

Kurt Erdmann (1901-1964)

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Kurt Erdmann was one of the foremost German art historians of the first half of the 20th century in the field of medieval and early modern Middle Eastern art.¹ In order to understand his life it is important not only to ask who he was, but under what conditions he performed his studies and to look at the context of his life in the history of his time.

During much of his life he was a scholar in the Islamic Department of the State Museums of Berlin but was also active in teaching at universities. Although he is perhaps best-known for his publications on Oriental carpets, he wrote on various subjects as his studies encompass the early Iranian dynasties from the Achaemenians to the Sasanians as well as different topics of the long period of Islamic rule and its art production. Like other art historians of the Islamic Department such as Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945) and Ernst Kühnel (1882-1964),² he started with Western art history and continued from there on into the medieval and early modern Middle Eastern art. He always kept his interest in Western art and was thus able to include this knowledge for his studies in Sasanian art and on Oriental carpets.

The early years 1901-1919

Erdmann started his career on a difficult basis. He was born in Hamburg on 9 September 1901, the son of an overseas merchant. He did not have an easy childhood as he was only three when his father Friedrich Erdmann died of malaria

¹ The obituary written by Richard Ettinghausen 'Kurt Erdmann', *Der Islam* 41, 1965, 253-60 mentions all important aspects of Erdmann's scholarly life and thus is still unsurpassed. For a biography in Turkish see Semavi Eyice, Kurt Erdmann, *TDV Islam Ansiklopedisi* 11, 1995, 286-8.

For a short biography on Erdmann see Jens Kröger, Erdmann, Kurt, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* VIII, 1998, 540-1. This was a first attempt to reconstruct his life in connection with his biography on the occasion of his centenary, see Jens Kröger, 'Kurt Erdmann. From European Painting to the Diversity of Islamic Art', *Hali* 120 (2002) 84-91. The translation of my text from German to English was the congenial work of Robert Pinner. This is an extended version of a that biography. I would like to thank my colleagues for helping me with this extended version: Franziska Bloch, Thomas J. Farnham, Michael Franses, Claus-Peter Haase, Miriam Kühn, and the editors András Barati and Yuka Kadoi.

For Erdmann's writings see Hanna Erdmann, 'Verzeichnis der Schriften von Kurt Erdmann' in Oktay Aslanapa – Rudolf Naumann eds, *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens. In Memoriam Kurt Erdmann 9. September 1901 – 30. September 1964*, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, Türk ve İslam Sanatı Kürsüsü, Istanbul: 1969, 305-23.

²On Sarre see Jens Kröger, 'Friedrich Sarre, Kunsthistoriker, Sammler und Connaisseur' in Julia Gonnella and Jens Kröger eds, *Wie die Islamische Kunst nach Berlin kam. Der Sammler und Museumsdirektor Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945)*, Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2015, 13-46. On Kühnel see Richard Ettinghausen, 'In Memoriam Ernst Kühnel (26.X.1882 – 5.VIII.1964)', *Madridener Mitteilungen* 6, 1965, 215-36.

in 1904 in Sierra Leone/Africa, and from then on he and his younger sister Liselotte were brought up in modest circumstances by their Danish-born mother Alma, née Sörensen. He used his mother's name for a pseudonym calling himself K. Sören Erdmann and, somewhat disturbingly, also used this in the last official phone directory of Berlin 1941.³ Throughout his life Erdmann continued to have a special relationship with the city of Hamburg of which he spoke with fondness, always interested to hear news about his home town.⁴

Art historical studies from 1922 to 1927

Erdmann was not able to go to one of the prestigious schools in Hamburg that would have provided a better start in art history and classical languages. Instead he visited a Realgymnasium and passed his exam in 1919 and studied German language and culture in Hamburg in 1920/21 and later in Tübingen (1921). An enthusiastic student of literature, particularly of Goethe, later also of August Strindberg and Paul Valéry, he displayed an early talent for writing that initially suggested a career in journalism. But as time went on, he found himself increasingly drawn towards the study of art history which he then pursued in Marburg (1922-1923) and later in Hamburg (1925-1927). However, in 1923, the disastrous economic situation in Germany and his own financial difficulties forced him to give up his studies in order to earn a living. During 1924 and 1925 he therefore worked for an art gallery in Berlin researching European art.⁵ This was the first of a number of undertakings to earn his living in the art market.

In Hamburg, Erdmann was trained in the school of art history headed by Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) and steeped in the classical tradition of the Warburg Bibliothek. He came to know both Aby Warburg (1866-1929) and his colleague Gertrud Bing (1892-1964), and corresponded with Warburg's successor, Fritz Saxl (1890-1948), an Austrian art historian who became an assistant of Aby Warburg in Hamburg and later took care with Gertrud Bing of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg in Hamburg and after 1933 of the Warburg Institute in London.

