

Abstract

This thesis situates itself within contemporary global discourses on maritime heritage, which have evolved beyond terracentric paradigms, traditionally focused on land-based sites and monuments, toward recognizing that oceans and coasts are active cultural spaces that have profoundly shaped human histories and identities across the world. Within this ocean-oriented framework, the thesis examines Qeshm Island, the largest in the Persian Gulf, as a strategic maritime node and a dynamic site of cultural encounter, whose significance has been continually renegotiated through successive cycles of trade, occupation, and exchange. Through an inside-out perspective, this thesis extends the notion of “outsiders” to encompass both Western powers and the Iranian state, examining how interventions by Portuguese, English, Dutch, and Iranian actors were mediated and reinterpreted through the agency of local communities. It explores how the shifting strategies of Western and national powers reshaped not only the island’s landscape and maritime networks, but also the ways in which its heritage was conceived, appropriated, and redefined over time. The research employs digital humanities methodologies for surveying, managing, and representing historical and spatial data. Unlike conventional narratives that rely primarily on textual records, this study adopts a visual and spatial framework that integrates maps, archival sources, and GIS-based analyses to reveal neglected dimensions of Qeshm island past and to reinterpret its heritage as a dynamic and multilayered process. In this context, the thesis is organized into two main parts. Part A provides a historical reconstruction of Qeshm Island from the earliest waves of colonial expansion to the present (sixteenth to twenty-first century), tracing the interplay between external ambitions and local agencies. Part B focuses on identifying the enduring elements of these histories as part of an evolving process of heritagization, thereby framing maritime heritage, defined not from continental or colonial perspectives but from the locality of the island itself, as a critical lens through which to reassemble the island’s past and re-situate it within wider regional networks. By reframing the island legacy in this way, the thesis outlines Qeshm Island as a site of negotiation, survival, and cultural exchange, recovering overlooked aspects of its history and providing new perspectives on its cultural value and potential for sustainable regional development within the current geopolitical context.