

The Study of Persian Art on the Eve of World War II: The Third Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology in 1935*

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Having gathered a number of Persian art historians and archaeologists from western countries, as well as those from the Soviet Union, the Third Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology in 1935, held at the State Hermitage Museum in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), set a pivotal stage for the scholarly formation of this emerging research field in the early 20th century. Despite its significance as one of the key international academic fora before World War II, the historiographical background of the Leningrad Congress remains largely understudied. This chapter thus casts new light on the background of this event, considering the roles of Euro-American art historians, particularly those from the English-speaking world, the process as to how the basis of the dynastic canon in Persian art history was formed, as well as some of the key debates that occurred during a week-long scholarly gathering.

Initiating Persian Art Fora in the Early 20th Century

By the time when the Congress took place in 1935, Persian art had reasonably established its profile as a genre of art collecting and a subject of scholarly investigation. This image took a steady shape over the course of the two world wars: shortly after 1925 when Iran opened its gate to the west, many ambitious scholars from Europe and the United States set out their archaeological and collecting expeditions through this uncharted ancient land, in tandem with the rise of cultural and political self-consciousness among the Iranians under the Pahlavī regime.¹ Although such a significant cultural shift could not have been credited for one single advocate, the American art

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¹ See Grigor 2009.

historian and aesthetician Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969) was, among others, the most gifted player who laid out the aesthetical standard in Persian art history through his carefully orchestrated projects, such as the curation of exhibitions, as well as the publication of books and articles, notably *A Survey of Persian Art* (1938–9), co-edited by his partner Phyllis Ackerman (1893–1977).²

Among his achievements, Pope was a charismatic operator who envisaged not only large-scale loan exhibitions but also regular scholarly meetings. The organisation of a scholarly gathering is nowadays considered as an essential part of academic networking, but such a face-to-face meeting among scholars coming from all over the world was still rare in the early 20th century. It was Pope who initiated the first meeting of Persian art historians and archaeologists in the mid-1920s: the First International Congress of Persian Art and Archaeology took place in Philadelphia in 1926, followed by the Second Congress in London in 1931.³ The Third Congress in 1935, a topic of the current study, was the first of this kind that happened outside the west and the last one before the outbreak of World War II. Initially planned in Paris in 1937, the Fourth Congress was for a long time suspended until 1960, when it was finally realised in multi-locations in the United States.⁴ After the relocation of the Asia Institute to Shiraz, the Fifth Congress took place in Iran in 1968, and this public event marked as the last public appearance of Pope before his decease.⁵

Like the previous congresses, the Third Congress took place in conjunction with a comprehensive exhibition of Persian art, from the ancient to Islamic periods. Showcasing the strengths of the Russian collections of Persian art, the 1935 Exhibition at the State Hermitage Museum remains one of the largest public displays dedicated to this subject, equivalent or even surpass to the 1931 Exhibition in London.⁶ Although a detailed discussion on the content of the 1935 Exhibition is beyond the scope of the current chapter, the following quotation from a review essay by Pope, who was behind the organisation of the entire congress-exhibition enterprise, captures the grandeur of the Hermitage show:

The Exhibition ... is so vast, so complex, and so full of unfamiliar, unpublished material, raising so many intellectual problems, that an adequate interpretation

² For a documentary biography of Pope, see Gluck and Siver 1996; for an art-historiographical reassessment of Pope's career, see Kadoi 2016A.

³ See Gluck and Siver 1996, 114–122, and 200–202. See also a history of the Congress summarised in Pope 1981.

⁴ See Gluck and Siver 1996, 420–426.

⁵ See Gluck and Siver 1996, 498–537.

