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Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux: Disentangling the Narrative of French Colonialism and Modern Architecture in Iran

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Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of two French architects, Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux, in early twentieth-century Iran using postcolonial methodology to challenge the reductive prevailing narrative of these architects as representatives of Western imperial powers. Furthermore, this paper argues for the existence of a distinct local modernism in Iran, highlights the enduring presence of Iranian architectural traditions throughout different historical periods, and argues against the narrative of modern architectural works in Iran as simplistic hybrids of pre-Islamic Iranian architecture and Western modernism. In addition, this research underscores the role of Iranian intellectuals in shaping the cultural and social movements that led to the broader modernization of Iran and modernism in Iranian architecture.

Keywords: Postcolonial Theory; Iran's Local Modernism; Modern Architecture of Iran; Archeological Colonialism; Andre Godard; Maxime Siroux

Introduction

When Princess Shams, the favorite daughter of Reza Shah (r. 1925–41), desired a garden for herself, she selected the design submitted by French architect Andre Godard. For construction to occur in the royal compound, however, the shah's approval was needed. When the plans were laid out before him, the shah caught sight of a Latin name in the corner of the paper. He grew visibly angry, and despite assurances that Godard had lived in Iran so long that he was virtually Iranian, Reza Shah tore apart the plans, commanding that an Iranian architect must design the garden.¹ This anecdote shows how the search for modernity has a thousand and one faces. Some advocated for a globalized modernism, emphasizing a universal approach without considering the unique identity of the designer, while others promoted the significance of local traditions and talents, advocating for the development of a modernism that taps into global modernity but authentically reflects and contributes to the local context.

Investigating the impact of Beaux-Arts-trained French architects Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux on the built environment of early twentieth-century Iran, this article argues for a more nuanced interpretation of modern architecture in Iran. Godard and Siroux made

¹ Soleiman Behboudi, *Reza Shah* (Tehran: Tarhe No Publication, 1995), 356.

significant contributions by designing buildings, educating a new generation of Iranian architects and archeologists, engaging in archaeological and conservation work, and producing numerous essays on Iranian art and architecture. They tried to understand the country through their archeological investigations and analytical essays. Godard and Siroux can thus be considered two of the most influential Western architects in Iran. Yet, their legacy continues to reside in a reductive narrative, suggesting they were simply representative of Western imperial powers.² This study suggests nuanced perspectives on the roles of these French figures. Godard can be characterized as a Western scholar who, while misusing the power and trust vested in him by the Iranian government, also contributed significantly by aiding numerous Iranian students and constructing several noteworthy buildings in the country. In contrast, Siroux stands apart from Godard, as he did not exploit his authority, actively assisted the Iranian community, and dedicated himself to designing and restoring numerous buildings.

In applying postcolonial theory to countries like Iran, one of only six countries outside the colonial West that was never directly colonized, we must consider the fact that these countries, though never subject to direct colonization, were still affected by the forces of imperialism and Western hegemony.³ These forces notably shaped the historiography of Iranian architecture. Postcolonial theory illuminates the impact of colonialism on societies, focusing on the dynamics between colonizers and the colonized, spotlighting the construction and contestation of power, culture, and identity in their interactions.

This article challenges the binaries of the dominant postcolonial discourse, asserting the existence of a distinct local modernism with an enduring presence of architectural traditions in Iran. It emphasizes Iranian intellectuals' role in cultural shifts, especially in shaping modern architecture. Using primary sources from Iranian and French archives, alongside diverse secondary sources in French, Persian, and English, my analysis goes beyond stylistic definitions. Examining archival materials allows a nuanced understanding of Godard and Siroux, challenging a simplistic view that aligns them with an imperial hegemonic project. Despite historical instances of colonial exploitation, it is crucial to acknowledge nuances. Godard and Siroux's engagement with Iran were notable due to their deep commitment to understanding and respecting the country's culture and history. Nevertheless, there were differences in these two architects' attitudes and practices. Looking through the lens of postcolonial methodology, it is helpful to add the layers of function, patronage, and audience to better understand the complexity of architecture's history, specifically to analyze the works of Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux in Iran.

In addition, this paper aims to challenge the prevailing narrative that characterizes modern architectural works in Iran as simplistic hybrids of pre-Islamic Iranian architecture and Western modernism. In one example, architectural historian Talinn Grigor states: "the French architect André Godard's Archaeological Museum (1939) and Maxime Siroux's National Library--both fashioned after the last Sasanian palace at Ctesiphon in present-day Iraq."⁴ The word "fashioned" in this context implies that Grigor questioned the originality of their work and ignored their attempt to build a distinctly new yet localized architecture, at once modern and Iranian. Grigor instead sees their work as "syntheses of Western modernist morphology and pre-Islamic royal iconography."⁵ Drawing on scholars like Ikem Okoye, I show that modernity and modernism did not always arise solely from Western influence, but were often co-produced in collaboration between Western and local interlocutors.⁶

² Sara Mahdizadeh and Reyhaneh Sadat Shojaei, "The involvement of Western Orientalists in cultural heritage affairs during the Pahlavi Era, Iran (1925–1979)," *Routledge Journal of Architectural Conservation* 24, no. 3 (2018).

³ Conference of "Sovereignty and Imperialism: Non-European Powers in the Age of Empire," Cambridge University, September 2015.

⁴ Talinn Grigor, *Persian kingship and architecture: strategies of power in Iran from the Achaemenids to the Pahlavis*, co-ed. Sussan Babaie (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 266.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Ikem Stanley Okoye, "Unmapped Trajectories: Early Sculpture and Architecture of a 'Nigerian' Modernity," In *Exiles, Diasporas & Strangers*, edited by Kobena Mercer, 28–43 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

Contesting the notion that there is a clear demarcation—a paradigmatic shift or leap—between Iranian architecture of the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, I highlight the continuity of structural elements, materials, and spatial relations, demonstrating the enduring presence of Iranian architectural traditions. The concept of continuity in Iranian art and architecture was clear to some scholars, among them the American art historian and spy Donald Wilber, who wrote:

There was no real break between pre-Islamic and Islamic art (in Iran): familiar decorative forms were continued, and the basic plans and methods of construction common to Sasanian fire temples and palaces reappeared in the Muslim monuments of the country.⁷

Despite changes in function and the incorporation of modern materials to enhance the construction of spaces, the same techniques, spatial arrangements, and materials persist, serving as a testament to the lasting legacy of Iranian architectural traditions. Andre Godard notes in his essay “Fire Temples” that historical buildings around Iran “prove the persistence and use of pre-Islamic architectural forms during the Islamic era.” In addition, if we want to observe an original fire temple, we do not have access to an existing building except in an Islamic mosalla, because all the fire temples changed function after the Arab invasion.⁸ Maxime Siroux confirms that “analyzing buildings shows that Islamic shrines in Iran were built on the site of older places of worship and this shows an adaptation and not a rupture.”⁹ These scholarly studies are important affirmations of the persistence of an architectural tradition and contribute to deeper understandings that more readily reject the colonial narrative. So how did this narrative begin?

The colonial narrative claiming a clear distinction between pre-Islamic and Islamic architecture in Iran started with Western explorers who came to Iran with specific expectations. In 1839, the French government and Ecole des Beaux-Arts selected French painters Pascal Coste and Flandin to travel to Iran to register ancient Persian architectural monuments. This trip took two years, and they published their book *Monuments Anciens de la Perse* with the help of the French government in 1844. The book documents Iranian buildings erected before the end of the Sasanian era. Coste himself funded a subsequent publication focused on Iranian architecture built since the beginning of the Islamic period.¹⁰ Coste offers no evidence for his narrative of rupture. Godard, on the other hand, observes that “Iranian villagers everyday build buildings in the style of their ancestors Persepolis and arches like Shapur’s era because these villagers only think advantageously and economically.”¹¹ He even discusses this continuing tradition in the renovation project of Emamzadeh Yahya in Tehran. There, a local master builder, Ostad Abbasali, used the same technique to build the dome as that used in the Sasanian-era Niasar Chartaqi.¹² These insights clearly challenge the colonial narrative that only emphasizes a fundamental rupture.

Examining Godard and Siroux’s works offers more evidence to challenge this reductionist narrative. The two architects came to Iran when Iranians were fighting both British and Russian colonialism. Iran, as a “semi-colonial” country, had a multifaceted experience of Western imperialism that involved complex power dynamics and cultural

⁷ Donald Newton Wilber, *Iran, Past and Present: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 79.

⁸ Andre Godard, “Fire Temples,” in *Athare Iran*, vol. 1., trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1989), 84.

⁹ Maxime Siroux, “Zoroastrian Fire Temple of Sharif Abad,” in *Athare Iran*, vol. 1, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1989), 91.

¹⁰ Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits*, ed. Morel (Paris, 1867), 8.

¹¹ Andre Godard, “Iranian Arches,” in *Athare Iran*, vol. 3, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1992), 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

interactions.¹³ Looking at the works of Godard and Siroux from within the local framework shows how, in some countries, internal forces and traditions exercise greater agency and are not simply tools of colonial forces.

