authorized by federal authorities, to the point that today this tradition is renowned *al-salmiyyah* (the peaceful) in the border with Oman. Sources: 2008 and 2009 Fieldworks.

State.¹⁵ It appears that the associations are not spontaneous and autonomous structures. Their financial and administrative framework demonstrates that they are under the control of the locale authorities (Sebiane 2007, 123). These associations, which are very active in legitimizing the official discourse on the *turâth*, constitute a dense territorialized network. They are located in areas defined in each city and are controlled economically and musically through their performances at weddings, various celebrations and official commemorations (ibid, 120-125). The local Ministry of Information's antennas supervise the whole of this system. Ideological ties with the authorities remain strong and maintain a consensus of the official discourse on national unity in the *turâth*.

If we are talking about some kind of instrumentalization, it is to the extent that the State has developed a ratio of grants towards associations and thus musicians.¹⁶ This process seems to prolong a relationship of dependency for the musicians, who in many cases are descendants of African slaves. The construction of the United Arab Emirates federation in a unified nation (including a consensual representation of the heritage) was done in such a way as to maintain the stability of the previous social organization system to its foundation. It was an essential step in order to not to upset the hierarchy of groups on which the Bedouin society rests. Indeed, despite the abolition of slavery in the early '60s, many traditional musicians of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah are in fact descendants of slaves from East Africa or transited through Baluchistan. Let us note that their conditions have barely changed. It was in 2006 that the federal government granted them permanent citizenship. Finally, the institutional appropriation of traditional culture would purely be a managerial action if it did not involve some degree of significant changes observed on formal musical traditions. The *leiwah* is an illustration, among others, of this collateral phenomenon.

1.4 The *leiwah*: one tradition, two practices

The *leiwah* is a therapeutic possession rite of African origin that nevertheless developed in parallel with its ritual dimension, i.e. a profane and festive practice arising from the rite. It is best known today as the profane form. The ritual currently includes a dance performed in a circle, with dancers and singers composed mainly of men. However, at the time when the ritual was practiced, the dance included women and also homosexuals. Many musicians born after the '80s join the State's

¹⁵ These associations are registered in parallel to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. These institutions – the *jam'iyyât al-funun asha'biyyah* – are related to subsidized companies.

¹⁶ A system maintained until 2006.

discourse on this tradition: the rite of possession has never existed and women and homosexuals have never participated in the dance. This change of discourse on their own music reveals the distance that has appeared between the '70s and the '90s in the UAE between the initial form reported by Danish ethnomusicologist Poul Rovsing-Olsen (1922-1982) and the current tradition.

Our oral sources collected between 2002 and 2009 from musicians, who practiced the *leiwah* before 1971, indicate that from the first half of the '80s to the late '90s the reaction of the religious authorities regarding possession practices was negative. It is under the collective pressure that musicians have neglected the practice of *leiwah*. The possession cult has disappeared from the visible social sphere, but its secular form has been encouraged in the associative frame. It should be added that this is the same period in which female dances disappeared from the *leiwah* rite and its secular form. This phenomenon is not specific to music of African origin, but also affects Bedouin traditions such as the *'ayyalah* dance that involved young female dancers (the *na'ashât*). Today, it is rare to see these female dancers in public performances as the weddings.¹⁷

1.5 Towards an urban representation, secular and modern musical traditions

These phenomena reported by musicians active during the period before creation of the Federation bring to light the tensions that traditional society suffered when the country opened to exogenous cultural influences. Meanwhile, the action of the Ministry of Information and Culture, according to a former official,¹⁸ was to accompany these societal changes. In the first instance, the aim was to harmonize the common Musical Heritage and then present a national culture in line with the collective perception.

However, by analyzing the local official folk literature published from the '70s and '80s by the Ministry, it appears that the musical traditions are described on the basis of a moral and puritan point of view. Regarding the *leiwah*, its dance is described as profane without female participation. It is not associated with any precise local community; it is rather

¹⁷ This phenomenon also affects the music of minorities of Ras-al-Khaymah, such as the *Shihuh*. Their female dance called *al-Kaf* disappeared from the urban areas affected by the rise of Puritanism. Fieldwork conducted from 2002 to 2009 in the UAE and from 2006 to 2009 in Oman.

¹⁸ Source: Fieldwork in Abu Dhabi 2008. The informant requested anonymity.

categorized as imported music (*fann wafid* in Arabic), indicating its otherness compared to the Bedouin culture.¹⁹

All this contributes to shaping a consensual and policed representation of *leiwah*, which has the effect of introducing its profane form in the theatrical reality of cultural events. This phenomenon crystallizes the historical perception of this tradition so that today, during performances of young musicians, singing a text redacted from these publications may be interpreted as traditionally authentic. It appears that this homogenization process has influenced the reading of musical traditions in the UAE. It corresponds to a patrimonialization. In other words, it is the expression of a collective construction of meaning (the implicit social agreement construction) and a reformulation of musical practices in accordance with a shared sense of national identity.