⁶ For the 1931 exhibition, see Robinson 2000; Wood 2000.

of it would require many months and many articles... although there are things in some of the later galleries which would not be included in an exhibition of severest artistic standards in Western Europe, none of these is without historic interest, and there is something to be said for the presentation of material showing the decline as well as the rise and culmination of various styles. But this artistically less interesting material represents only a negligible proportion of the whole collection, and before the seventeenth century galleries there is not an object that is ordinary and gallery after gallery presents a concentration of masterpieces that has left the foreign visitors breathless with excitement and admiration.⁷

The unprecedented scale of the exhibition is also remarked in most exhibition reviews. Ackerman, who also participated in the 1935 Congress, gives its metrics as ‘Twenty-five thousand exhibits in eighty-four halls.’⁸

While there was not yet a unified scholarly meeting under the umbrella term ‘Islamic art’ that comprised the art histories of the Arab, Turkish and Persian lands of the Islamic period before World War II, several attempts were made to reassess aspects of Islamic and Middle Eastern culture among western Orientalists and local scholars alike in response to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent wake of Arab nationalism. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the First International Congress of Arab Music took place in Cairo in 1932. Henry George Farmer (1882–1965), a pioneering musicologist who specialised in Arab music, participated in the conference and recorded his daily activities and interactions with fellow delegates during his stay in Cairo.⁹

The 1935 Congress: the Organisational Background

The major host institution of the 1935 Congress and its location—the State Hermitage Museum—did not come as a surprise, given its long history of collecting Persian art, both in quantity and in quality. A wide range of objects from modern-day Iran, the Caucasus and Central Asia came to the Russian lands by degrees over the centuries, and it was intensified during the 18th century as diplomat gifts and trophies of

⁷ Pope 1935, 59.

⁸ Ackerman 1936, 45. The number of eighty-four for galleries is also found in Morgenstern’s review (Morgenstern 1936, 200) and Pope’s review (Pope 1935, 59; Pope 1936, 4).

⁹ See Katz 2015.

war booty.¹⁰ The State Hermitage Museum, founded in 1764, did not actively collect non-western objects at the beginning, apart from smaller items for philological research, such as coins and seals, but during the 19th century, other branches of objects entered the Hermitage that constituted what is now considered as an Islamic art collection, including those from the Persian cultural sphere.¹¹ After the Oriental Department was established in 1920, the collection incorporated non-western objects that had been scattered across different sections of the museum, as well as other museum collections in St. Petersburg, and acquired quantities and comprehensiveness.¹²

Although it was not the level of European art, Persian art was also involved in the Soviet sales of masterpieces and other fine arts during the interwar period. A network of Soviet traders and export organisations made a wide range of antiquities available to foreign dealers, collectors and tourists alike during the Soviet Union's First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932) under Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) in order to solve the new government's political and economic problems.¹³ During the late 1920s and early 1930s, more than 24 000 items were removed from the collections of the State Hermitage Museum and were released to the Antikvariat (the state office trading in art and antiques).¹⁴ The sales of works from the Hermitage served to stabilise the new government during its challenging foundation time, owing to its access to the oil market as well as to the American technology, thanks to the sales of masterpieces to Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1864–1955) and Andrew W. Mellon (1855–1937), respectively.¹⁵

This, however, does not mean that all of these items left Russia. Many of them were probably stayed at the Antikvariat storerooms, and unsold works of art were

¹⁰ Ivanov 2014, 6.

¹¹ Ivanov 2014, 11–13.

¹² Ivanov 2014, 13–16.

¹³ For the background of this, see Odom and Salmond 2009B, 16–21.

¹⁴ According to information compiled in 1936 regarding the works of art that were released to the state office trading in art and antiques between 10 March 1928 and 10 October 1933 (f. I, op. 17, d. 234, l. 10, Archive of the State Hermitage Museum) quoted in Solomakha 2009, 112, note 6. It does not include pre-Islamic or Islamic Persian art works, but it does include Japanese and Chinese porcelain and bronze pieces.

¹⁵ Solomakha 2009, 129. Gulbenkian, who was involved in the development of the Caucasian oil industry since the revolution, was approached by Georgii Piatakov, the head of the Soviet trade mission in Paris, and entered into negotiations with the Soviet authorities. In 1929 he offered 10 million rubles for the purchase of 18 paintings from the Hermitage; in the end, he acquired some of the paintings, together with gold and silver objects, furniture as well as some other items—his acquisition was worth around 4 million rubles (ca. 380 000 GBP) (Bayer 2009, 202–203). For the list of the paintings Mellon acquired from the Hermitage during 1930–1931, see Solomakha 2009, 135, note 62.

eventually returned to the Museum.¹⁶ The sales were made difficult owing to the economic crisis in Europe, the Great Depression in 1929 in the United States, and especially after the rise of National Socialism in 1933. Letters of protest against the disposal of the museum's collections may also have exerted some impact on the slowing of this operation.