Historical background of social and architectural changes in Iran

Reflecting on the historical context in which Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux operated in Iran, it is important to understand that the new Pahlavi dynasty ushered in a wave of rapid modernization, including building the first railroad connecting the Caspian Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south. The British Empire, which controlled India, sought a trade route from east to west through Iran. However, they opposed the construction of a railroad from north to south as they feared it would grant the Russians access to the Persian Gulf. Reza Shah built this railroad against British will.¹⁴ This modernization effort was also reflected in various aspects of Iranian society, including architecture and the urban fabric.¹⁵ In cities across the country, public buildings such as the post office, National Bank of Iran, and other governmental departments were constructed.¹⁶ These buildings were influenced by historical Iranian architecture. The influx of Iranian and foreign architects who used modern ideas and functions in combination with Iranian architectural traditions led to the design and construction of buildings reflecting this new sensibility.¹⁷ Notably, these changes were apparent in the new typology of buildings such as civic buildings constructed to meet the needs of a modern society.¹⁸ This created a transformation that led to “an inevitable Pahlavi Avenue in every major city, a symbol of order, cleanliness, and security,” evoking, in the eyes of the public, a positive new way of living that contrasted with “the crooked, dark, and unsafe alleys of the old neighborhoods.”¹⁹ In this modernizing zeal, cities’ important historical structures were demolished, including thirteen of the fourteen gates of Tehran. Rebuilding major cities and improving urban sanitation “were major priorities for the Pahlavi state.”²⁰

Reza Shah saw himself as a leader of change. On the basis of these insights, it is important to know that Reza Shah articulated his manifesto of new modernism in his first memoir published in 1926:

I have said it often and I will repeat again that I am completely and undoubtedly dedicated to this new civility [*Madaniyat*] but I am never willing to abandon Iran’s past and its good monuments. My Iran, my sacred nation, is amongst those places that once were a model of civilization, and underneath each of these ruins one can see signs and relics that can be the source of pride for every Iranian and these are not forgettable... absolutely these signs should be combined with the real principles of the new modern age, and from this combination offer the world a unique civilization. We must not become enamored with ugly or beautiful appearances of the modern in such a way that we destroy our own identity and forget ourselves.²¹

¹³ Homa Katouzian, *State and society in Iran: the eclipse of the Qajars and the emergence of the Pahlavi* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000); Cyrus Ghani, *Iran and the rise of Reza Shah: from Qajar collapse to Pahlavi rule* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

¹⁴ Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran 1941-1979* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 9.

¹⁵ Abbas Amanat, *Iran, a modern history* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 457.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 457; Talinn Grigor, *The Persian revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021), 196.

¹⁸ Amanat, *Iran, a modern history*, 459.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 460.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 457.

²¹ Reza Shah, *Mazandaran Travelogue*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Center for Pahlavi Research, 1975), 66.

In the same memoir, he also insisted on the construction of new monuments over the existing ruins of the tombs of poets such as Hafez, Saadi, and Ferdowsi, the “world’s great poets.”²² Numerous Iranian intellectuals and politicians had also expressed their desire to renovate and reconstruct the mausoleums of Iranian poets. Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Reza Shah’s prime minister and a distinguished scholar, emphasized on the 700th anniversary of Saadi’s “Golestan” that “Our foremost duty is to reconstruct Saadi’s mausoleum in a manner that truly honors him and transforms it from its current state of melancholy.”²³

The appreciation for Iranian architecture is evident in the design of some civic buildings and public spaces, which incorporate both historical Iranian design and modern architectural materials and techniques. Vartan, Reza Shah’s Iranian-Armenian architect, shared how he was directed to use Iranian elements in his designs.²⁴ Overall, the early Pahlavi era marked a significant transformation in Iranian architecture, reflecting the changing societal attitudes towards tradition and modernity. The public embraced such innovations, commissioning structures that reflected a new era in the private spaces of their homes and businesses. With all this construction activity, a school was needed to train a new generation of architects.

University of Tehran and the New Faculty of Fine Arts

Educational change began with the artists. In 1845, Abul Hasan Ghaffari—a favorite painter of the Iranian Qajar king Mohammad Shah—was sent to Italy to study painting. He was involved in the establishment of a relatively modern school of art in Iran, *Majma al Dar al Sanayi*, in 1852.²⁵ Abu’l Hasan Ghaffari’s nephew, Abu Torab, best known as Kamal al Molk, followed in his uncle’s footsteps and was also sent to Europe to study painting. Upon Kamal al Molk’s return, he established the first school of fine arts, *Madreseye Saneye Mostazrafeh* (School of Fine Arts), with a European curriculum focused on stylistic realism. Formerly traditional methods transitioned to a more technical approach to design and production. The school also employed traditional Iranian artists to teach students in various branches of art, from painting and sculpture to carpet weaving and wood carving.²⁶ Ironically, in spite of his fierce patriotism, Kamal Al Molk practiced Western traditions of painting such as Dutch Realism but ignored more modernist movements like Impressionism. By teaching craftsmen more efficient methods of production, dissolving old hierarchies of master and laborer, and focusing on one specific craft and greater possibilities for expansive qualifications, this school’s emergence marked an important transition away from traditional workshops.

With the rise of Pahlavi, Reza Shah took some religious madrasas away from clerics. Esmail Meraat, the Minister of Culture, appropriated the madrasa of Marvi for a new art college (*Honar Kadeh*) in Tehran. Godard and Siroux were among the teachers at this new modern college of art.²⁷ The second Pahlavi king, Mohammad Reza Shah, however, moved the college of art away from the madrasa and into the basement of the faculty of engineering at the University of Tehran, returning the madrasa to the clerics.²⁸

Meraat’s successor, Mirza Ali Asghar Khan Hekmat, funded the construction of museums, universities, and cultural sites. Most of Iran’s modern monuments—including the University of Tehran campus, the Ancient Iran Museum (later Iran National Museum), and the iconic tombs of Ferdowsi, Hafez, and Saadi—were built through his efforts. Hekmat’s intriguing

²² *Ibid.*, 64.

²³ Mohammad Ali Foroughi, *Essays* (Tehran: Tous Publication, 2004), 258.

²⁴ Abdolhamid Eshraq, “Reza Shah’s ideas for royal palaces,” *Talash* 20 (October 2004): 197.

²⁵ Maryam Ekhtiar, “From workshop and bazaar to academy: art training and production in Qajar Iran,” in *Royal Persian Paintings: the Qajar Epoch 1785–1925* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers and Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1998), 58.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁷ Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran 1941–1979*, 786.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 787.

narrative about the university's construction and the challenges faced while building the medical school's first dissection hall provides revealing insight into the cultural history and struggles of those striving to modernize Iran.²⁹

Reza Shah aspired to bring about transformative change in Iran. During a ministerial meeting in 1934, amidst widespread acclaim for Tehran's burgeoning architectural developments, Hekmat remarked that while the new buildings were commendable, it was regrettable that Tehran lacked a university, a common feature of other global cities. Reza Shah immediately commissioned Hekmat to build a university and a proposed budget of 250,000 Toman.³⁰ Previously, by the order of Shah, ten students had been sent each year to study in Europe and the United States. Reza Shah counseled Hekmat against sending further students abroad, instead proposing the establishment of a university in Tehran, which materialized in 1934.³¹ From 1937, both women and men attended the University of Tehran, studying law, medicine, pharmacology, and literature.³²

Ali Asghar Hekmat asked Godard to design the University of Tehran. Jalaliyah Garden, with more than 200,000 square meters, was allocated for the project.³³ Godard later designed some buildings for the University of Tehran, but first he hired Siroux to design most of them, including the dissection hall. In 1935, the Ebne Sina Medical School was the first building opened, decorated with calligraphy of Nezami poems appreciating knowledge.³⁴ It is important to note that the establishment of the medical school was fiercely opposed by conservative clerics, who were against building the dissection hall and tried to shut it down. Through the efforts of people such as Hekmat, however, the school was opened. The tension between the new methods and the fanatical religious attitudes of clerics forced people like Dr. Bakhtiar, surgeon and deputy of the medical school, to resort to unorthodox practices—e.g., going anonymously to hospitals, taking corpses, putting them in his car, and bringing them to the dissection hall.³⁵ Siroux subsequently designed the Faculty of Engineering and Mohsen Foroughi designed the Faculty of Law and Political Science. Iranian architect Hossein Joudat, the head construction supervisor, managed the buildings' construction process.³⁶

While Hekmat and Godard were in Mashhad looking for a site for a museum for the holy shrine of Reza, they visited the historical Shah Mosque, where Hekmat requested that Godard put a hexagonal space in the University of Tehran's central hall similar to that under the dome of the Shah Mosque; a request Godard accepted.³⁷ This anecdote underscores a misconception among certain scholars, who argue that while Godard used Iranian architecture as a source of inspiration in other designs, he was specifically required to align with the "intellectual elites' progressive and Western-oriented agenda closely" when designing the University of Tehran.³⁸ In reality, these intellectuals, including Hekmat, urged Godard and other architects to embrace Iranian architectural traditions for the design of all public buildings, including the University of Tehran.

The sixth building constructed at the University of Tehran belonged to the Faculty of Fine Arts.³⁹ Godard designed the buildings for this new faculty and, along with Siroux, was among its influential figures. Unlike other faculties at the University of Tehran, where the language of instruction was primarily Persian, classes were conducted in French at the Faculty of Fine

²⁹ Ibid., 182.

³⁰ Ali Asghar Hekmat, *30 memories* (Tehran: Vahid Publication, 1975), 333.

³¹ Ibid., 69.

³² Ibid., 102.

³³ Ibid., 335.

³⁴ Ibid., 337, 345.

³⁵ Ibid., 336.

³⁶ Ibid., 346.

³⁷ Ali Asghar Hekmat, *Hekmat's Souvenirs* (Tehran: Anjomane Athar Va Mafakhere Melli, 2000), 124.

³⁸ Peyman Akhgar, "Tehran University: A Contested Terrain," *Fabrications, The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* (February 2023): 372.

³⁹ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 349.

