



DIEZ, ERNST

DIEZ, ERNST, Austrian historian of Iranian and Islamic art (b. 27 January 1878, d. 8 July 1961). Diez belonged to the first generation of European art historians, who, starting with studies in European art, soon developed an interest in Asian cultures.

Diez studied with Josef Strzygowski in Graz until 1902 and later became his assistant. Strzygowski maintained that the art of Europe and the Mediterranean countries could not be understood without knowledge of the ancient Near East and Christian, Armenian, Islamic, and Indian art. Under Strzygowski's influence, Diez became interested in European, Byzantine, Islamic, Indian, and Far Eastern art, but he focussed mainly on Islamic art, particularly on questions concerning Persian architecture.

In 1908 he joined the Berlin State Museums and in 1909 was on the staff of the Islamic Department headed by Friedrich Sarre. This post enabled him to join in the preparation of the exhibition of Islamic art in Munich in 1910 and eventually drew his interest to Islamic art. He concentrated on the theoretical principles of art as well as the general outlines of artistic development. He was also interested in the historical study of monuments within well-defined regional boundaries, which led him to publish a number of broad surveys. As a student of the Vienna school, which considered Asia as a single region, Diez was perhaps one of the last scholars to write individual studies as well as general art histories on Islamic (*Die Kunst der islamischen Völker*, Berlin, 1915), Far Eastern (*Einführung in die Kunst des Ostens. China and Japan*, Hellerau, 1922), and Indian (*Die Kunst Indiens*, Potsdam, 1925) art. His



comprehensive survey of Islamic art, which focussed on the architecture, was the first study devoted to this field in the German language.

In spring of 1911 Diez returned to Vienna to become an assistant of Strzygowski. Believing, like his teacher, that the knowledge of Islamic art in northeastern Persia was of prime importance for understanding Islamic art in general, he made a research trip with Oskar von Niedermayer to Persia in the years 1912-14. The journey took them as far as Afghanistan, India, and a number of other Islamic countries. During his stay in Khorasan (10 March-10 April 1913), he surveyed architectural monuments but could not reach an agreement with the Persian authorities to excavate the city of Nīšāpūr. He published the results of his studies and observations during the expedition in two volumes (*Churasanische Baudenkmäler*, Berlin, 1918 and *Persien, islamische Baukunst in Churasan*, Hagen, 1923). The first volume gave a survey of a number of important buildings in Khorasan, including tombtowers and part of the sanctuary of Mašhad. The second volume contained a discussion on construction principles of Persian brick buildings. Diez again took up the questions treated in these volumes in his article in the *Survey of Persian Art* (pp. 916-29) and in a more general work on Persian art (*Iranische Kunst*, Vienna, 1944). Among other results of the expedition was a volume published by Niedermayer on Afghanistan (*Afghanistan*, Leipzig, 1924), which included contributions on art history by Diez.

Diez returned to Vienna after serving in World War I and taught Early Christian and Islamic art. This was the beginning of a long teaching career which, from 1926 until his return to the Vienna University in 1939, took him to the Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. During this period he was able to travel to India and the Far East. From 1943 to 1948 Diez taught Islamic art in Istanbul.

In 1925 he and H. Glück published *Die Kunst des Islam* (Berlin, 1925), which went through several editions. Diez was a contributor to the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Other contributions include “Indian Influence on Persian Art and Culture” (*Eastern Art* 1, 1928, pp. 117-22), “Sino-Mongolian Temple Painting and Its Influence on Persian Illumination” (*Ars Islamica* 1, 1934, pp. 160-73), “A Stylistic Analysis of Islamic Art” (*Ars Islamica* 3, 1936, pp. 201-12 and 5, 1938, pp. 36-45), and “Simultaneity in Islamic Art” (*Ars Islamica* 4, 1937, pp. 185-89). His continued interest in the art of the Islamic countries, India, and the Far East is reflected by the contributions to his memorial volume, which appeared shortly after his death.



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