In 1932, for instance, the Antikvariat asked the Hermitage to select possible export of unique works, such as Sasanian silver objects that had become popular at the London exhibition in 1931.¹⁷ The leading Soviet Orientalists Joseph (Iosif) Orbeli (1887–1961; then Head of the Oriental Department at the Hermitage; Museum Director from 1934 to 1951), wrote a letter to Stalin on the suggestion of Boris Legran (1884–1935), then Museum Director (1930–1934).¹⁸ A response from Stalin was fortunate for the Oriental Department: the Antikvariat's requests were considered unfounded, and the collections of the Oriental Department were thus untouched.¹⁹

As far as surviving archival records are concerned, Pope had become acquainted with Orbeli by the mid-1920s, when they exchanged letters regarding Oriental carpets as a typical starting point of Pope's networking strategy.²⁰ In one of their earlier letter exchanges, Orbeli is apologetic about his poor English command, confessing that 'I am not sure, if I can be of any use in America: I am not speaking English and do'nt [*sic*] know if my readings would be of any interest to the auditory there ... Forgive me my bad English. I write with the help of Miss Trever who is trying her best.'²¹ Their acquaintanceship can also be testified by Orbeli's participation in the First

¹⁶ Solomakha 2009, 129. Such returns begun in 1931 and continued until 1937.

¹⁷ This episode is quoted in Solomakha 2009, 128. The display of the Sasanian silvers is sensationally reported by the London Illustrated news: 'Western Europe has here an opportunity of appreciating it [the Hermitage collection of Sasanian metalwork] for the first time on so large a scale. The silver objects now on view are particularly interesting, as at first the Hermitage authorities hesitated to send them, as being more fragile than the gold and bronze' (*Illustrated London News*, 31 January 1931, Issue 4789, 176). See also the catalogue of the London 1931 Exhibition, in particular Case 91 (London 1931, 58–60).

¹⁸ For a biography of Orbeli, see Yuzbashyan 1964.

¹⁹ Boris Borisovich Piotrovsky (1908–1990; Museum Director from 1964 to 1990) was present when Orbeli received a letter from Stalin. His recollections on the content of this letter are quoted in Solomakha 2009, 135, note 70.

²⁰ This culminated in his post-academic career success as an authority of Oriental carpets in the 1920s, as exemplified by his involvement in the curation of an Oriental rug exhibition in Chicago in 1926 (see Kadoi, 2016C, 248–259).

²¹ Letter from Orbeli to Pope, 30 September 1925, Arthur Upham Pope Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Camilla Trever (1892–1974) was Orbeli's Hermitage colleague.

Congress as a committee member.²² Their working relationship seems to have steadily grown over the course of preparing the Second Congress, in which Orbeli participated, once again, as a committee member, and there was a hint at that time that the Third Congress would be hosted by the Hermitage Museum.²³

The New York Times announced the Leningrad Congress in summer 1934. Sent by Pope, this announcement alerted students of Persian art to consider ‘the Russian collections of the utmost importance because for sixteen centuries, between 600 BC. and 1200 AD, the Iranian culture was not confined to Persia’s present boundaries but extended far into Siberia and Southern Russia.’²⁴

Apart from its academic objectives, the 1935 Congress was politically administered by the Soviet Government, as reflected in the involvement of Andrei Sergeevich Bubnov (1883–1938), then People’s Commissar for Education at the Soviet Government. The participation of Pope’s colleagues from the United States in the 1935 Congress was therefore primarily intended not only for their scholarly outputs but also for their western, ‘bourgeois’ profiles, in tandem with ‘progressive’ aspects of scholarship from the Communist East.²⁵ The Prussian Orientalist and collector Friedrich Sarre (1865–1945) was, for instance, acting merely as Honorary President of the Congress (fig. 1).²⁶ As will be discussed in detail below, the content of the papers delivered to the 1935 Congress was largely divided into two groups—participants from the Soviet Union and those from the west. This chapter casts light on the content of the papers delivered by western participants at the 1935 Congress, so as to complement the following chapter that highlights Russian approaches to the study of Persian art at that time.²⁷

²² See Kadoi forthcoming A.