Arts, although most of its professors were Iranian.⁴⁰ The faculty's curriculum was inspired by the Ecole des Beaux Arts. This phenomenon was also observed in the neighboring Ottoman Empire, which, in 1883, established an architecture school following the Beaux-Arts model.⁴¹ The Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran also expanded its curriculum to include courses on the history of Iranian architecture. However, professors chose all students' final thesis subject, including, for instance, a "residence for feudals," a topic disconnected from the concerns of Iranian society in this period.⁴²

Godard held the position of Honorary Dean within the faculty, making all the important decisions and appointing professors, but did not actively teach any classes. Godard encouraged students who used Iranian traditional architecture in their designs. One former student, Alireza Jazbi, remembered that his final project initially received a failing grade, but Godard convinced the committee to accept the project, which incorporated element of Iranian historical architecture, at the last moment. Godard said this would encourage other students to do the same.⁴³ Siroux conducted one of the three architectural design studios and the construction techniques class. His tenure spanned four years, until Godard decided to appoint Houshang Saanei, a recent graduate and Siroux's student, to replace him.⁴⁴ Saanei, a former student in Siroux's Design Studio and later worked in his office, wrote that Siroux had changed his approach to learning architecture.⁴⁵ Siroux's replacement was done at the request of the Dean of the University of Tehran, who stated in a letter that the university should replace Maxime Siroux if a qualified Iranian professor existed; only in the absence of such a candidate could Siroux be hired.⁴⁶ The first Pahlavi era has, at times, been labeled as a period of colonial subjugation.⁴⁷ However, an emerging body of literature presents a reevaluated perspective on this period, and the tone of this letter, its content, and its defiance against a colonial figure like a French architect confirms this revisionist narrative.⁴⁸

After Godard's retirement, when Mohsen Foroughi assumed the role of dean, a significant transformation took place within the Faculty of Fine Arts. One notable change was the adoption of Persian as the language of instruction, in line with the language policies of the university's other faculties. This shift to Persian also served to foster a stronger connection with local culture and heritage, enabling students to express their artistic ideas and concepts with greater depth and authenticity. By embracing the national language, the Faculty of Fine Arts established itself as an integral part of the university, contributing to the preservation and promotion of Iranian artistic traditions. During Godard's time as dean, students in the studio studied the Greek/classical orders, with some examples of Iranian columns. This approach to studying architecture reflects a power dynamic inherent in the field: the focus on classical Western architecture as the primary subject of study, with Iranian architecture presented merely as supplementary examples, perpetuates a Eurocentric framework. The same approach was also followed within the Ottoman Empire's School of Fine Arts.⁴⁹ This framework positions Western architectural traditions as superior and relegates non-Western architectural practices to a subordinate status. By prioritizing the study of Western

⁴⁰ Ali Kiafar, "Interview with Houshang Seyhoun," *The Persian Book Review* 31, no. 111 (Fall 2022): 18.

⁴¹ Gülsüm Baydar, "Teaching Architectural History in Turkey and Greece: The Burden of the Mosque and the Temple," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 1 (2003): 84.

⁴² Kiafar, "Interview with Houshang Seyhoun," 20.

⁴³ Arash Tabibzadeh Nouri, *University of Tehran: School of Fine Arts under Andre Godard* (Tehran: Mirmah Publication, 2021), 286.

⁴⁴ Letter number D/ K 9701, 09/24/1944, from Victor Daniel and Golnar Tajdar, *Maxime Siroux's Architecture* (Tehran: Architecture of Changing times in Iran, 2021), 33.

⁴⁵ Tabibzadeh Nouri, *University of Tehran: School of Fine Arts under Andre Godard*, 118.

⁴⁶ Dean's letter number: 8720, 09/05/1944, from Daniel and Tajdar, *Maxime Siroux's Architecture*, 32.

⁴⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between two revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁴⁸ "Reza Shah Special Issue," *Talash Journal* 20 (October 2004); *Talash Journal* 24 (July 2005)

⁴⁹ Gülsüm Baydar, "Teaching Architectural History in Turkey and Greece: The Burden of the Mosque and the Temple," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 1 (2003): 84.

architectural models, this studio perpetuated a colonial strategy that prioritized and reinforced Western cultural norms and values.

The Writings of Siroux and Godard and a New Paradigm for Iranian Architecture

Today, the writing of Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux are the only remaining witness to some of Iran's historical buildings that have since been destroyed. Traveling through the desert, Siroux meticulously measured the ruins of caravanserais and other ancient structures, preserving their legacy for future generations. While working on the restoration of the caravanserai of Madare Shah in Esfahan, Siroux started writing *Anciennes voies et monuments routiers de la région d'Ispahân, suivis de plusieurs autres édifices de cette province*, but his most important bookwork is *Caravansérails d'Iran et petites constructions routières*. In 2023, when Iran sought UNESCO registration for Iranian caravanserais as world heritage sites, they relied extensively on Siroux's publications to substantiate their claim of the enduring originality and scholarly value of his works.⁵⁰ This highlights the continued relevance and significance of Siroux's contributions to the understanding and preservation of Iranian cultural heritage.

After ten years of travel and study, Siroux finished *Caravansérails d'Iran et petites constructions routières* in November 1944 in Tehran, publishing it in Cairo in 1949. In the preface, he acknowledges the many caravanserais of Iran and his efforts to document their deteriorating condition through drawings and detailed plans. Siroux advocates for their preservation and argues that new roadside facilities could be the contemporary descendants of these caravanserais. With these ideas, Siroux shows his enthusiasm for Iranian architecture and his belief that it could be modern and functional without losing its connection to the past.⁵¹

Siroux's first two chapters discuss various ancient to present-day routes in Iran, connecting cities and villages. While he names even the smallest roads, he acknowledges the impossibility of covering every route, urging further investigation. He extensively references Western travelogues, including Marco Polo, Chardin, Coste, Curzon, Tavernier, and others, as well as Iranian and non-Western historical travelogues such as Ibn Battuta, Mostawofi, and Moqadasi. This demonstrates his meticulous research, careful observation, multicultural sources, and genuine curiosity. Siroux discusses the evolution of caravanserais in Iran through a detailed examination of each building, tracing their changes over time and comparing examples from different periods. He declares that, while Iranian builders learned from their regional neighbors throughout history, they never quite relinquished their own traditions.⁵² In the third chapter, Siroux categorizes caravanserais based on their commissioner into royal, private, and endowed caravanserais.⁵³

In Chapter Five, Siroux classifies caravanserais into two groups based on location: those in the mountains and those on the plains.⁵⁴ This chapter focuses on caravanserais situated in mountainous areas and, in analyzing their variety, Siroux illustrates their plans, sections, site plans, and detailed sketches of their structure and materials. Siroux goes beyond relying only on oral history or historical texts, instead estimating the building's date by closely studying its construction methods and structure.⁵⁵ His methodology was multidisciplinary.

In the sixth chapter, Siroux discusses caravanserais in the plains of Iran, disputes Jean Sauvaget's suggestion that caravanserais in Iran and Syria were identical, and provides diverse examples to showcase the architectural differences resulting from historical, social,

⁵⁰ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. "The Persian Caravanserai." <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1668/documents/>

⁵¹ Maxime Siroux, *Caravansérails d'Iran et petites constructions routières* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1949), X.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

and geographical distinctions between the two countries.⁵⁶ Thus, Siroux avoids making gross generalizations about similarities between non-Western architectural cultures, and notably argued that there were no specific structures, signs, or spaces functioning as mosques or *mihhrabs* in Iran's caravanserais from Safavid era onward.⁵⁷ With this statement, he challenges the notion that caravanserais are an Islamic rather than a secular building type. After discussing the details of buildings and their characteristics, Siroux concludes that Iranian caravanserais were the continuation of structures seen in Sasanian palaces. The elements such as interior courtyard and four *iwans* on the four sides of the court with a spacious entrance and cradle arches are part of this continues Iranian characteristic. He argued that these special structures and relations made these buildings "Iranian."⁵⁸ This typology can be seen in other Iranian buildings, such as houses, madrasas, and mosques. Siroux followed this typology in his designs. In this chapter's conclusion, Siroux highlights the potential of incorporating distinct Iranian architectural elements into the design of contemporary roadside rest stops, suggesting that lower levels could be used as parking for cars and upper levels allocated for people, much like in ancient caravanserais. Essentially, he presents a model for adapting and integrating Iranian architectural patterns to serve modern functions.⁵⁹

In the seventh chapter, "petites constructions routières," Siroux examines various structures, including small roadside buildings, city bazaar caravanserais, water and sanitation systems, qanats, cisterns, wind catchers, baths, and a range of other building types. Siroux discusses castles, military bases, towers, cafes, and tea houses along the roads in Iran, highlighting how these remote cafes and tea houses served as forums for social interaction.⁶⁰ During his travels, Siroux encountered many myths about remote ancient ruins, and he tried to visit and demystify these buildings.⁶¹

While Siroux wrote extensively about Iran's architectural heritage, Andre Godard published only one book, *The Art of Iran*. In this, he categorized Iranian artworks and architecture based on different dynasties, from ancient to Islamic. Aside from this book, Godard, as the head of the archeological service in Iran, along with his colleagues—including his wife Yedda Godard, Maxime Siroux, and many Iranian scholars—published the annual magazine *The Journal of the Archaeological Service (Athare Iran)* from 1936 onwards. In this, they wrote several essays about Iran's art and architecture in French, which were later translated and published in Iran in 1989.⁶² In his "Faryumad and Zozan mosques" essay, Godard wrote that "Iranians are genius in producing meticulous, innovative techniques, original forms, and magnificent shapes, even in the poorest villages, and if the buildings were more solid, Iran could have been a museum for the art of architecture in the world."⁶³

In another essay from this collection, Godard sentimentally expresses fondness for his house in Jamal Abad, in Tehran's northern region, which an elderly man seeking a natural and peaceful environment had built for himself at a distance from the city. The house's simplicity and local craftsmanship attract admiration from Godard's friends. By discussing this house, Godard aimed to showcase the humble beauty of Iranian architecture.⁶⁴ The discussion of the simple house in Jamal Abad highlighted the emotional effect of the structure's

⁵⁶ Ibid, 46.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 51.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 99.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 107.

⁶¹ Ibid., 101.

⁶² Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam, *Athare Iran*, vol. 1, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1989), 7.

⁶³ Andre Godard, "Faryumad and Zozan mosques," in *Athare Iran*, vol 2, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1989), 262.

