



آرشیو آندره گدار در موزه لوور و اهمیت آنها برای مطالعه موزه ملی ایران سارا پیرام

چکیده

آندره گدار (۱۳۴۴ - ۱۲۶۰) معمار فرانسوی، از سال ۱۳۰۷ تا ۱۳۳۹ رئیس اداره کل عتیقات بود. این انتصابات از سوی دولت ایران باعث ارتقا دیپلماسی فرهنگی بین فرانسه و ایران شد. این مقاله به اسناد آرشیو گدار در گروه هنر اسلامی موزه لوور و اهمیت آنها برای مطالعه موزه ملی ایران می‌پردازد. همچنین تلاش دارد شخصیت برجسته‌ای را بازسازی کند که برای حفاظت و ترویج میراث فرهنگی ایران تلاش زیادی کرد. این مقاله بر اساس پژوهش‌های دکترای نویسنده در دانشگاه نانتر پاریس درباره آگاهی از میراث و معماری در ایران از اواخر سده نوزدهم تا دهه ۱۹۶۰ میلادی است.

واژگان کلیدی: میراث، موزه، موزه ملی ایران، فرانسه، ایران.

<https://doi.org/10.22034/JINM.2022.252908>
© 2021 Iran National Museum. All rights reserved.

André Godard's Archives at the Louvre Museum and Their Significance for the Study of the National Museum of Iran Sarah Piram^a

Abstract

André Godard (1881-1965) was a French architect who was Director of the Iranian Archaeological Service from 1928 to 1960. This appointment by the Iranian government encouraged significant cultural diplomacy between France and Iran. This article deals with Godard's archival material kept at the Louvre Museum, in the Department of Islamic Art, and their significance for the study of the National Museum of Iran. It also rehabilitates a remarkable figure who did much to protect and promote the cultural heritage of Iran. This article is based on the author's doctoral research conducted at Paris Nanterre University about heritage awareness and architectural creation in Iran from the end of the 19th century to the 1960s.

Keywords: Heritage, Museums, National Museum of Iran, France, Iran.

a. PhD Candidate in History of Art, Paris Nanterre University and curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, s.piram@vam.ac.uk

Introduction

Further to incredible artworks and masterpieces, the Louvre Museum in Paris also holds important collections of archives. One collection amongst them was donated to the Museum in 1977. They are essentially composed of photographs and written documents collected by the French architect André Godard (1881-1965). His archives give a sense of the cultural relations between France and Iran from the 1920s to the 1960s. They offer the opportunity to study a large part of the cultural heritage in twentieth-century Iran.

The French architect graduated from the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris in 1909. Godard worked in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and Afghanistan, and finally came to Iran in 1928. The Iranian government had appointed him Director of the Archaeological Service which was the general office for archaeology, antiquities and museums. His duty was to protect and promote the cultural heritage of Iran. Godard also designed several Iranian museums, most notably the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran, but also regional museums in Tabriz, Abadan and Mashhad (fig. 1).

A Museum for Iran

The idea of a museum in Iran emerged after the visit of the Qajar rulers to Europe, and especially to the Louvre Museum in Paris. In 1876, Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848-1896) ordered the construction of a royal museum in the Palace of Golestan in Tehran (Nasiri-Moghaddam, 2004, p. 302). At first, the royal museum was reserved to the Shah and his court – it is only when the place was renovated in 1878 that the Iranian people had access to it. Several travellers had admired the place, describing it as “sumptuous” and adorned with objects of all kinds, including diplomatic gifts. Representatives of foreign countries were also systematically welcomed to this museum. However, the place was conceived as a political showcase and did not keep any Iranian artefacts (Ibid, p. 305).

Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1896-1907) had the project to create a grand museum in Iran. One year before his reign, in 1895, an archaeological agreement gave the privilege of the archaeological excavations to France, and it stipulated that half of the objects would belong to the Iranian government. Furthermore,



Fig. 1. André Godard © Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam

the discovery of illegal excavations at the beginning of the 20th century allowed the confiscation of many objects, which were sent to the Ministry of Education in Tehran. In 1917, a room inside the ministry became a museum with more than two hundred objects on display. A catalogue was even published, probably written by the minister himself (Nasiri-Moghaddam, 2004, p. 306). The only drawback was that the people supposed to preserve and study the objects were not competent enough, and that explains why the provenances were not indicated and the inscriptions not deciphered (Ibid).