In the course of his studies and through his work in the art market he acquired a comprehensive knowledge of European painting which would in time be reflected also in his studies of Oriental carpets. In 1927 he completed his doctoral dissertation on *The Architectonic Arch as an Artform* in five volumes, but he could only publish an abridged form.⁶ For his Ph. D. examination Erdmann chose

³ *Amtliche Fernsprechbuch für den Bezirk der Reichspostdirektion* Berlin 1941.

⁴ Erdmann did not write an autobiography of his life. Therefore most details had to be taken from the correspondence with other scholars. I consulted the letters now kept in the Zentralarchiv of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz for the years 1927-1944 and 1958-1964. Copies of letters exchanged between Ernst Kühnel and Erdmann from the Kühnel-Archiv of the German Archaeological Institute, Orientabteilung are in a separate folder in the Museum für Islamische Kunst. The lacunae between 1945 and 1954 is only partly filled by the letters to Kühnel.

⁵ He worked for the Schäfer art Gallery under its director Adolf Gottschewski in Berlin but no details are known of his contributions.

⁶ Kurt Erdmann, 'Der Bogen. Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Architektur', *Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft (Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft)* 22, 1929, 100-44 (Ph.D. Universität

Historische Hilfswissenschaften and Archaeology. Why Erdmann wrote on an architectural subject is not known, but his work was highly praised. In a letter of 14 July 1930 to Erdmann, Saxl referred to it as a 'history of the fundamentals of our architecture'.

In spite of the intellectual climate he found himself in, Erdmann remained relatively uninfluenced by the new emphasis on iconography and iconology which later became of great influence.⁷ In 1927, urgently needing to find a paid position, he sent his Curriculum Vitae, probably on advice by Friedrich Sarre, to the German-American art historian William R. Valentiner (1860-1958) in the United States, assuring him that 'through my education in art history, it has been possible for me to keep myself free from the rather one-sided Hamburg school's 'Warburg theme-circles'. His studies, as he wrote to Valentiner, had left him clear about one thing: 'I do not wish to return to the art market...since my inclinations lie entirely in scholarship'. It is unknown how Valentiner, who at that time was already the director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, reacted, but a career in the States did not follow. Because Erdmann studied art history, he was not an orientalist and never learnt any of the languages but opened important first insights into the art of the different periods of the Near East.

A career in the Islamische Kunstabteilung of the Staatliche Museen in Berlin 1927-1944

On 1 July 1927 Erdmann took up a position at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum in Berlin as an unpaid volunteer, then beginning in 1929 as a contract negotiator. We know from the Erdmann correspondence in the archives of the Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz – the source for most of the facts in this account – that during these years he was forced to moonlight to earn money. The archives reveal only too clearly how difficult it was at the time for an art historian to find a way into a paid professional life.

In the beginning of his museum career with the State Museums of Berlin Erdmann was a guide in the galleries of the Picture Gallery within the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, today the Bode-Museum, which was then still headed by Wilhelm von Bode (1845-1929), the early pioneer of carpet studies. In the Kupferstichkabinett Erdmann must also have met Max J. Friedländer (1867-1958). In the Islamic Department Friedrich Sarre, the director of the Islamische Kunstabteilung seems to have asked him to participate in projects. There Erdmann also met Ernst Kühnel, who had written on carpets with Wilhelm von Bode.⁸ In the

Hamburg 1927. Short version).

⁷ How this restraint came about and what the reasons were cannot yet be answered, since Erdmann never seems to have written about the details of his university studies. Richard Ettinghausen used the new ideas and wrote iconographical studies. On a critical view of Erdmann see Robert Hillenbrand, 'Richard Ettinghausen and the Iconography of Islamic Art', *Discovering Islamic Art. Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850-1950* in Stephen Vernoit ed. London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000, (171-181) 171-72.

⁸ The Bode-Kühnel (Wilhelm von Bode and Ernst Kühnel, *Vorderasiatische Teppiche aus älterer Zeit*. Dritte, verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage. Monographien des Kunstgewerbes I. Leipzig: Verlag von Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1922) was then the most read carpet book for

Islamic Department he was engaged with numerous organizational tasks since the department had never had enough personnel caring for its inventories, the picture archive and its photographic collections. The years of the 1914-18 war, when neither Sarre nor Kühnel was in the museum, had been difficult from an organizational point of view. Because of a certain chaos due to this state, Erdmann soon took care to bring an order into the situation of the departmental activities. In 1927 he compiled a comprehensive list of the glass specimens in the museum for Carl Johan Lamm (1902-1961), the Swedish specialist on Islamic glass who was writing his dissertation.⁹ Questions on glass and rock crystal resulted in a lasting scholarly contact between the two scholars.

Working in the Islamic Department meant an intellectual journey for Erdmann since all topics were completely new to him and he immediately responded to the numerous subjects he came in touch with. It seems that he found an intellectual interest in almost every subject and thus wrote simultaneously on many different topics. Since he did not have funds at his disposal to travel to museums or in the lands of the Islamic world, he often wrote on objects he had not seen nor handled and thus missed certain qualities. For carpets this meant that he did not consider the importance of the material of which the carpets were knotted nor did he look closely at the palette of the colours, a vital part of carpet studies. Carpet studies was thus more or less a study of black and white photographs and this automatically led to pattern studies.