⁶⁴ Andre Godard, "Jamal Abad," in *Athare Iran*, vol. 1, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1989), 252.

special arrangements. The house was built by a local master builder on an elevated location with views of the entire area, and was adorned with a small garden, cypress trees, several fountains and canals, and different-level terraces leading to *iwans* and the interior court, with a few sunny rooms in the northern and southern part of the building. Godard considered the simplicity of this traditional house, its serenity and soul, superior to any French villa. However, he acknowledged that when people come to visit Jamal Abad in the future, there may be little trace of such places; photographs and plans might be all that remain at that point.⁶⁵

While Godard appreciated the traditional special arrangements of Iranian architecture, he challenged the notion that gothic architecture has roots in Iranian architecture, a theory explored by European scholars such as Dieulafoy in the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Godard wrote that “for Dieulafoy everything from the apricot tree to science, wisdom and gothic architecture has roots in Iran,” and then called Dieulafoy “a romantic archeologist.”⁶⁷ In another essay, Godard claims, without giving any reason, that:

Iranians in the 14th century imitated the groined vaults from western architecture. We see some remaining examples in buildings such as the Varamin mosque, Shiraz old mosque, and many more. These were badly built due to the lack of facilities.⁶⁸

Karim Pirnia, a renowned Iranian scholar and contemporary of Godard, challenged Godard. Pirnia demonstrated that the origins of pointed arches in Iran can be traced back to ancient buildings such as the Elamid and Mead temples from the third millennium B.C.E.⁶⁹ Pirnia argued that the Iranian system of arches and ribs was used in Sasanian buildings and therefore preceded gothic architecture.⁷⁰ Godard’s reluctance to entertain comparisons between Iranian and French architecture, even when presented by French scholars, reveals the bias in his thinking that favored the Western architectural tradition. In some cases, however, he did acknowledge the unique qualities of Iran’s architectural heritage.

Although Godard’s writings suggest an intimate knowledge of Iranian building types, some claim that Godard utilized the expertise of Iranian scholars, including Mostafavi and Bahrami, to conduct building visits and analysis on his behalf.⁷¹ Subsequently, Godard reportedly incorporated the findings from these research endeavors into his *Art of Iran* book and his essays. However, it has been noted that Godard did not credit the Iranian scholars for their contributions.⁷² Pirnia strongly criticized Godard’s book, pointing out numerous inaccuracies regarding Iran’s architecture. One of the major flaws lies in Godard’s misidentification of several buildings, such as wrongly claiming that the Karian Fire Temple in Firuzabad is Ardeshir Palace. However, it is evident from the building’s plan, location, and historical texts that it is, in fact, a fire temple.⁷³

The contrast between Siroux and Godard’s perspectives on Iranian architecture shows the difference in opinions within the field, highlighting both the appreciation for and challenges faced in understanding and preserving the Iranian architectural heritage.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 255.

⁶⁶ Martin S. Briggs, “Gothic Architecture and Persian Origins,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 62, no. 361 (April 1933): 183.

⁶⁷ Godard, “Iranian Arches,” 70, 71.

⁶⁸ Andre Godard, “Groined Vaults,” in *Athare Iran*, vol. 3, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1992), 170.

⁶⁹ Karim Pirnia, “Iran’s gift to the world of architecture: Janagh and Kalil,” *Honar Va Mardom* 142 (1975): 5.

⁷⁰ Karim Pirnia, *Memorabilia of Professor Karim Pirnia*, ed. Akbar Qalam Siyah (Yazd: Pirnia institute, 2002), 342.

⁷¹ Karim Pirnia, *Memorabilia of Professor Karim Pirnia*, ed. Akbar Qalam Siyah (Yazd: Pirnia institute, 2002), 341.

⁷² Ibid., 341.

⁷³ Ibid., 342.

Archeological Colonialism and Tradition: the Role of French Exploitation in Iran

To better understand the context in which French archeologists and architects worked in Iran, it is necessary to look back in history. In 1895, the Qajar government granted France the right to excavate in Iran. Five years later, “the French obtained a total concession covering all archaeological excavations in Iran for an indefinite period.”⁷⁴ This treaty, in typical colonial style, gave the French government and institutions total freedom, or a “monopoly on archaeological excavations.”⁷⁵ Recent scholarship has questioned the equity of such arrangements, the negative impact on knowledge production, and the disproportionate dispersal of material cultural heritage that resulted.⁷⁶

The Constitutional Revolution of 1907–1911 was a pivotal moment in Iran’s modern history. Tired of the oppressive rule of the Qajar dynasty and the interference of imperial powers, Iranians revolted. This movement generated renewed appreciation for Iran’s cultural heritage, as it became increasingly clear that the Qajar kings had left a legacy of destruction and neglect. Notably, Ayeneh Palace, Namakdan Palace, and Charbagh Street in Esfahan were among the many cultural treasures destroyed or damaged beyond repair. Rulers often used the materials from these ancient buildings in their own palaces or sought to find hidden treasures for their personal gain, rather than focusing on improving the lives of the people. The Constitutional Revolution inspired a strong sense of national pride and a determination to protect Iran’s historical legacy.

The establishment of the antiquities service served to protect Iran’s legacy. In 1910, Sani al-Molk, the Minister of Culture, played a crucial role in establishing Iran’s first antiquities service. To oversee this significant achievement, he selected Iraj Mirza, a well-known poet and cultural figure. Six years later, in 1916, Minister of Education Momtaz al-Molk inaugurated Tehran’s first antiquities museum on the lower level of the college of Dar Al Fonun.⁷⁷ The museum featured a collection of 270 objects, representing a significant milestone in preserving and promoting Iran’s cultural heritage.⁷⁸ Additionally, a group of Iranian intellectuals founded the Society for National Heritage in Tehran in 1923.⁷⁹ This society invited scholars and European archeologists such as Ernst Herzfeld to give lectures on the history of Iran.

In 1923, Reza Khan, the *Sardar Sepah* (Commander in chief), traveled to Susa, the main site of French excavation in Iran. “The sight of an enormous European castle with a French flag at its top so enraged him that he said: ‘Did they intend to position an army there up on the hill?’” Reza Khan also later received multiple reports of French looting of Susa’s antiquities and taking them to France.⁸⁰ When Reza Khan ascended the throne in 1925, his court minister, Teymourdash, proposed that if the French government wanted to keep some of their archeological privileges, it would be better to end the French monopoly on excavation and appoint a Frenchman as the director of the new archeological institute. Thus, the French monopoly was abolished in 1927 and, as a compromise, Andre Godard was selected as the director of the archeological service.⁸¹ The Iranian Parliament voted on April 29, 1928, to hire Godard for five years from the signing of his contract on November 18, 1928.⁸² Andre

⁷⁴ Ali Mousavi, “Ernst Herzfeld, politics, and antiquities legislation in Iran,” in *Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies 1900–1950*, ed. Ann Gunter and Stefan Hauser (Lieden; Boston: BRILL, 2004), 447.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 448.

⁷⁶ Jessica L. Nitschke and Marta Lorenzon, ed., *Postcolonialism, Heritage, and the built environment: new approaches to architecture in archaeology* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2020), 3.

⁷⁷ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 52.

⁷⁸ Mousavi, “Ernst Herzfeld, politics, and antiquities legislation in Iran,” 448.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 449.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 454.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 457; Sarah Piram, “André Godard’s Archives at the Louvre Museum and Their Significance for the Study of the National Museum of Iran,” *Journal of Iran National Museum* 2, no. 1, serial no. 2 (Spring and Summer 2021): 7.

⁸² Mohammad Gholi Majd, *The great American plunder of Persia’s antiquities 1925–1941* (University Press of America, 2003), 119.

Godard arrived in Iran a year later.⁸³ Parliament renewed his contract every five years, requiring monthly educational meetings with Iranian archaeologists and publishing new archaeological findings.⁸⁴

Godard first came to the Middle East—Cairo—in 1910, accompanied by Henri Viollet, a friend from Pierre Andre’s workshop. Godard was active in Iraq; in 1910, he directed the archaeological excavations of Samarra and did various works in Baghdad. He went to Egypt in 1912 to continue his research on Islamic architecture and married Yeda Reuilly after World War I. Godard became Director of the French Institute of Archeology in Afghanistan, which was created in 1922. He studied the site of Bamiyan with his wife and organized an exhibition at the Musée Guimet in Paris in 1925.⁸⁵ Godard’s contract was renewed in 1933 and 1939, as the parliament determined that he had “faithfully fulfilled the terms of his contract, his work has given complete satisfaction, and his presence is necessary.”⁸⁶ American Charge d’affaires David Williamson wrote: “Monsieur Godard’s personality is most pleasing. He strikes one as being possessed of unusual talent and tact. Both he and Madam Godard have made a very favorable impression on Tehran society, Persian as well as foreign.”⁸⁷ By contrast, the American archeologist Arthur Pope saw Godard as his rival, noting to Williamson:

Godard is a third rate man, not at all fitted to be the director of Antiquities in Persia, where an immense amount of valuable and original work remains to be done; if the Persians entrust the actual restorations and excavations to qualified archeologists, all will be well; but if Godard should attempt such work Persian art is doomed, because Godard does not know Persian art and is a small man.⁸⁸

This statement illustrates the rivalry between Western archeologists who wished to claim Iranian masterpieces for themselves. The Americans believed that “thanks to Godard, the best archeology sites in Iran are reserved for the French.”⁸⁹ Godard tried to block excavations led by American institutions at important archeological sites such as Persepolis, Ray, and Luristan, and handed two more important sites, Shahpour and Kazeroun, over to the French.⁹⁰

In 1930, for the first time in Iran, an antiquities law protecting Iranian buildings and artifacts was approved by the parliament.⁹¹ Drafted by Godard, Herzfeld, and Pope, this law also included some changes by Minister of Education Yahya Khan Gharagouzelou.⁹² Godard identified buildings to be preserved as cultural heritage and designed the Ancient Iran Museum, which later became the Iran National Museum. Godard also mentored a later generation of Iranian archeologists, including Mohammad Taqi Mostafavi, who became Director General of the Department of Archaeology and the head of the Ancient Iran Museum.⁹³ Ali Sami, another Iranian archeologist and architect who worked with Godard, conducted excavations

⁸³ Mousavi, “Ernst Herzfeld, politics, and antiquities legislation in Iran,” 457.

⁸⁴ Collection of approved law, 1944–1946, March 4, 1945, 194.