These very first museum spaces, located in a palace and in a ministry, outlined the creation of the Iran Bastan Museum, now part of the National Museum of Iran. Although the history of museums began in the 19th century, the most significant phase took place in the 1930s. The ambition of the Iranian government was to create a national museum with collections that were valued and documented. The first administrators to address these issues were the ministers of Education, Momtaz al-Molk and his successor Ali Asghar Hekmat. The latter became minister under the rule of Reza Shah (r. 1925-1941). Both politicians were particularly interested by the French museum model, stated by Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, a student of Etienne-Louis Boullée (Mozaffari, 2007, p. 93). According to Durand, the organisation of the main spaces of a museum had to follow a hierarchical and orderly logic, with galleries, rotundas and gardens. To create such place, the Iranian administrators were keen that the museum of Tehran was designed, but also directed by a Frenchman. This model was finally studied and reproduced by André Godard with the Iran Bastan Museum. The museum had a dual nature: a place of display and culture on the one hand, an autonomous architecture in an urban context on the other hand as reflected in Western museums in general (Bianchi, 2016, p. 109).

The creation of the Archaeological Service (1927-1928)

Reza Shah played a major role in the modernisation of Iran. In 1927, he denounced the

1895 archaeological agreement and decided to abolish the French monopoly. In exchange, a French administrator would come to Iran to protect the cultural heritage (Archives Godard, 1APAI/5964/3). In these circumstances, the Archaeological Service was created, and it replaced a small department of antiquities in the Ministry of Education. André Godard was introduced by the French government to become the Director of this service. A new diplomatic agreement was signed between Iran and France on October 18, 1927, by Mohammad Tadayyon, Iranian Minister of Education, and Paul Ballereau, chargé d'affaires in Tehran (Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Asie-Océanie 1919-1929, Perse-Iran 66, E387-3, f° 77-78).

The creation of the Archaeological Service put an end to the archaeological concessions of the Qajar period. It also reduced cultural rivalries within the country itself, as Western powers were opposed to the archaeological interests of France in Iran. Some Orientalists, such as the German Ernst Herzfeld and the American Arthur Upham Pope played a major role in the cultural domain. They did their utmost to overthrow the French monopoly by developing strong relations with their Iranian colleagues.

An extremely active period (1930-1936)

Godard first arrived in Tehran for a period of five years. His archives at the Louvre list some anecdotes about his arrival – the situation seemed “extremely discouraging” to him. However, in France, he was reminded that “in the event that his mission fails, no grudge would be retained” (Archives Godard, 1APAI/5964/3). It is obvious that his appointment was a way for the French government to keep a control over archaeology and antiquities in Iran.

Godard was involved in drawing up the antiquities law of 1930. The heritage awareness took a new turn in Iran after the promulgation of this law. Godard's contract was renewed, and an extremely active period began in 1933 as he was asked by Ali Asghar Hekmat to draw up plans for the University of Tehran, and for the design of a major national museum. One year



Figs. 2. The storage in the Ministry of Education
© Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam



Figs. 3. The Iran Bastan Museum
© Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam

later, in 1934, Reza Shah went to Turkey and was very surprised to see the President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk taking an active interest in the development of the universities and museums (Id, 1APAI/5964/8). Upon his return, the Shah was delighted to see that, in Iran too, several projects were conducted on the same subjects (Ibid).

The journal of the Archaeological Service *Athār-e Irān* was founded in 1936. Godard's wife, Yedda, collaborated actively with the journal. The articles written by the couple dealt mainly with the Islamic art and architecture of Iran. An important interest for Islamic archaeology was developed with the Archaeological Service. Excavations multiplied and the art of Iran, all periods combined, became the subject of a first reference book written by Arthur Upham Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art. From Pre-historic Times to the Present*, published in six volumes between 1938 and 1939. At that time, Reza Shah was anticlerical and proposed the destruction of monuments opposed to modernisation, including religious buildings. Yet, most historical monuments in Iran are mosques or shrines and André Godard, through the Archaeological Service, played a consequent role, by raising the Shah's awareness on Iran's historic heritage from ancient times to the Islamic era. The duty of the Iranian state was to maintain this multimillennial heritage.