²³ ‘When Professor Orbeli, now Director of the Hermitage Museum, extended the invitation of the Soviet Government to the Second International Congress on Persian Art and Archaeology, that was meeting in London in conjunction with the Persian Exhibition, to hold the Third Congress in Leningrad, and when the invitation was supported by hints that the Soviet Government would provide a great exhibition that would assemble all of the relative material from the numerous museums in the Soviet Union, great hopes were roused’ (Pope 1935, 59).

²⁴ *The New York Times*, 5 August 1934.

²⁵ This aspect of Soviet politico-scholarly strategies is pointed out by Kemper 2015, 170. An interesting parallel can be made with the 25th International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow in 1960, in which the combination of Oriental studies and Soviet propaganda manifested itself (see Kemper 2015). I am grateful to Iván Szántó for drawing this study to my attention. For Soviet Iranology in particular, see *Iranian Studies*, 48/5 (2015; a special issue on Russian Orientalism and Soviet Iranology); Volkov 2018.

²⁶ For Sarre’s art collection, see Gierlichs’s chapter in the present volume.

²⁷ See Vasilyeva’s chapter in the present volume.

The year of 1935 was most probably set as a realistic date for the next international congress of Persian art studies, considering some five-year interval between the first and second events, as well as the time required for the preparation of both an academic forum and its accompanying exhibition. Intriguingly, however, the Third Congress was coincided with the occasion of the thousand anniversary of the birth of the poet Firdaws, known as Millenary Celebration (*Jashn-i Hazāra*).²⁸ In response to a series of festivities that were masterminded by the Pahlavī nationalists, such as the inauguration of the mausoleum of Firdawsī, which took place in Iran during the year of 1934 (following Nöldeke [Theodor Nöldeke; 1836–1930]’s calculation of the birth-date of Firdawsī as 323 AH / AD 934 or 324 AH / AD 935),²⁹ the celebration was also organised by the Columbia University in collaboration with other New York institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), the New York Public Library and Pope’s institute, namely the American Institute of Persian Art and Archaeology (AIPAA). The New York event was accompanied by *Shāhnāma* exhibitions at the Columbia University and the Met, and David Eugene Smith (1860–1944), Professor of mathematics at Columbia, recruited his colleague Richard J. H. Gottheil (1862–1936)—an eminent American Orientalist who studied a newly acquired illustrated copy of the *Shāhnāma* at the New York Public Library (Spenser Pers. MS 2)³⁰—for supervising the compilation of a bibliography in the memorial volume.³¹

The concurrent happenings of Persian cultural festivities in and out of Iran during the first half of the 1930s suggest a certain degree of Pahlavī intervention in the 1935 Congress. Apart from the sending of key Iranian delegates to Leningrad, including ‘Alī Asghar Hikmat (1893–1980), Minister of Education, the title of the Congress that used to opt for the term ‘Persian Art and Archaeology’ was replaced by ‘Iranian Art and Archaeology’ in response to the change of the country’s name in the same year.

The Congress was first open in Leningrad on the 10th of September, moved to Moscow on the 16th, and closed on the 18th.³² With more than 200 delegates from twenty-four different countries, ten sessions took place at the Hermitage Theatre, built by order of Catherine the Great, and two sessions in Moscow.³³ Many papers were

²⁸ For the Millenary Celebration, see Shahpur Shahbazi 1999.

²⁹ See Shahpur Shahbazi 1999. The Soviet Union sent the largest delegation, including Orbeli, to the Celebration, and it presented a number of gifts, including reproductions of Sasanian and post-Sasanian plates and a facsimile of the 1333 *Shāhnāma* manuscript.

³⁰ For a biography of Gottheil, see Riedel 2005. It is interesting to note that the illustrations of the Spencer *Shāhnāma* are now considered as early 20th-century forgeries.

³¹ See Smith 1936.

³² Gluck and Siver 1996, 287.