⁸⁵ Bibliothèque de l’Institut national d’histoire de l’art, collections Jacques Doucet, Paris. 8 Piece 46161. Exposition de récentes découvertes et de récents travaux archéologiques en Afghanistan et en Chine: Musée Guimet, 14 mars 1925.

⁸⁶ Mohammad Gholi Majd, *The great American plunder of Persia’s antiquities 1925–1941* (University Press of America, 2003), 119.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 74

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Mehdi Mohaqeq, *Biography and academic life of Mohammad Taqi Mostafavi* (Tehran: Association of Cultural Works and Honors publishers, 2006), 14.

at Pasargadae and Persepolis, contributing to the restoration and preservation of numerous historical buildings.⁹⁴

There have been allegations that Andre Godard smuggled art objects out of Iran.⁹⁵ He was an avid collector of Iranian art and artifacts, but it is unclear how he sourced these objects and whether he had the right to sell them. According to my research, Godard sold Iranian artifacts and objects to the Louvre Museum in 1931.⁹⁶ In just one instance, he sold 160 ancient Iranian bronze objects for 92,800 Francs.⁹⁷ At the time, Mohsen Moghaddam, Professor of Art History at the University of Tehran and an archeologist, criticized Godard for buying fake Iranian bronze artifacts for the Ancient Iran Museum with Iranian state money.⁹⁸ Iranian scholars suspected that Godard sold the original artifacts to the Louvre, and the sources presented in this essay prove, for the first time, that their suspicions were correct.⁹⁹ Another document, referring to both Godard and Foroughi, shows that Mohsen Foroughi, an Iranian colleague of Godard, donated Iranian artifacts to the Louvre in 1946.¹⁰⁰ In 1948, Godard, with the help of his wife, held an exhibition of Iranian artifacts at the Cernuschi Museum in Paris.¹⁰¹ Additional archival records show that the sale and donation of Iranian artifacts to the Louvre meant they were lost to Iran.

When appointed as the first Director of the Ancient Iran Museum, Godard asked to borrow the famous Hammurabi Stone, which had been excavated from Susa by French archaeologists, to display in the new museum. However, the Director of the Louvre Museum, Henri Verne, rejected Godard's request, citing the stone's significance and value. Godard's archive of notes, documents, and photographs—around 14,000 pieces—has been in the Louvre since 1977.¹⁰² Ironically, in an interview with *Ettelaat Newspaper* in Tehran about the new archeological museum, Godard stated: “in the past, Iranians carelessly lost their ancestral heritages to personal collections and foreign museums. Iran didn't care about this heritage and others abused this indifference to loot Iranian masterpieces.”¹⁰³ In fact, Iranians had preserved their heritage and it was Godard who was responsible for valuable objects being permanently removed from Iran. Siroux, on the other hand, did not participate in the looting of Iranian artifacts. Siroux graduated from Ecole des Beaux-Arts on June 5, 1934, with a thesis entitled “A consulate in the Orient.”¹⁰⁴ A member of the French archeological team working for the Louvre Museum in Iran from 1933–1934, Siroux was later hired as an Iranian government architect and lived in Tehran for eleven years.¹⁰⁵ Despite extensive archival searches, there is no evidence to indicate that Siroux engaged in activities similar to Godard.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁴ Ali Sami, *Shiraz, city of Saadi and Hafez, city of Rose and Nightingale* (Shiraz: Mousavi publication, 1958).

⁹⁵ Sarah Piram, “Andre Godard's Archives at the Louvre Museum and Their Significance for the Study of the National Museum of Iran,” *Journal of Iran National Museum* 2, no. 1, serial no. 2 (Spring and Summer 2021): 10.

⁹⁶ Archives nationales de France, “Catalogue des objets d'art persans achetés à Téhéran par M. André Godard en 1931” and “achat Godard Andre, direction des beaux arts, F 44447,” March 23, 1931.

⁹⁷ Archives nationales de France, “achat Godard Andre, direction des beaux arts, F 44447,” March 23, 1931, 44-385-J 4398-30.

⁹⁸ Archives Godard, 1APAI/5954, cited in Piram, “André Godard's Archives at the Louvre Museum and Their Significance for the Study of the National Museum of Iran,” 10.

⁹⁹ Archives nationales de France, “achat Godard Andre, direction des beaux arts, F 44447,” March 23, 1931, 44-385-J 4398-30.

¹⁰⁰ Archives nationales de France, “Godard Foroughi, Ceramiques trouves a Gorgan,” July 29, 1946, October 17, 1946, October 26, 1946, No. B 5.

¹⁰¹ Sarah Piram, “S'approprier un modèle français en Iran? L'architecte André Godard (1881-1965) et la conception des musées iraniens,” *Les Cahiers de l'École du Louvre* 11 (2017): 10.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰³ “Interview with Monsieur Godard,” *Ettelaat Newspaper*, May 23, 1934, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Archives nationales de France, AJ/52/1279, 19800035/1323/53165, Dossiers individuels des élèves, Section architecture, Série du 1er janvier 1931 au 31 décembre 1940, Serres de Mesples-Stym Popper.

¹⁰⁵ Archives nationales de France, “A. S de Siroux Maxime a la demande du Ministere e la reconstruction et de l'urbanisme,” June 22, 1949, no. 1977 1065/ 222, 1672

¹⁰⁶ Pirnia, *Memorabilia of Professor Karim Pirnia*, 343.

The acquisition and removal of Iranian cultural artifacts to Western nations occurred without the consent of the local government, amounting in effect to cultural theft and imperialism in archaeology. Today, there is a growing movement to repatriate cultural artifacts to Iran and address this legacy of imperialism in the field of archaeology.¹⁰⁷ Helping to understand and preserve Iran's art and architectural heritage and yet illegally smuggling and selling artifacts of that heritage to Western museums are glaring indications of the complicated, contradictory legacy of French, German, and American archeological colonialism in Iran. Today, while the Louvre has the most extensive Iranian collection in the world thanks to the nineteenth and twentieth-century French archeological monopoly, it does not have a space dedicated to Iran. Instead, Iranian artifacts are scattered across the museum's "Near East" and "Islamic" sections, with no reference made to Western exploitation of Iran's material heritage.

Architectural Works: The Rise of a Local Modernism

On the other hand, through references in the many buildings they designed, Godard and Siroux exhibited a certain respect for Iran's archeological legacy and impacted a generation of Iranian architects. The Iranian government hired several foreign and Iranian architects as teachers and professors to lead the country's modernizing effort in its built environment. Hekmat, the head of the Ministry of Education, wrote that their goal was to build modern schools around Iran and a university in Tehran.¹⁰⁸ He mentioned that, in designing these schools, architects were inspired by Iranian historical architecture.¹⁰⁹ In typical Iranian decorative tradition, the walls of the school buildings were adorned with tiles inscribed with poetry using the Iranian calligraphic style, *Nastaliq*.¹¹⁰ Including this poetic tradition specifically composed for the school served as a pedagogical tool, as such bore the name of the building, the builder, and the date of construction while giving moral advice to all who visited the building.¹¹¹

In designing and constructing the Academy of Boys in Tabriz, Hekmat documented in his memoirs the local materials Siroux employed to construct the building, including brick, stone, iron, and cement, an improvement on the mud brick used for older buildings.¹¹² One of the most significant challenges at the time was the limited availability of modern materials in Iran. Siroux designed the Hakim Nezami School in Qom (Fig. 1) with stone and brick while retaining the forms and methods of Iranian historical architecture. After three years, when the building was completed, it was named after the poet Nezami, whose poetry filled its walls.¹¹³ Siroux designed another school in Yazd, the Iranshahr School (Fig. 2), which resembled the old local caravanserais but contained new functions, such as a laboratory and auditorium.¹¹⁴ More than ten local master builders—including Ramezankhani, Ashkezari, Mehrizi, and others—built this school with an arching technique unique to Yazd, *Yazdi Bandi*.¹¹⁵ While Siroux designed the school with consideration for the Yazd's warm, dry weather, Godard measured and examined the site.¹¹⁶ When Hekmat visited the Saadi School in Esfahan, he requested that a parapet with blue tiles around the gable roof, in the style of Ali Qapo Palace in Esfahan, be included alongside poetry, providing

¹⁰⁷ Leila Amineddoleh, "The Politicizing of Cultural Heritage," *North Carolina Journal of International Law* 45, no. 2 (April 2020).

¹⁰⁸ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 289.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

¹¹⁰ Archives nationales de France, "A. S de Siroux Maxime a la demande du Ministere e la reconstruction et de l'urbanisme," June 22, 1949, no. 1977 1065/ 222, 1672.

¹¹¹ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 292.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 300.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹¹⁵ Hossein Masserat, "a look into Iranshahr school foundation," *Darolfonoon treasure* 3, no. 11 (Fall 2020): 78.

¹¹⁶ Hekmat, *Hekmat's Souvenirs*, 108.



Figure 1. Hakim Nezami School. Public domain. From Wikimedia Commons



Figure 2. Iranshahr School. Public domain. From www.Archawpress.com

tangible references to local culture.¹¹⁷ Working consistently across the country, Siroux incorporated local architecture traditions and materials, as exemplified by the Shapur School in Kazeroun.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 104.

¹¹⁸ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 319.

