



ASIA INSTITUTE

ASIA INSTITUTE was founded in 1928 in New York City as the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology, incorporated 1930 in the state of New York; active in Shiraz 1965-79. In its affiliation, functions, and publications, the Institute has had a complicated and eventful career, illustrating some of the vicissitudes of Iranian studies during the twentieth century.

The founding director was Arthur Upham Pope, who had organized an exhibition and the First International Congress on Persian Art in Philadelphia in 1926. Its charter authorized it to promote research and interest in Persian art and archaeology through exhibitions, lectures, congresses and publications, and to assist in the excavation and conservation of monuments in Persia. Steps taken toward these goals included the provision of a library and archives of photographs and slides of art and archaeology, and scholarships for students in colleges and universities. Before World War II the Institute organized the Second International Congress, with an exhibition at Burlington House in London in 1931, assisted by [Laurence Binyon](#) (Suppl.) and Arnold Wilson, two British scholars of Persian art; the newly discovered [Luristan bronzes](#) were a special feature of the exhibition. The Third International Congress was held in Leningrad and Moscow in 1935; the Proceedings were published in 1939 in the USSR. The Persian Antiquities Law, passed by the Persian parliament at the end of 1930, ended the French monopoly on archeological digs, and enabled the Institute to participate in expeditions such as that by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the University



of Pennsylvania Museum in 1935 to Surkh Dum in Luristan: this dig provided an archaeological locus for the famous bronzes, which had so far appeared only on the antiquities market. When Reżā Shah ordered the name “Persia” changed to “Iran” in foreign usage, this necessitated a slight change in the name of the Institute and its publications: thus the *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology*, inaugurated in 1931, continued publication from 1937 as the *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*.

A survey of archaeological sites and a photographic survey of Islamic architecture in Persia, already begun almost single-handedly by Pope, continued with Eric Schroeder, Donald Wilber, Robert Byron and Faraj-Allāh Badl as assistants. The Institute in New York, at 724 Fifth Avenue, became the center for a major project, the preparation of a Survey of Persian Art, with several young assistants working under the direction of Dr. Phyllis Ackerman, Pope’s wife and a specialist in tapestries and textiles, while Pope was in Persia. In 1938 the Institute established the School for Iranian Studies and, with the help of refugees Richard Ettinghausen and Leo Bronstein, hired many Jewish and dissident refugee scholars from Nazi-ruled Germany and Austria, including Bernard Geiger, Robert von Heine-Geldern, Edith Porada, Gustav von Grunebaum, William Haas, Ilse Lichtenstaedter, Wolf Leslau, and Leo Oppenheim. The Institute’s most important project, the *Survey of Persian Art* (edited by Pope with the assistance of Ackerman), was completed in 1939 and published in six massive volumes by Oxford University Press. Exhibitions of Persian art were organized, e.g., in New York in 1940. In the same year, the body’s name was changed to Asia Institutes (plural), with a school for Asian Studies; many students studied Oriental languages here for the military or other services, and the first Master’s degrees were conferred in 1948.

After the war, numbers of faculty, students, and officers gradually decreased, as did the budget, and the Institute changed its address in New York several times. Pope was attacked in print by supporters of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and in 1952 he resigned as chancellor. Continued difficulties brought the Institute to the brink of extinction. Its last project in New York was the Fourth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology (April 1960, with visits by participants to Philadelphia and Washington); the high point was a special session on an illustrated manuscript of the *Andarz-nāma* (q.v., in the



BIBLIOGRAPHY

, articles by Minovi and Yarshater), the authenticity of which was disputed. As a result of the initiative of Iranian participants in the congress, it was resolved to activate an International Association for future congresses with headquarters in Tehran. A former student of the Institute, Jay Gluck, then engaged in publishing English books in Japan, established a new publishing company called Asia Institute Books and had the Survey of Persian Art reprinted in a smaller format in 1964.