³³ Gluck and Siver 1996, 287 and 293.

included in the congress proceedings, edited by Orbeli, and a large-size volume, with some 300–pages and more than 120 plates, was published in 1939.³⁴

Of equal noteworthiness is the involvement of Dikran Garabed Kelekian (1868–1951) in the 1935 Congress, demonstrating an inseparable tie between dealership and scholarship in the field of Persian art prior to World War II. One of the influential Armenian-American dealers of Islamic art in the early 20th century, Kelekian started his career as early as the late 1890s, for instance acting as commissioner for the Persian Pavilion at the World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893,³⁵ and already became involved in Pope’s Persian enterprise at the time of the Philadelphia Exhibition of Persian Art in 1926 as a major lender.³⁶ In a short commentary on the 1935 Congress published in *Parnassus*, Kelekian remarks on his foreseen view to the evaluation of Persian art as the source of all decorative arts in his 1909 publication and says ‘I still believe that it is very close to the spirit of modern times because it has remained more human and more understandable to us than some of its predecessors.’³⁷

The Formation of a Dynastic Canon in Persian Art History: the Saljuqs

The following discussion is based on the papers that were included in the proceedings, and unless specified all the authors are assumed to have participated in the Congress, either in person or in absentia (their papers were read by someone else).

Among the dynastical genres, the growing awareness of the importance of Saljuq art is reflected in the content of many papers delivered by western scholars at the 1935 Congress. The cultural legacy of the Saljuqs became largely defined as the architectural remains of 12th–13th century Iran, in accordance with the growth of archaeological expeditions within the country during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and its scholarship had been reasonably developed by the time of the 1935 Congress. The England-born American art historian Eric Schroeder (1904–1971), for instance, participated in the 1935 Congress and read a paper on the Jabal-i Sang, a Saljuq building in Kirmān.³⁸ It was around the time when he was asked by Pope to write for *A Survey*,

³⁴ Leningrad 1939.

³⁵ Kadoi 2016C, 239.

³⁶ Gluck and Siver 1996, 121.

³⁷ Kelekian 1936, 27. In this commentary, Kelekian poses the question as to the relationship between the art of Persia and that of Egypt and casts a critical view to the overemphasis on Persian contribution to the art of neighboring countries.

³⁸ See Leningrad 1939, 230–236.

while the French archaeologist André Godard (1881–1965) decided not to deal with the Saljuq period and instead contributed to other chapters of Islamic architecture.³⁹ Yet more archeological finds—textiles, ceramics and metalwork—became available in the art market, their multifaceted problems became clearer to the eyes of many scholars. The problematisation of Saljuq objects at the 1935 Congress may have not been particularly helpful for the scholarly development of this field, and it was only in the 2010s that a major attempt to reconsider the art of the Saljuqs was initiated.⁴⁰

Phyllis Ackerman (1893–1977) gave a paper, entitled ‘Some problems of Saljuq and Safavid textiles.’⁴¹ The paper title itself mirrors an enduring confusion over a group of textiles that had been discovered in Rayy in 1925 and their attribution to the Buyid period.⁴² Although some of such textiles, if not all, are now widely considered as forgeries, Ackerman highly valued them because of their stylistic uniqueness but struggled to locate them in a history of Persian textiles that was yet to be established, both stylistically and scientifically:

In the four hundred years and more that intervene between the Saljuq and the Safavid periods textile material is scarce. Quite a number of fourteenth century Islamic silks have survived, but their attribution is still in a state of complete confusion. What one man calls Spanish another woman may call Samarqand.⁴³

Similarly, the metalwork of the Saljuq period posed a heated debate at the Congress. Responding to sceptical views about the authenticity of the Alp Arslan Salver in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (34.68), the significance of this enigmatic object was thoroughly analysed not only from an art-historical point of view by Pope himself but also as part of metalingual investigation by Harold J. Plenderleith (1898–1997), a conservation scientist at the British Museum.⁴⁴ Since much has been said on this debate

³⁹ Kadoi 2016D, note 36. Godard was also present at the Congress and gave a paper on early mosque architecture in Iran (see Leningrad 1939, 70–78).

⁴⁰ A special exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, ‘Court and Cosmos: The Great Age of the Saljuqs’ (27 April – 24 July 2016), successfully showcased representative examples of Saljuq cultural remains, mostly those from the Euro-American collections, but it could not obtain any loans from the lands of the Saljuqs, namely Turkey and Iran.

⁴¹ Phyllis Ackerman, ‘Some problems of Seljuq and Safavid textiles’, in Leningrad 1939, 1–5. See also Orbeli’s paper, entitled ‘Le problème de l’art seldjouq’ (in Russian; with a French summary), in Leningrad 1939, 150–155.