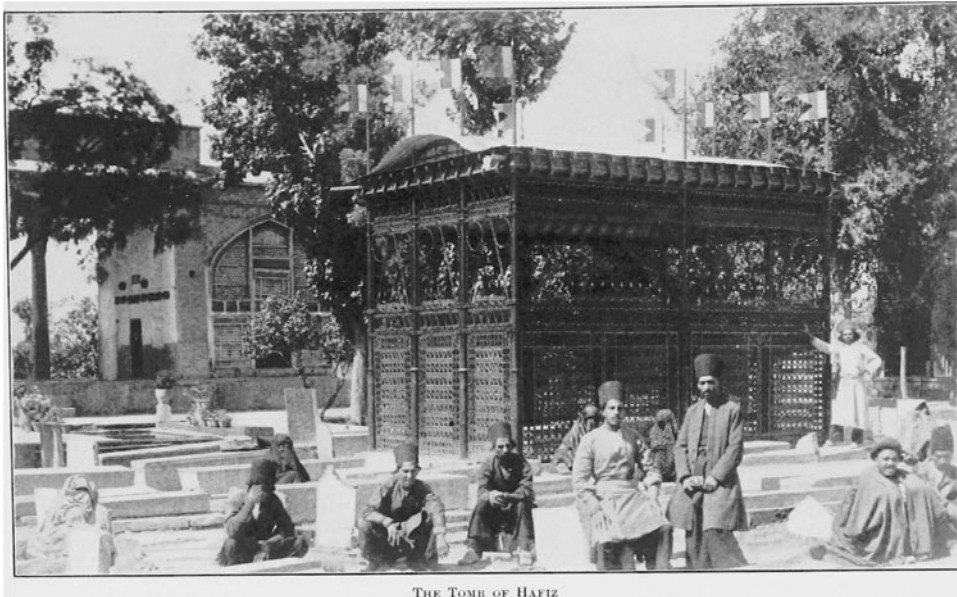


Figure 3. Tomb of Hafez. Public domain. From the book “Persia Past and Present; a Book of Travel and Research, with More than Two Hundred Illustrations and a Map.”

In 1934, when Siroux began the construction of Amjadih Stadium, with an intended capacity of 15,000, Reza Shah approved the design and ordered similar stadiums be built across Iran.¹¹⁹ Dehkhoda, the writer of Iran’s first encyclopedia, chose verses from the *Shahnameh* to be placed on tiles around Amjadih Stadium. These verses referenced Zoorkhaneh, which evolved from ancient Mithraic temples as a gathering place for people to engage in sports.¹²⁰ This display demonstrates the enduring concept of a communal sports space rooted in Iranian history, now manifested in a modern structure.¹²¹

The Tomb of Poet Hafez

One of Godard’s buildings, the Tomb of Hafez (known as Hafeziyeh) in Shiraz, was situated in an old cemetery within the courtyard of a building complex (Fig. 3). Godard was careful to preserve the historical buildings around the tomb to show the transformation of the space over time, while also creating something innovative (Fig. 4). He paid homage to the historic monumental tombs within gardens as well as to Zand architecture in Shiraz. This design has been recognized by scholars as an important typology, “Circular or round in plan, and with a domed or tent roof, these tomb towers established a type which was to persist for several centuries.”¹²² In his design, Godard self-consciously appropriated the round plan and domed columned space of the tomb towers, writing about them in his essay “Mile Ahangan,” which is a tomb tower located in Mashhad.¹²³ He further discussed the typology in various essays and lectures, such as “notes about existing tombs in Maragheh (Azerbaijan).”¹²⁴ Ali Sami supervised construction of the tomb of Hafez, which started in 1938 and was completed in 1940.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 82.

¹²⁰ Wilber, *Iran, Past and Present: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, 119.

¹²¹ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 86.

¹²² Wilber, *Iran, Past and Present: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, 104.

¹²³ Godard, “Iranian Arches,” 311–316.

¹²⁴ Andre Godard, “notes about existing tombs in Maragheh (Azerbaijan),” in *Athare Iran*, vol. 3, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1992), 286–320.

¹²⁵ Sami, *Shiraz, city of Saadi and Hafez, city of Rose and Nightingale*, 60.



Figure 4. Tomb of Hafez. Photo by author

The Hafeziah tomb complex included a garden divided into two sections by *talar* (open-columned halls) measuring 7 by 56 meters (Fig 5). A *talar* with four stone columns still remained on the site from the Zand era, so Godard extended the hall and added 16 similar stone columns. Thus, the *talar* became a buffer between the entrance and the tomb monument, providing a gradual shift from the busy sphere of the city to the serene space of the tomb. The symmetrical axis of the Hafeziah entrance matches the axis of the Zand *talar* and crosses the *talar* symmetrically, reaching the tomb and mimicking the symmetry of historical Iranian gardens. Two sides of the roof of the *talar* are decorated with traditional tiles



Figure 5. Tomb of Hafez. Photo by author

(Moaraq) displaying Hafez poems, which indicates a remarkable attention to detail and a deep respect for the past.

A beautiful octagonal structure was constructed around the tomb on five circular stone steps, complete with a dome that featured more Moaraq tiles, Hafez poems, and Iranian geometrical patterns and motifs (Fig. 6). The structure of the bronze dome was a renowned Iranian technique known as *Karbandi*. In many Iranian domes, the transition from the square space to the circular dome occurs through an octagonal intermediary. Godard used this technique (*Hasht Gush*) by putting the dome on eight stone columns. The columns around the tombs were crafted from the same stones and adorned with the same intricate carvings, much like the Zand columns in the *talar* in front of the tomb. However, Godard's protégé, Houshang Seyhoun, criticized Godard's decision to replicate historical columns, stating: "I obliged myself not to build the same exact old building, but to build something that associate with or remind that old building with some analogies but not the exact same thing, not to uselessly duplicate a Zand column."¹²⁶ The historical building north of

¹²⁶ Kiafar, "Interview with Houshang Seyhoun," 21.



Figure 6. Tomb of Hafez. Photo by author

the tomb became a library and all the stone fountains placed in the pools were from historical Zand buildings in Shiraz.

Notably, in his plan for the Hafezieh complex, Godard did not add heavy structures to the existing buildings and instead designed a light, clear structure. Only a few of the changes he introduced radically altered the space. Godard employed local architects and artists for the construction of the tomb. This commitment to local talent also highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage through architecture. Godard's innovative approach to incorporating historical elements into his design for the Hafezieh is a testament to his respect for the history and tradition of Iran.

However, who designed the significant Tomb of Hafez building remains a subject of debate among scholars. Talinn Grigor asserted, without providing supporting evidence, that Maxime Siroux was actually the designer of the tomb and its garden in Shiraz.¹²⁷ This claim was accepted by Iranian scholars, highlighting the influence of Euro-American scholarship over local knowledge.¹²⁸ Interestingly, Maxime Siroux, in his curriculum vitae, listed all the buildings and gardens he designed but did not mention the Tomb of Hafez. On the contrary, Ali Sami, the project supervisor, confirmed in his book that Godard designed the tomb.¹²⁹

The tomb's architectural design has received widespread acclaim and admiration. Indeed, a published essay discussed the growing number of tourists who visit the Tomb each year, which included interviews in which visitors confirmed that the tomb's tranquil atmosphere and architecture were closely tied to their admiration for Hafez's love poems.¹³⁰ Interviewees also emphasized the sense of the place and the close connection they felt between Hafez's

¹²⁷ Grigor, *Persian revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture*, 197.

¹²⁸ Sara Mahdizadeh and Pirooz Hanachee, "The Role of Western Archaeologists and Architects in Restoration of Historical Buildings during the Pahlavi Era, Iran (1925–1979)," *Honar-Ha-Ye-Ziba-Memari-Va-Shahrsazi* 21, no. 3 (2016): 11.

¹²⁹ Sami, *Shiraz, city of Saadi and Hafez, city of Rose and Nightingale*, 60.

¹³⁰ Mohammadreza Bazrgar, "Hafez, Hafeziyeh, Tourism," *Researching Hafez* 13 (2017): 114.

poems, the complex's architecture, and themselves: "The architectural elements of the building are translations of Hafez's poem in architecture. The deep connection between the words of Hafez is visible in the building too."¹³¹ These interviews prove that people admire the architecture and garden created by Godard within a historical building complex that was once a public cemetery.¹³²

The Ancient Iran Museum (Museye Iran Bastan)

The design and construction of the Museye Iran Bastan (the Ancient Iran Museum), ordered by Minister of Education Ali Asghar Hekmat and later renamed the Iran National Museum, took four years (1934–1937).¹³³ Reza Shah accepted Hekmat's suggestion to build a museum and allocated part of an old military base as the site. Hekmat commissioned Andre Godard to begin work on the building.¹³⁴ At first, Godard designed a large garden with a monumental building in the center. This design referenced historical Iranian gardens with a *Kushk* in the center.¹³⁵ A *Kushk* is a historical free-standing type of building in Iran, and from which the English word and the form "kiosk" evolved. This design was not accepted due to land shortage, so Godard designed another building for the allocated 10,000 square meters in the western part of the land and the remaining land gradually became the site of several ministries and the Tehran post office.¹³⁶

Godard was particularly interested in Iranian brickwork, which he incorporated into his designs. He also used traditional Iranian elements such as the *iwan*, a three-sided rectangular hall with a vaulted roof. In designing the Ancient Iran Museum in Tehran, Godard used the egg-shaped Sasanian vaulted *iwan* with intricate brickwork for the entrance (Fig. 7). In particular, the entrance arch was inspired by the well-known Ctesiphon arch, although the museum's arch was on a much smaller scale (Fig. 8).¹³⁷ These egg-shaped and egg-named arches were used to cover huge spaces in different buildings in Iran from a range of eras.¹³⁸ Godard wrote in his essay "Neyriz mosque" that he encountered "a similar facade to the Ctesiphon" in a newly built house near Yazd and another in a house in Semnan, emphasizing that these forms and techniques were common in contemporary Iran and visible everywhere.¹³⁹

The façade of the Ancient Iran Museum is decorated by intricate brick patterns, semi-double columns, and arched windows. The plan is geometrically simple and symmetrical, it has apparent references to the Iranian traditional plan type called the *Hasht Behesht*. The museum's interior space is uninterrupted, open on two levels for exhibitions (pre-Islamic and Islamic), and has two interior courts. After entering through the *iwan*, there are two hallways around the interior courts (Fig. 9). The whole building is extended from south to north and was built on a monolith plate around one symmetrical axis. While Godard designed the structure, he employed two local Iranian master builders, Ostad Morad Tabrizi and Abbas Ali Memar, to construct it. While some scholars identify this design as having Art Deco influences, I have argued that Godard reinterpreted Iranian plans and forms.¹⁴⁰

¹³¹ Ibid., 116.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 55.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 54.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹³⁸ Pirnia, "Iran's gift to the world of architecture: Janagh and Kalil," 2.