Designing a museum

Godard drew up plans for the university of Tehran, especially the Faculty of Fine Arts. He proposed to hire the French architect Maxime Siroux (1907-1975) who would deal directly with it. Godard was more involved with the creation of the museum. The construction was also urged by the accumulation of excavation objects in the storage of the Ministry of Education. For three years, from 1934 to 1937, the French architect worked on the design of the building and the collections to be on display. His wife Yedda, who had "some museography knowledge from the *École du Louvre*", helped him a lot with the choice of objects, their classification and organisation (Archives Godard, 1APAI/6068) – she was supported by an Irani-

an assistant curator called "Mademoiselle Riazi". The museum was built in 1936 "at the lowest cost" (Ibid). Its inauguration and opening to the public took place three years later, in 1939, on the occasion of the wedding of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Fawzia Fuad of Egypt.

- The building

When Godard was commissioned to prepare the architectural plans for the Iran Bastan Museum, he was asked that the building would be in harmony with the ancient Iranian monuments (Nasiri-Mohgaddam, 2004, p. 308). The museum's pediment was therefore sketched after the model of an ancient building, the *Taq Kasrā* in Ctesiphon in Iraq, built around 540 after a victory of the Sassanians against the Byzantines. This monument was symbolic for different reasons: it referred to this glorious pre-Islamic dynasty, which architecture also influenced the Islamic period with the model of the *iwan*.

The museum area was about one hectare. At the entrance, the visitor was greeted by a poem inscribed in the glory of Reza Shah and his dynasty in the service of progress and modernisation. This inscription was replaced by a Koranic verse after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Inside the building, the space was vast and luminous. The museum had two floors: the lower level was devoted to the ancient civilisation and the higher level to Islamic Iran. Most of the objects were displayed in large display cases "in the French manner" (Pope, 1946, pp. 78-79). In his archives, Godard mentions that "nothing but showcases and some iron sleepers came from abroad" (Archives Godard, 1APAI/5983). A conference room and a library were also designed by Godard.

On several occasions, Godard asked for help from the Iranian government for the construction and consolidation of the museum. His archives present a series of letters written to the Ministry of Education, for the maintenance and cleaning of the museum. At the end of his career, in 1958, he wrote that "this monument is the one that cost the most modest sum to the Iranian state because it was made with a strict saving. That is why it needs to be modernised" (Ibid).

- The collections

The antiquities from the French missions, and the ones confiscated by the government, were transferred to the museum. The discoveries of the Archaeological Service were also added to the display, such as artefacts from the Luristan. However, the sources are not very clear on this subject. It is reported that a series of bronzes were acquired by Western museums at the same time. Rumours about copies circulated in Iran and Godard was criticized by his contemporaries, like Mohsen Moghaddam who wrote in the *Iran-e Ma* newspaper in 1945: "Do not be afraid that antique dealers sell fake bronzes from Luristan. Mr Godard has bought them all for the Museum." (Archives Godard, 1APAI/5954). Godard was suspected of giving works to the Louvre Museum and wasting the money of the Iranian state in the purchase of fakes for the Iran Bastan Museum. The rumours embarrassed the French architect who reprimanded Moghaddam (Ibid).

The museum of Tehran was distinguished by a large collection of Iranian art. However, the antiquities of Susa were poorly represented as most of them were at the Louvre Museum. Similarly, in order to admire the Achaemenid gold or Sassanian silverware, one had to go to the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg. As for the Islamic collections, it was difficult to do better at the time than the museums of London or Paris. However, Tehran's collection was unique in the world, with elamite bronzes, Achaemenid reliefs and jewellery, Islamic architectural ornaments and a large collection of ceramics, including Chinese porcelains.

Godard helped to promote the museum outside Iran, particularly in France. In 1948, he organised with his wife an exhibition at the Cernuschi Museum in Paris to present objects from Tehran. But from 1950 onwards, the museum's loans policy made all loans to international institutions very difficult. A letter from Godard informs that the constant travelling of



Fig. 4. Iran Bastan Museum © Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam

pieces represented a danger for their conservation, and that it was necessary to limit or to prohibit their transport outside the building, as this was done “at the British Museum in London” (Archives Godard, 1APAI/6105/1).