2. Patrimonialization and Cultural Economy (2004-2010)

The cultural policy of Sheikh Zayed al Nahyan during the first two decades of the Federation was to harmonize the Cultural Heritage of different emirates to build a nation-state. After his death in 2004 a major change began in the representation and management of the Heritage as his successors embarked on an unprecedented modernization of the Federation. This new stage is characterized by a rationalized approach to Cultural Heritage, notably through the development of privatization programs led by government institutions.

Based on this dialectic of *turâth* internalized by the local society, these programs initiate the valorisation of some of its potential. I propose now to examine how the 2004-2011 period represents a paradigm shift in the symbolic transformation of traditional music and in the patrimonialization process; and how the ADACH's Intangible Heritage program of collection and archiving is legitimized.

2.1 New stakes, new strategy, new practices

Over the course of 2000 years, festivals have gradually emerged as the institutional dissemination instrument of culture.²⁰ These new structures are developed by weaving various private partnerships. The introduction of the market sector into cultural programming induced a consumption

¹⁹ I choose to translate *wafid* as *imported* rather than *immigrant* because it is more significant in this case. This notion of "*wafid*" used by the State for non-Bedouin music disappeared from official publications from 2004.

²⁰ The first festival focused on Traditional Heritage appeared in Dubai in 1996.

relation with the Heritage objects, which also corresponds to a demand of novelty by the local population.

In 2002, the Ministry of Information ordered a reduction – to be spread out until 2006 – of the annual subsidies to associations, a move which called into question the institutionalized status of traditional musicians. Since the state was no longer their direct interlocutor, musicians changed their strategy and began to defend their interests by bargaining for their performances (Sebiane 2007, 127-132). This situation exacerbated competition between musical ensembles.

In this global context turned toward profit, the strategy of the traditional musician becomes commercial. They are more professional and the quality of their performances no longer depends on the observance of the traditional codes of the performance, but on the spectacular of the musicale exhibition. For example, some associations introduce an electrified instrumentarium in *al-razhah*, i.e. a Bedouin musical genre. Regarding the *leiwah*, it is not the qualities of the oboe player, the drummers or the songs that appear important, but the innovation of dance moves. This new formatting process is therefore not based on aesthetic considerations, but results from an approach founded on the economic management of the music.

In addition, the population's relocation causes a deliquescence of the traditional social ties that are the basis of local musical practices.²¹ These are increasingly cut off from the social fabric, despite awareness programs to re-enter (organization of competitions and mini-festivals for school, for example). The music becomes more and more a consumption object.

2.2 Musical Heritage as a factor of cultural and economic dynamism

In 2006 the Ministry of Information and Culture was replaced by a "Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development". This new structure aims to "highlight the national identity" to "revive the culture and heritage" and transform the UAE into a "major international center of culture". These new concerns are economic and correspond to the decision to develop the tourism industry on a large scale and strengthen the Emiratization policy²² after the awareness of the limits of the oil windfall. Those incentives to enter the competitive market have resulted in the change of status of musicians, but also the transformation of Heritage as "Cultural Capital".

²¹ A consequence of the rapid urban growth observed in the UAE Federation.

²² The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the UAE launches an Emiratization program to counteract unemployment among citizens. Program was enacted in April 2004: Decree No. 1/259. Source: Federal Government of the UAE.

This logic of economic development pushes local governments to restructure their own institutions.²³ Thus in 2005 the emirate of Abu Dhabi reformed the "Cultural Foundation" – whose mission was the public awareness of Heritage – into a new authority called ADACH. This new institution does not hide its claim to develop a unique representation of the Emirate culture to the world. In Dubai, the "Dubai Cultural Council", which has had the same mission since 2004, integrated a new structure, the DCAA,²⁴ in March 2008. This structure quickly found partners in major real estate groups and private companies in the emirate. This is part of a larger strategic project to make Dubai the first Cultural Hub in the region.

This outbidding of projects, all focused on the economic development of culture, reveals a very strong economic rivalry between the different cultural mediators in the UAE. With increased private investment, Culture becomes a factor in economic growth, and turns into a territorialized cultural economy. The Dubai Shopping Festival, the Sharjah Heritage Days and Womad Abu Dhabi are significant examples of this mechanism.

Across cultural policy restructuring, it is therefore the economic reasoning and the criteria of performance and productivity that today guide cultural mass production. This process fits into the new urban space of the UAE. It is adapted to the standards of the WTO and WIPO of which tourism is the mainspring.