¹³⁹ Andre Godard, "Neyriz mosque," in *Athare Iran*, vol. 3, trans. Abolhasan Sarvghad Moghaddam (Mashhad: Astane Qodse Razavi publication, 1992), 330.

¹⁴⁰ Victor Daniel, Bijan Shafei, and Sohrab Soroushiani, *Andre Godard Architecture* (Tehran: Architecture of Changing times in Iran, 2015), 282



Figure 7. The Ancient Iran Museum. Public domain. From Wikimedia Commons. Photographer: Amir lolohari



Figure 8. Ctesiphon. American Colony Photo Department, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019702677/>

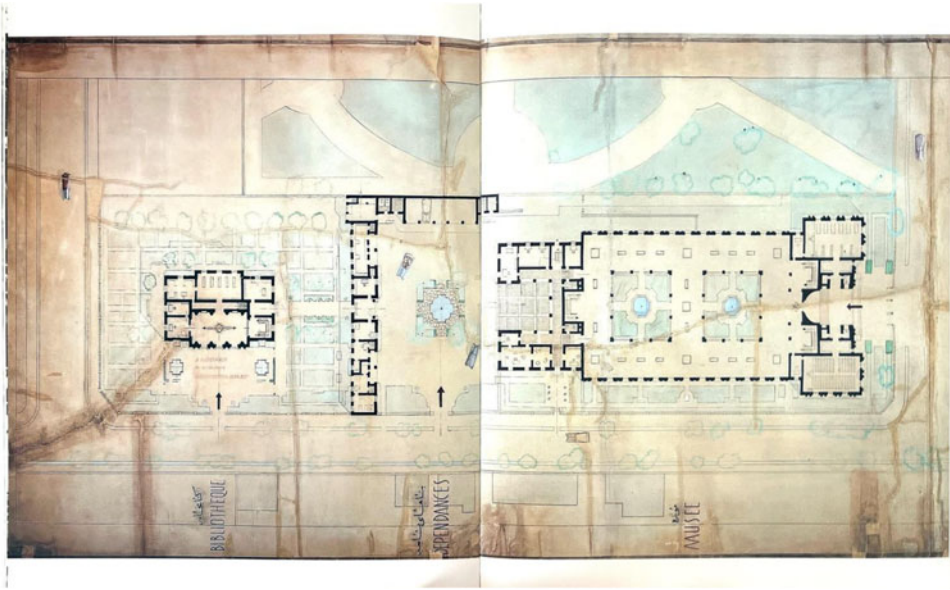


Figure 9. The Ancient Iran Museum and National Library. From the book “Andre Godard’s Architecture.”

Adapting historical elements to suit modern construction techniques, Godard only used local brick. On the upper side of the museum’s entrance arch, on marble, is a poem celebrating the museum’s architecture and Reza Shah. The work of Malk Alshoaraye Bahar, a prominent literary figure, the carved poem was written in the Tholth style by Amir AlKottab Kurdestani, a famous calligrapher of the time.¹⁴¹ After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, this poem was replaced with Quranic verses. Godard noted that “nothing but showcases and some iron sleepers came from abroad.”¹⁴² As Nader Ardalan, a renowned Iranian architect and scholar, argued, this museum “stands today as one of the most original contemporary interpretations of the architectural heritage of Iran.”¹⁴³

While Godard designed the building, Siroux was responsible for the garden designs for both the museum and the Iran National Library. He was inspired by the strict geometry of Iranian gardens, pools, and fountains situated in the center of courtyards and in front of the façade, and cypress trees lined the edges of the garden (Fig. 9). Historian Abbas Amanat believes that modern Iranian public buildings of that time “were often clad in a thin veneer of Persian architectural references.”¹⁴⁴ For example, Amanat expresses that both the Ancient Iran Museum and the Iran National Library were designed “in a tasteful style inspired by Sasanian architecture.”¹⁴⁵ However, Talinn Grigor rejects Godard’s innovation by referring to the Ancient Iran Museum as a “re-creation”: “Godard’s re-creation of Khosrow Palace, however, inspired his students and their students in their monumental proposals; a case in point is Hosayn Amanat’s 1971 Shahyad Aryamehr Tower, which duplicates the outline of the Ctesiphon vault in western Tehran.”¹⁴⁶ At the same time, Grigor acknowledges that Godard encouraged Iranian architects to use the past when shaping a modern Iranian architecture.

¹⁴¹ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 51.

¹⁴² Archives Godard, 1APAI/5983, cited in Piram, “André Godard’s Archives at the Louvre Museum and Their Significance for the Study of the National Museum of Iran,” 9.

¹⁴³ Nader Ardalan, “Museums and Memorials of Iran 1935 to 1979,” *2A Magazine* 13 (Spring 2010): 1.

¹⁴⁴ Amanat, *Iran, a modern history*, 459.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁴⁶ Talinn Grigor, *The Persian revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture*, 207.

Iran National Library

Ali Asghar Hekmat observed that, despite extensive use of the old military base in central Tehran for numerous buildings, a portion of the land remained unutilized. While overseeing the construction of the Ancient Iran Museum, he found inspiration to establish a national library on the available site. He approached Reza Shah and successfully obtained approval for the allocation of the land.¹⁴⁷ Though Hekmat states that he commissioned Andre Godard to design the national library, Siroux's records indicate that he designed the building probably under the order of Godard and very similar to the museum's building. A Chronogram poem by Habib Yaghmai—a poet and literary scholar—was also placed on this building and the entrance decorated with Iranian brick patterns.¹⁴⁸ This building's designer has also been erroneously reported, as some sources state that Godard designed both the Ancient Iran Museum and the Iran National Library, but Siroux names the national library as one of his designs.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, in both the museum and library's original documents, both Godard and Siroux are named as architects (Fig. 9).

Godard and Siroux's Influence on Iranian Architects

Part of Godard and Siroux's legacy is that they helped to establish a strong connection between Iran and France. As a professor at the School of Fine Arts in Tehran, Godard taught and mentored many Iranian students, as well as organized several study trips to France. During these trips, Iranian students studied French architecture and urban planning. Furthermore, it was in part due to Godard that Iranian students studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts between the 1940s and 1960s.¹⁵⁰ The phenomenon of studying architecture in Europe and subsequently returning to one's home country to exert influence had parallels in different places, including the Ottoman Empire, where prominent architects—such as Kemalettin—followed a comparable trajectory.¹⁵¹ After World War II, during Charles de Gaulle's presidency, the French government invited exceptional students from universities around the world to study in France with the idea that they would take French culture back to their countries when they returned.¹⁵²

This seemingly noble decision to support students requires analysis. As a former colonial power, France was facing the erosion of its global influence, and inviting students from around the world could be seen as a strategic maneuver to regain some cultural and intellectual dominance. Under the guise of fostering cultural exchange, the French government intended to increase its hegemony. By imparting French education and values to these students, the French government hoped to perpetuate a Eurocentric worldview. Moreover, the assumption that these students would willingly bring French culture to their respective nations is problematic, as such ignored these students' agency, autonomy, and ability to critically engage with the knowledge they acquired and decide how to contribute to their societies on their own terms. Arguably, this pretense of promoting cultural exchange was a form of neo-colonialism that amplified power imbalances and reinforced the Western-centric narrative.

¹⁴⁷ Hekmat, *30 memories*, 57.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; Habib Yaghmai, "Memories of the editor of the Yaghma Journal," *Ayandeh journal* 7, no. 1–2 (April and May 1981): 46.

¹⁴⁹ Abbas Amanat, *Iran, a modern history*, 458; Archives nationales de France, "curriculum vitae, Maxime Siroux, Architecte a Teheran," May 30, 1946, no. 1977 1065/ 222, 1672.

¹⁵⁰ Piram, "S'appropriier un modèle français en Iran? L'architecte André Godard (1881–1965) et la conception des musées iraniens," 14.

¹⁵¹ Farivash Ghanadi Maragheh and Hilal Tuğba Örmecioglu, "A Study on Two Architects of Iran and Turkey at the Threshold of the 20th Century: Andre Godard and Mimar Kemalettin," *The Journal of Iranian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2020): 261.

¹⁵² Kiafar, "Interview with Houshang Seyhoun," 18.

Houshang Seyhoun became Godard and Siroux's student at the new College of Art and Architecture (*Honarkadeh*).¹⁵³ Students could choose one of three architectural design studios for their education, and Seyhoun opted for Siroux's studio. Seyhoun later said, "Siroux loved Iran and he served Iran very well, that's why I chose to be in his studio."¹⁵⁴ Seyhoun was "a favored protégé" of Godard, who headed the committee that selected Iranian students for the French government art and architecture scholarships, and Seyhoun had previously won competitions for the mausoleums of Ferdowsi and Ebne Sina before heading to France.¹⁵⁵ Seyhoun finished his training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1948 with the project "Le mausolée d'Avicenne à Hamadan."¹⁵⁶

As Dean of the University of Tehran's School of Fine Arts, Godard invited Seyhoun to join the faculty. In 1961, Seyhoun assumed the role of dean after Mohsen Foroughi.¹⁵⁷ Some scholars overlook Seyhoun and other Iranian architects' education in Iran, emphasizing only their Parisian studies as the key influence on the future of Iranian architecture.¹⁵⁸ Notably, Mozaffari and Westbrook call Seyhoun "the Beaux Arts-trained architect."¹⁵⁹ As dean, Seyhoun transformed the curriculum by teaching Iranian historical architecture. He and his students explored various structures in Iran, and through collaboration with the antiquities department, many previously neglected buildings gained recognition as historic sites.¹⁶⁰ Seyhoun designed innovative monuments for Iranian poets and polymaths, including the renowned Tomb of Omar Khayyam (Fig. 10), in which Seyhoun's design integrated Khayyam's roles as poet, mathematician, and astronomer.¹⁶¹ In "Four Discourses," Nezami Aruzi mentioned Khayyam's wish for a grave with blossoms every spring. Seyhoun honored this by designing a multi-level axis from the north garden to Khayyam's resting place, allowing blossoms to fall on his grave each spring.¹⁶² Seyhoun paid tribute to Khayyam's geometric inventions by incorporating an open star structure on the tomb. This unique design symbolizes the celestial expanse above Nishapur.¹⁶³ Seyhoun adorned the structure with classical tiles inscribed with Khayyam's poems, featuring Morteza Abdolrasul's abstract Shekaste Nastalik calligraphy.¹⁶⁴ Seyhoun aimed to modernize Iranian architecture while preserving tradition, defining a unique Iranian modernism. The undeniable roles of Godard and Siroux influenced his work in creatively addressing societal needs based on culture.¹⁶⁵

Conservation and Historical Preservation

Discussing Andre Godard's legacy as the head of the Department of Archeology, some scholars argue that he prioritized pre-Islamic Iran.¹⁶⁶ In contrast, however, Godard collaborated with local builders to preserve Islamic-era buildings, such as the Shah Mosque in Esfahan,

¹⁵³ Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran 1941-1979*, 786.