In 1966 Pope and his wife moved to Shiraz, where the Asia Institute was reestablished as a part of Pahlavi University, renamed from Shiraz University. The university conducted teaching mainly in English and had a close relationship with the University of Pennsylvania. The Asia Institute was housed in a Qajar palace near the bazaar (formerly the residence of Qawām-al-Molk), called the Nāranjestān, following its restoration (Figure 1, Figure 2). Gluck, as assistant to Pope, became the guiding light in restoring the Nāranjestān and launching the new Asia Institute in Shiraz. A number of people became attached to the Institute, such as ‘Ali Aşğar Baḳtyār, an architect who undertook an extensive study of old Islamic buildings in Isfahan, and two administrative assistants to Pope, Jannat Bolandgiray and Cornelia Montgomery. The architectural survey continued with photographer Asad-Allah Behruzān, succeeded by Mortazā Rostami. In the first year energy was directed mainly toward organizing the Fifth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology, which took place in Tehran in April 1968 with archaeologist ‘Ezzat Negahbān as director of the Congress. At the final session in Shiraz Negahbān proposed a motion calling on UNESCO and all governments to seek ways of controlling the export of antiquities, except through internationally agreed channels. Pope and French archaeologist Roman Ghirshman voted against the motion, which was passed by the majority of the congress participants. Although the Asia Institute was the initiator of the Congress, the new chancellor of Pahlavi University, Huşang Nahāvandi, cut the Institute’s budget and as a result its activities were curtailed.

Pope died on 3 September 1969 at the age of 88, a month after Richard N. Frye had succeeded him as director of the Institute. With the death of Pope, the mystique of his friendship with Reżā Shah and the royal court ceased, and the



Institute was further integrated into the University. Nahāvandi charged that Gluck had been exporting antiquities illegally from Iran to Japan and demanded his removal. Since Frye retained his professorship at Harvard University and could only spend four months of the year at Shiraz, the Institute suffered some neglect. Nonetheless, scholarly projects expanded with the inauguration of a yearly symposium on archaeological work in Iran, when all investigators reported on their results. After two years, the successful symposium was moved to Tehran by the Ministry of Culture and Arts.

In 1970 a summer school was organized by the Asia Institute, where for the first time all courses (including Akkadian and Elamite cuneiform, Islamic art history, and ancient history of Iran) were taught in Persian by Iranian scholars. It was a great success, despite inadequate funding. The Institute was designated the center for scholarly activities during the celebration of 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran, which took place in October 1971, and organized a big congress of Iranian Studies in Shiraz. In 1973 the Institute also helped organize the Sixth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology at Oxford, under the direction of Basil Gray. In Shiraz the Institute became a center for foreign scholars working in Iran, among whom were Pierre de Miroschedji, Andrew Williamson, Klaus Schippmann, Minobu Honda, Eiji Mano, Koji Kamioka, Sheila Blair, Vladimir Lukonin, and Dastur Jamaspasana. The Institute published a monograph on the Masjed-e 'atiq of Shiraz by Donald Wilber, excavations at Yahya tepe in Kerman by Karl Lamberg-Karlovsky, a study of Arabic calligraphy by Faraj-Allāh Baḡl, and a study of the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad by Bižan Sa'ādat. In addition, four issues of the *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* were published by 1975.

When Frye's contract expired in 1975, Māhyār Nawābi (executive officer since 1973) became director of the Institute. This was moved from the Nāranjestān to a larger university building, which accommodated many students, and the Institute became the Department of Linguistics of Pahlavi University. The *Bulletin* was now primarily devoted to articles on linguistics; collected articles of Frye, Duchesne-Guillemin, and Harold Bailey were issued as monographs of the Institute, and a set of Pahlavi and Avestan manuscripts, mainly from Bombay, were printed in facsimile under its aegis.

After the Islamic revolution in 1979 the library of the Institute, which had remained in the Nāranjestān, was transferred to the main university library, and the photographs, potsherd collection, and other antiquities were stored in the basement. In time much of the collection was stolen, the furniture

dispersed, and the Nāranjestān returned to its function as a tourist attraction. Publication was ended, and even teaching in the Department of Linguistics ceased for several years. In 2000, however, the Nāranjestān became the museum of the university.

The Institute was dead, but in 1987 the *Bulletin* was revived in Michigan, through the efforts of Carol Bromberg, returning to its emphasis on the art and archaeology of Asia (www.bulletinasiainstitute.org). By the year 2001 twelve volumes had been published, and even though the Institute was gone the name continued to exist.

Jay Gluck and Noël Siver, eds., *Surveyors of Persian Art: A Documentary Biography of Arthur Upham Pope & Phyllis Ackerman*, Ashiya, Japan, 1996 (the principal source).

Bulletin of the Asia Institute, N.S., vol. 1 (1987).