

Hassan Fathy, *New Gourna Mosque*, near Luxor, Egypt, 1952
 New Gourna came to international attention some 20 years after Fathy finished work on it, with the publication of his book *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt* (1973). New Gourna was built in order to relocate the villagers of old Gourna, who were living off the looting of antiquities, away from the site of the valley of the kings. Despite Fathy's thoughtful design of medieval dwelling and enlightened consideration of natural ventilation, orientation, energy conservation and local building techniques, which were all ahead of their time, the project was not wholly successful – the resettlement was imposed on the villagers by the government. The mosque with its distinct staircase minaret is now one of the new seating structures on this World Heritage site.

For much of its history, Iran was part of an extensive empire with far-reaching trade and cultural networks. The current political situation, however, has often led to a misplaced patriotism that has emphasised the heritage of the nation state over its connections across the region. **Farrokh Derakhshani** flags up the danger of appropriating a wider common heritage from a local rather than a global perspective, and looks at Iran in the wider context of its immediate neighbours.



IRAN IN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

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COUNTERPOINT