¹⁵⁴ Tabibzadeh Nouri, *University of Tehran: School of Fine Arts under Andre Godard*, 85.

¹⁵⁵ Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran 1941-1979*, 786, 787.

¹⁵⁶ Archives nationales de France, "Dossiers individuels des élèves. Section architecture. Série du 1er janvier 1941 au 31 décembre 1950. Sabron-Szczepanski," no. AJ/52/1303.

¹⁵⁷ Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran 1941-1979*, 788.

¹⁵⁸ Peyman Akhgar and Antony Moulis, "The legacy of the École des Beaux-Arts in twentieth-century Iran: the architecture of Mohsen Foroughi," *The Journal of Architecture* 26, no. 7 (Oct 2021): 948.

¹⁵⁹ Ali Mozaffari and Nigel Westbrook, "In search of continuity with the past: Houshang Seyhoun's Ferdowsi mausoleum complex as cultural landscape," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 79, no. 2 (2022): 298.

¹⁶⁰ Milani, *Eminent Persians: the men and women who made modern Iran 1941-1979*, 789.

¹⁶¹ Kiafar, "Interview with Houshang Seyhoun," 26.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Mahdizadeh and Hanachee, "The Role of Western Archaeologists and Architects in Restoration of Historical Buildings during the Pahlavi Era, Iran (1925-1979), 9.



Figure 10. Tomb of Khayyam. Public domain. From www.Archawpress.com

and as head of the Ancient Iran Museum, he allocated one of the two floors exclusively to the Islamic-era Iran.¹⁶⁷ Maxime Siroux also played a crucial role in conserving historic buildings in Iran. Together, they notably restored Meydan Naqshe Jahan in Esfahan, a UNESCO World Heritage site housing the Shah Mosque, Sheikh Lutfullah Mosque, and Ali Qapo Palace. Godard, in collaboration with master builder Ostad Hossein Maarefi, led this restoration effort. Furthermore, Godard oversaw the preservation of prominent Esfahan landmarks, including Khaju and Si-O-Se Pol Bridges and Chehelsotun Palace.¹⁶⁸ Hekmat visited the Shah and Sheikh Lutfullah Mosque restoration with Godard and examined the building

¹⁶⁷ Piram, “André Godard’s Archives at the Louvre Museum and Their Significance for the Study of the National Museum of Iran,” 9.

¹⁶⁸ Mahdizadeh and Hanachee, “The Role of Western Archaeologists and Architects in Restoration of Historical Buildings during the Pahlavi Era, Iran (1925–1979),” 9.

carefully to observe the process.¹⁶⁹ This attention to detail ensured that the restoration process was carried out with the highest level of precision and accuracy.

Iran's government initially hired Maxime Siroux to design new buildings, but he ended up becoming actively involved in the preservation of historical buildings. Notable projects include the restoration of the Yazd Mosque, Qom Mosque, and Niyasar Fire Temple. As the architect of the Ministry of Education, he personally designed plans for the restoration of the semi-ruined Safavid Fin Garden near Kashan, suggesting he had deep knowledge of Iran's historical architecture.¹⁷⁰ As Karim Pirnia affirmed:

Maxime Siroux knew Iran better than any other foreign scholar. He traveled to many remote and fearful corners around Iran alone, and he had to sleep among wild animals to measure these buildings. Siroux worked really hard to understand Iranian architecture.¹⁷¹

However, Pirnia also mentioned that this “doesn't mean that all of his ideas were right, for example, he wanted to change all the pointed arches to egg-shaped arches.”¹⁷² Nonetheless, Pirnia still asserted: “Siroux's books and essays are very meticulous, scholarly and with great knowledge. His works should be used by Iranian students and scholars.” Pirnia appreciated Siroux's work, observing that “Siroux without any available vehicles for travel and with all dangers such as snakes and scorpions stayed in ruined caravansaries to do his work, our students and young scholars should learn from him.”¹⁷³

After World War II, the French government called on all French architects to return to France and contribute to the reconstruction and renovation of the nation.¹⁷⁴ Siroux left Iran in 1945, but he returned in 1958 to undertake the preservation of the Caravanserai Madare Shah along with Iranian architects, artists, and builders including Ebrahimian, Chaychi, Rashtian, Meraatian, and many others.¹⁷⁵ This Caravanserai was transformed into a modern hotel, the Hotel Abbasi, now considered one of the most unique hotels in Iran.¹⁷⁶

This article argues that the conservation and preservation of Iran's historical buildings was made possible by the enthusiasm of French architects and their detailed study of Iranian historical architecture, the efforts of the Iranian intellectuals, the close supervision of the government, and the insistence on Iran's cultural legacy.

Conclusion

The material presented here strongly suggests that Godard and Siroux's approach to architecture in Iran often represented a sensitive and contextually grounded response to the local culture and climate. Andre Godard and Maxime Siroux were not just interested in replicating Western architecture in Iran; they sought to create a new architecture informed by Iranian traditions and modern design principles. The Iranian government also played a pivotal role in requiring architects to prioritize the integration of Iranian architectural traditions into their designs. If the government had sought a design reminiscent of a typical Western building, the outcome would unquestionably have diverged.

Godard and Siroux were keen to understand Iranian culture and architecture, recognizing that their work was not simply to design buildings, but also to engage with a complex

¹⁶⁹ Hekmat, *Hekmat's Souvenirs*, 106.

¹⁷⁰ Hekmat, *Hekmat's Souvenirs*, 99.

¹⁷¹ Pirnia, *Memorabilia of Professor Karim Pirnia*, 343.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 344.

¹⁷⁴ Kiafar, “Interview with Houshang Seyhoun,” 18.

¹⁷⁵ Institut national d'histoire de l'art (France) - licence: Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), dossier Légion d'honneur, 1977.

¹⁷⁶ Farhang Mehr, *My Companions* (Los Angeles: New Era Communications, 2013), 207–213.

cultural heritage. As a result, they studied Iranian architecture extensively and sought to incorporate this knowledge into their designs. Furthermore, Godard and Siroux strongly emphasized context in their designs. They were interested in how buildings could be integrated into surrounding landscapes and urban contexts in a way that was respectful of local traditions and culture. They incorporated traditional Iranian elements, such as the use of light, water, and greenery, as well as the creation of multiple courtyards and the use of proportional systems based on geometry. Additionally, Godard and Siroux believed in the importance of collaboration and consultation with local architects and builders. In this approach, we must recognize the active role of Iranian intellectuals and the government in urging foreign and local architects to honor and incorporate Iranian artistic and architectural traditions. These traditions were not merely guidelines but profound sources of influence and inspiration, which guided the creation of enduring designs.

A comparison between Siroux and Godard reveals some distinctions. Among Iranian scholars, Siroux was more significant, primarily due to his interest in Iran's culture and architecture. His dedication to preserving Iranian architectural traditions was evident in his publications and efforts to restore numerous historically significant structures. The ongoing significance of Siroux's work was underscored by its recent use in documentation submitted to obtain UNESCO heritage listing for Iran's caravanserais, highlighting his work's enduring relevance. Godard's architectural prowess was recognized in Iran through his design of one of the country's most renowned edifices, the tomb of poet Hafez. But instead of building on the work of previous French scholars who emphasized the significance of Iranian architecture, Godard dismissed their claims. Additionally, he engaged in unethical practices that marred his reputation within the Iranian scholarly community, looting and selling various Iranian artifacts, betraying the trust of the country. Furthermore, Godard's interference in the work of Iranian scholars demonstrated a lack of respect for their expertise and undermined their contributions. Scholars like Pirnia identified Godard's scholarly errors.¹⁷⁷ By contrast, Pirnia used the Persian term "*Ostad*" when referring to Siroux, labeling him both as master and professor.¹⁷⁸ These comments shed light on Iranians' interactions with two distinct categories of Western scholars.

Godard, despite working for the Iranian government, primarily demonstrated unwavering loyalty to France and himself. His dedication to his home country was evident in his actions and choices. While he undoubtedly contributed to Iran, his overarching allegiance seemed to lie elsewhere. This dynamic shaped his behavior and work. On the other hand, Siroux, also employed by the Iranian government, made earnest efforts to serve the Iranian people to the best of his abilities. He exemplified a genuine desire to make a positive impact on the lives of Iranians through his work. This focus translated into a different set of actions and a unique work ethic, setting him apart from both his predecessors and Godard, his counterpart.

In conclusion, while both Godard and Siroux served the Iranian government, their distinct motivations, attitudes, and methodologies highlight the intricate nature of their engagement with Iranian culture. This underscores the complexity of their roles as Western scholars within Iran's socio-political landscape, offering a nuanced perspective on the diverse dynamics shaping their interactions.

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¹⁷⁷ Pirnia, *Memorabilia of Professor Karim Pirnia*, 341.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 343.

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