This situation would not be problematic for traditional music if it was not in contradiction with declared objectives by the political discourse – that is to say the valorization of the cultural richness and desire to conserve a Cultural Heritage²⁵ as the basis of the Nation's Identity. This cleavage between public interest and private interests is at the heart of the standardization of music previously mentioned.

This situation from my point of view results from a structural mutation. The fragmentation of cultural operators multiplies the mediators and induces changes in traditional significations of music. In this context, the Popular Arts Associations, *jam'iyya al-funun asha'biyyah*, and traditional musicians are totally disadvantaged in front of a deregulated market.

²³ Source: *The cultural strategy of the Arab countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council*, Brochure of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2009, unpublished.

²⁴ DCAA: Dubai Cultural and Art Authority.

²⁵ Source: ADACH (Strategic Plan) *Five-Year Strategy 2008 – 2013*.

2.3 Captation, capitalization and the monopoly logic of musical traditions

Our question about the objectives and the action of the ADACH is based on three phenomena: the first is the Heritagization of the musical traditions by the State Cultural Institutions; the second is the recent regionalization of the Heritage by the economic sector; and the third is the legal consistency of the UAE cultural policy with the UNESCO Safeguarding Heritage Convention of 2003.²⁶

Indeed, the safeguarding policies under the Convention involve an institutionalization of the "traditional culture"²⁷ which justifies *de facto* patrimonialization in the Emirates. What is however difficult to see in the approach of the ADACH is the balance between the logic of preservation of the musical traditional "expressions" and the notion of safeguarding and renewing the social dynamics of living traditions. This point is particularly sensitive if we add the break context among the traditional musicians and the absence of an infrastructure dedicated to this safeguarding.

Thus, one can wonder what will be the quality of the musical collection of the ADACH in an already formatted traditional landscape. What will be the criteria for the musical objects selection? How will Emirati communities be part of the safeguarding program of local ICH while the representation of the society is homogenized? This approach of the ADACH can indeed be likened to a form of Emirati heritage monopolization, especially in this context of strong competition between the major emirates which constitute the UAE Federation.

If we take into account David Harvey's analysis of the treatment of cultural goods within the structures with capitalist economy framework, it is the monopolistic rent logic that prevails in a competitive situation:

"All rent is based on the monopoly power of private owners of certain portions of the globe. Monopoly rent arises because social actors can realize an enhanced income-stream [...] by virtue of their exclusive control over some directly or indirectly tradable item which is in some crucial respects unique and non-replicable" (Harvey 2001, 395).

This principle transposed to an intangible good, such as traditional music, assimilated to a collective symbolic capital in this case, can serve as follows:

²⁶ ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage.

²⁷ See the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, 15 November 1989, Paris, General Conference of UNESCO.

"[...] in the cause of extracting monopoly rents [...] For what is at stake is the power of collective symbolic capital, of special marks of distinction that attach to some place, which have a significant drawing power upon the flows of capital more generally" (Ibid., 405).

One can suppose that the whole of this Emirati national heritage management and beyond is part of the musical heritage monopolistic rent perspective. The stake in this monopolization is local at first between the various emirates, but also regional over the medium-term between the Arab Gulf States. The symbolic captation of this heritage constitutes therefore a political and economical capitalization strategy.

Indeed, the ADACH's conservation logic appears as the basis of a wider appropriation process of the regional Bedouin culture and identity. This strategy will entail projects which aim to be more grandiose than those of its neighbors. Thus, the Centre for Music in the World of Islam at Al Ain, which proposes to archive all music from the Muslim world, is motivated by long-term economic logic rather than a development approach for the fundamental knowledge. This raises the question of the future of scientific research on living practices.

2.4 Towards a post-patrimonialization in the Persian Gulf

This cultural policy paradigm shift in the UAE since 2004 reflects the gradual introduction of an economic logic for operating an already formatted heritage, and implies the adoption of a rent monopoly approach by the Emirati authorities. This approach is legitimized by the patrimonialization of international standards endorsed by UNESCO.

However, do not overlook the permanence of the *turâth* dialectic in the Emirati society and its neighboring countries, as Qatar, Bahrain and Oman (to name but a few) have built their unity on this principle. Today, Abu Dhabi tries above all to find its symbolic and central place in front of the other emirates of the UAE Federation and the other regional actors in this race for cultural development.²⁸ What we attend today is thus only a new stage of state cultural policy that has existed since the creation of the Federation.

²⁸ During the 2009 financial crisis, Dubai refocuses its activities on the promotion of urban culture leaving the field to Abu Dhabi in the pursuit of its strategic plan for 2008-2012.

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