⁴² See Blair, Bloom and Wardwell 1992.

⁴³ Leningrad 1939, 3.

⁴⁴ Said to have come from ‘a private Russian collection, unnamed,’ the Salver entered the collection of the Boston Museum under the mediation of Arthur Upham Pope in 1934; this object is

as part of a larger historiographical inquiry into the falsification in Persian art,⁴⁵ it is sufficient to mention that this debate damaged Pope's reputation considerably and thus earned him sobriquets, such as a 'fancy operator at some complicated edge between scholarship, dealing and collecting.'⁴⁶ The mystification of the Boston Salver that was unfortunately intensified at the 1935 Congress offers an intriguing contrast with the celebrated status of the Hermitage's Sasanian metalwork collection that was further secured by the publication of *Sasanidskiĭ metall* (1935), a corpus of Sasanian silver by Orbeli and Camilla Trever (1892–1974).⁴⁷

Among the delegates who gave a positive view to the material culture of the Saljuqs, the participation of Richard Ettinghausen (1906–1979) as Pope's associate in the 1935 Congress is noteworthy.⁴⁸ Having been already known for his linguistic expertise, Ettinghausen gave a paper on the ceramics of Kashan, a genre which he later set a scholarly standard.⁴⁹ Aside from his presentation, the 1935 Congress was particularly memorable for Ettinghausen, because this was the first time after his departure from Germany in June 1933 that he saw Sarre and Ernst Kühnel (1882–1964) again.⁵⁰

The Formation of a Dynastic Canon in Persian Art History: the Timurids

Such a wide range of papers dealing with the art and architecture of the Saljuqs poses an interesting parallel with the art and architecture of the Mongol period, a topic on which was almost untouched throughout the 1935 Congress. This does not contradict with the fact that the term 'Ilkhanid' was not widely used by the scholars of Persian

now considered as 'a possibly a modern-day forgery' in the museum website (see <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/salver-dedicated-to-alp-arслан-ruled-1063%E2%80%931072-inscribed-with-an-islamic-date-equivalent-to-1066%E2%80%931072-but-possibly-a-modern%E2%80%931072-day-forgery-17905>, accessed 17 August 2016).

⁴⁵ See Kadoi forthcoming A.

⁴⁶ For a list of other sobriquets that Pope acquired, see Kadoi 2016B, 4–5.

⁴⁷ See Lerner 2016, 212.

⁴⁸ Born in Frankfurt and having worked at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, Ettinghausen moved to England in early 1933 shortly after the rise of National Socialism in December 1932 to work with Pope as an assistant for *A Survey of Persian Art*. He moved to the US in 1934 and continued working for Pope's *Survey* project. Ettinghausen wrote chapters in *A Survey* dealing with pre-Islamic and Islamic ceramics as well as manuscript illumination (see Soucek 1998).

⁴⁹ Richard Ettinghausen, 'Evidence for the identification of Kashan pottery', in Leningrad 1939, 60–66.

⁵⁰ I am most grateful to Jens Kröger for this information.

art before World War II.⁵¹ The scholarly potential of Ilkhanid architecture was not fully addressed by Pope and his contemporary senior scholars but mainly by the younger generation, notably by Donald N. Wilber (1907–1997), one of Pope’s associates who conducted doctoral research into this very subject.⁵² The study of Ilkhanid visual art and material culture was equally slow to develop and became incorporated, bits by bits, in the art history of Islamic Iran during the second half of the 20th century.⁵³

By contrast, the post-Mongol dynasty of Iran and Central Asia—the Timurids—was particularly featured as an essential historical narrative of Persian art at the 1935 Congress. This was largely owing to the strength of the Hermitage holding of Central Asian art, both Islamic and pre-Islamic, as well as thanks to the architectural legacy of Timur and his successors in Soviet Central Asia, a topic which was not well known to Euro-American scholars at that time. According to Pope, ‘at the Leningrad exhibition ... one can for the first time obtain a solid idea of how imposing were the accoutrements of the world conqueror.’⁵⁴

Although the Soviet scholars capitalised on Timurid-related topics, the English writer Robert Byron (1905–1941), the author of *Roads to Oxiana* (1937), gave an excellent paper on Timurid buildings in Afghanistan, by using the wealth of his first-hand knowledge on Islamic architecture in Central Asia.⁵⁵