Aftermath

The creation of the Iran Bastan Museum was the result of various reflections led by Iranian officials in the Ministry of Education. Godard was an intermediary between Iran and France. He exported the model of a museum, without however appropriating it. The model was rather assimilated by his Iranian counterparts. Godard respected the instructions allocated to this project and acted fully as an employee of the Iranian state. Despite an emancipation of Iranian institutions through the Archaeological Service, Godard still remained at the heart of a French political influence on the country, even

after the abolition of the monopoly. Cultural interests in Iran was one of the driving forces of French diplomatic action to influence politics (Allain et al, 2007, p. 179).

The reign of Reza Shah was marked by a renovation of the army and the Shah did not deal directly with the cultural policy. According to Yedda Godard, in the aftermath of the Second World War, “Iran was one of the world’s hotspots” (Archives Godard, 1APAI/6001). The country had been under the domination of foreign powers in very different fields. Reza Shah tried to liberate Iran from those influences, especially by criticising the bad oil exploitation of the country, which capital was mostly held by the British government. The concession of oil had been granted under the Qajars, the same who granted the archaeological concession to France. In both cases, a small portion of the profits were returned to Iran,



Fig. 5. Iran Bastan Museum © Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam

which was a drag on the Shah's new projects. The monuments designed during his reign embodied a new idea of cultural reappropriation. The objects on display in the national museum were mostly antiques, which fuelled a national pride and a certain interest for the Iranian civilisation. This strong identity was also evoked in the construction of memorial sites, and Godard took part in major works, by re-designing for example the Tomb of Hafez in Shiraz (Daniel and Tajdar, 2017). The memory of ancient kingship, myths and poetry, was a way to symbolise a form of progress through a political instrumentalisation of the past.

The stay of the French architect in Iran, which was to last five years, finally extended to almost thirty years. After 1960, the direction of the museum was entrusted to Ali Abadi, who was trained by Godard. From the end of the 1960s, the museum was more and more criticised. The display mainly valued ancient objects, putting the Islamic collections aside and questioning the centrality of Islam in the country's identity (Mozaffari, 2007, p. 93). Godard was more specialised in the Islamic period, so it is very likely that the display was a desire of the government and a way to highlight the pre-Islamic past. For that reason, it can be argued that the museum institution in Iran was at first an instrument of propagation that served an ideology of nationalism, rather than a democratic place for education. The Islamic collections were finally placed in a separate building next to the Iran Bastan Museum. Despite the political context, it is admitted that Godard exerted a major influence on Iran's cultural institutions and his archives at the Louvre Museum give important details on the creation of the National Museum of Iran. His appointment also encouraged significant cultural diplomacy between France and Iran, with a strong influence of the Beaux-Arts system in Iran.

References

- Allain, J.-P., Guillen, P., Soutou, G.-H., Theis, L., and M. Vaisse
2007 *Histoire de la diplomatie française*, tome II. De 1815 à nos jours, Paris: Perrin.
- Bianchi, P.
2016 *Espaces de l'œuvre, espaces de l'exposition*. De nouvelles formes d'expérience dans l'art contemporain, Saint-Denis: Connaissances et savoirs.
- Daniel, V. and G. Tajdar
2017 *The Tomb of Hafez and the Godard's poem*, Téhéran: Abyaneh.
- Mozaffari, A.
2007 "Modernity and Identity: The National Museum of Iran". In Simon J. Knell, Suzanne Macleod et Sheila Watson, *Museum Revolutions, How Museums Change and are Changed*, London-New York: Routledge.
- Nasiri-Moghaddam, N.
2004 *L'archéologie française en Perse et les antiquités nationales, 1884-1914*, Paris: Connaissances et savoirs.
- Pope, A.U. (ed.)
1938-9 *A Survey of Persian Art. From Prehistoric Times to The Present*, t. I-XIII, 6 vols., London-New York: Oxford University Press.
- 1946 "The National Museum in Tehran". In *Bulletin of the Iranian Institute*, vol. VI-VII, New York.
- Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l'Islam, Archives Godard*
1APAI/5954 ; 1APAI/5964/3 ; 1APAI/5964/8 ; 1APAI/5964/9/1 ; 1APAI/6001 ; 1APAI/6068 ; 1APAI/6105/1.
- Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères, Direction des affaires politiques et commerciales, Asie-Océanie 1919-1929*, Perse-Iran 66, E387-3, fo 77-78.