In addition to architectural themes, the cauldron of the shrine complex of Khwāja Aḥmad Yasawī was brought to the scholarly attention by a paper of Aleksandr Yakubovskiy (1886–1953).⁵⁶ Although its earliest publication can be traced back as early as 1866, it was in 1935 when the object was removed to the Hermitage Museum.⁵⁷

⁵¹ This term was rarely used in the study of Persian architecture during the first half of the 20th century (*A Survey* opted for the term ‘Mongol’, for instance), apart from a few known cases: Herzfeld’s article on the Gunbād-i ‘Alawiyān, which appeared in the *Festschrift* of Edward G. Browne in 1922, was, for instance, entitled ‘Die Gumbadh-i-‘Alawiyān und die Baukunst der Ilkhane in Iran’ (see Kadoi 2017, note 37).

⁵² Wilber’s dissertation was later published as ‘The Architecture of Islamic Iran: The Il Khānid Period’ (1955).

⁵³ A scholarly synthesis of Ilkhanid art and architectural was finally manifested in a special exhibition, ‘The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353’, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Los Angeles County Museum in 2002–2003.

⁵⁴ Pope 1935, 61.

⁵⁵ Robert Byron, ‘Timurid monuments in Afghanistan’, in Leningrad 1939, 34–38.

⁵⁶ Aleksandr Yakubovskiy, ‘Les artisans iraniens en Asie Centrale a l’epoque de Timour’ (in Russian with a French summary), in Leningrad 1939, 277–285.

⁵⁷ Komaroff 1992, 20.

The imposing scale of the cauldron also caught the fancy of Pope: ‘a vast bronze cauldron with splendid relief ornament ... weights two tons and is as handsome as it is impressive.’⁵⁸ A photograph of the cauldron included in the proceedings, as well as a rare photograph of Pope and Ackerman together standing next to the cauldron (fig. 2),⁵⁹ also demonstrates the impact of this object in the context of museum installation.

Although works on paper were in general not the focal point of discussion throughout the Congress, the manuscript painting of the Timurids was explored by Kühnel, who gave a paper on Bihzād (d. ca. 1535), a master painter working at the court of the Timurid Sultan Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 1469–1506) and later the Safavid Shah Ismā‘īl I (r. 1501–1524).⁶⁰ This short essay provides a useful survey of the scholarship of this enigmatic painter based on the information available up to the mid-1930s, yet at the same time it signals the methodological dilemma surrounding the study of Persian painting before World War II.

Other Uncanonical Subjects

Among many other star players who were also present at the Congress, attention should be given to the Galician art historian Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) who gave a paper on Persian art during the Ice Age. Although his paper was not included in the proceedings, the following short comment by Pope captures the impression that it was not particularly met with enthusiasm: ‘Professor Strzygowski offered a startling suggestion about the possible dawn of the artistic impulse in Persia during a break in the Ice Age.’⁶¹

Although Strzygowski’s theory had been already outdated by the time of the 1935 Congress, the impact of diffusionist methodology can be traceable in some of the papers, such as the paper by the Italian Orientalist Ugo Monneret de Villard (1881–1954).⁶²

⁵⁸ Pope 1935, 61.

⁵⁹ Gluck and Siver 1996, 291.

⁶⁰ Ernst Kühnel, ‘Bihzad’, in Leningrad 1939, 114–118.

⁶¹ Pope 1935, 62. This does not mean that Strzygowski did not submit his paper or did not want to get it published: his paper is more likely to have been rejected for publication, due to the lack of sound scholarship (see Vasilyeva’s chapter in the present volume).

⁶² For a recent biographical study of Monneret, see Armando 2013. It seems that Monneret did not attend the Congress in person, as his paper was read by Pope.

Entitled, ‘the westward expansion of Sasanian architectural forms’,⁶³ Monneret took a distinctive, Italian approach to the arts of Persia by locating them within the context of pan-Mediterranean art historical narratives.⁶⁴

The British art historian Basil Gray (1904–1989), who later became an active scholar of Persian art at the British Museum, in particular the field of Persian painting, also attended the Congress, although it appears that he did not give a paper or did not publish his paper in the proceedings.⁶⁵ Besides the archaeologist and ceramic expert Gerald Reitlinger (1900–1978),⁶⁶ another fellow British art historian David Talbot Rice (1903–1972) was also present at the Congress,⁶⁷ along with his Russian-born wife Tamara Talbot Rice (1904–1993), who was able to secure a visa to revisit the country, thanks to the help of Orbeli,⁶⁸ and the Australian archaeologist Vere Gordon Childe (1892–1957), who became an early exponent of Marxist archaeology in the English-speaking world.⁶⁹ Rice gave a paper, entitled ‘Byzantine elements in Iranian art’, and published his paper in the proceedings.⁷⁰ This was one of his earliest attempts to explore the Byzantino-Persian thesis, and he developed a long-term interest in this topic.

Lastly, many other important scholars of Persian art and archaeology from other European countries, Iran and Turkey contributed to the proceedings of the 1935 Congress, including Ture Johnsson Arne (1879–1965), the Swedish archaeologist who reported the Swedish archaeological expedition to Iran in 1932–1933;⁷¹ the Iranian archaeologist and ceramic expert Mehdi Bahrami (1905–1951);⁷² the French art

⁶³ Ugo Monneret de Villard, ‘the westward expansion of Sasanian architectural forms’, in Leningrad 1939, 138–139.

⁶⁴ See Kadoi and Szántó 2013, 4–5.

⁶⁵ Pinder-Wilson 2000, 452. Gray briefly stayed in Vienna in 1927 and attended lectures by Strzygowski (Pinder-Wilson 2000, 443).

⁶⁶ Reitlinger gave a paper, entitled ‘Islamic glazed pottery from Kish’ (Leningrad 1939, 197–202).

⁶⁷ Rice acted as Treasurer of the International Association of Iranian Art and Archeology (Pope was Secretary, and Sarre was President), which was responsible for the organisation of the Congress as far as Western Europe and America were concerned (according to Rice 1936, 99).

⁶⁸ See Kadoi forthcoming B. Vladimir Minorsky (1877–1966), a leading Russian Iranologist who had been in exile in England since his involvement in the 1931 London Exhibition of Persian Art, did not attend the 1935 Congress; it was finally in 1960 when he returned to Russia for attending the International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow (see Bosworth 2004).

⁶⁹ Trigger 1984, 4. Childe was Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh during the period between 1927 and 1946.

⁷⁰ David Talbot Rice, ‘Byzantine elements in Iranian art’, in Leningrad 1939, 203–208.

⁷¹ See Leningrad 1939, 16–17.

⁷² See Leningrad 1939, 18–20.

historian Georges Salles (1889–1966);⁷³ the Turkish archaeologist Arif Müfid Mansel (1905–1975);⁷⁴ the Iranian painter Ḥusayn Ṭāhirzāda Bihzād (1889–1962),⁷⁵ to name but a few. Each of them deserves a detailed historiographical reassessment on its own.

Conclusion

The Third Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology in 1935 was undoubtedly the first international scholarly gathering of Persian art that sought to break down the academic orthodoxy of art history and archaeology. With attempts to look at the arts of Persia beyond the geographical dichotomy between modern-day Iran and historical Persian cultural lands, as well as beyond the 7th-century Hijrī threshold to partition Persian art history, the 1935 Congress should be remembered as a milestone in the history of Persian art studies in the early 20th century. This event remains first and foremost the only occasion of this kind that brought together western participants and Soviet scholars during much of the last century for the exchange of their ideas, despite language barriers, different methodological backgrounds and, to a certain extent, ideological biases. Each of scholarly trajectories that are featured in this chapter provokes a further rethink on the complex matrix of intellectual history during the interwar period.

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⁷³ See Leningrad 1939, 221–226.

⁷⁴ See Leningrad 1939, 119–126.

⁷⁵ See Leningrad 1939, 249–251. His paper was entitled 'Le matériel du miniaturiste et de l'enlumier iraniens.' For this artist, see Szántó's chapter in the present volume.

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Figure 1 The Third Congress for Iranian Art and Archaeology, Leningrad, 10 September 1935: Sarre (first from left), Bubnov (standing), Orbeli (seated on the left of Bubnov) and then Pope.



Figure 2 Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman in front of the cauldron of the shrine complex of Khwāja Aḥmad Yasawī.