Kühnel was excavating in the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon/Iraq in the fall of 1928 and the beginning of 1929 and when the finds from the First Ctesiphon-Expedition entered the museum and were exhibited in the galleries, Erdmann discovered a new area of interest for himself – the art of the Sasanian Dynasty in Iran (224-651). This field of research immediately fascinated him and he soon departed on studies of Sasanian architecture (palaces and fire-temples), architectural decoration and rock-reliefs, metalwork and glass, coins and seals. Additional studies on the impact of Sasanian art both in the West and the East kept his interest, and this field owes much to him. It is not known if Friedrich Sarre exerted some influence on Erdmann's future studies, but Friedrich Sarre was one of the few German art historians of the period who developed a universal interest in the arts of Persia. Sarre travelled widely in the Near and Middle East between 1895 and 1900 focusing on Achaemenian and Sasanian monuments as well as on Islamic architectural decoration. Simultaneously he acquired Persian art for his own collection and later as head of the Islamic Department of the Berlin Museums from 1904 until 1931 for the museum collection, making it a centre of Persian art.¹⁰ Sarre had published his *Die Kunst des alten Persien* in 1922 which soon became a standard title on the early dynasties in Ancient Persia. When Erdmann published his *Die Kunst Irans zur Zeit der Sasaniden* in 1943 and 1946, he dedicated it to Friedrich Sarre thus placing it into the continuity of Sarre's studies. While Sarre's book was a

the interested layman in Germany.

⁹ For Lamm see my contribution to the current special issue of the Journal of Art Historiography.

¹⁰ Jens Kröger, 'Friedrich Sarre und die Kunst des Alten Persien', *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 153, 2021, 13-26.

survey on the art from the Achaemenian to the Sasanian dynasties of Iran up to the early Islamic period, Erdmann wrote the first study exclusively on the Sasanian dynasty. An important difference between the two scholars was that Erdmann was not able to travel widely in the countries of his interest and thus had seen only those art objects that were in museums in Central Europe.

In 1928, Erdmann also began to develop a serious interest in oriental carpets when Friedrich Sarre invited him to prepare the descriptions of the carpets and the bibliography for the second volume of Friedrich Sarre and Hermann Trenkwalde's *Altorientalische Teppiche*.¹¹ This invitation brought him into contact with a field of research which fascinated him too and which became one that he is still remembered for. He soon began to write studies on 'Oriental Animal Carpets in Paintings of the 14th and 15th Centuries' (1929) and a further article in 1941¹² and two fundamental essays on Cairene carpets.¹³ These studies immediately showed his talent to incorporate datable or dated Western paintings with their depictions of Oriental carpets into the study of usually undated carpets thus providing a chronological framework for many of them. With these studies he followed the ideas of the Berlin school of carpet research as it had been developed by Julius Lessing (1843-1908) and Wilhelm von Bode and continued by Ernst Kühnel.¹⁴ Thus in 1929 Erdmann had found the two main fields of his future studies, Sasanian art and Oriental carpets.

Erdmann's financial situation remained difficult in these years. In order to make ends meet he wrote book reviews and articles and acted as a consultant in the art market. Together with Ernst Kühnel, the senior carpet expert of the museum, Erdmann was active in the Berlin carpet trade, writing texts for carpet catalogues as well as antiquities which were to be auctioned. At that time and also later this trade was not of prime importance in Berlin and the work thus was not profitable.¹⁵ Repeatedly, but in vain, he applied to art journals to be appointed their Berlin correspondent. On the positive side, he catalogued two Berlin collections of

¹¹Friedrich Sarre and Hermann Trenkwalde, *Altorientalische Teppiche*. Herausgegeben vom Österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie. I-II. Wien: Verlag von Anton Schroll & Co and Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1926-1928.

¹²Kurt Erdmann, 'Orientalische Tierteppiche auf Bildern des XIV. und XV. Jahrhunderts. Eine Studie zu den Anfängen des orientalischen Knüpfteppichs', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 50, 1929, 261-98. Kurt Erdmann, 'Neue orientalische Tierteppiche auf abendländischen Bildern des XIV. und XV. Jahrhunderts', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 63, 1941, 121-26.

¹³ Kurt Erdmann, 'Kairener Teppiche I. Europäische und islamische Quellen des 15.-18. Jahrhunderts', *Ars Islamica* 5, 1938, 179-206. Later he published the second part: Kurt Erdmann, 'Kairener Teppiche Teil II: Mamluken- und Osmanenteppiche', *Ars Islamica* 7, 1940, 55-81.

¹⁴ Anna Beselin, *Knots. Art&History. The Berlin Carpet Collection*. Skira – Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2018, 25-6.

¹⁵ Erdmann wrote introductions as well as lot descriptions on carpets and antiques in auction catalogues, see *Sammlung orientalischer Teppiche aus dem Besitz Exz. Schefik Pascha –Stambul. Versteigerungskatalog 2041*, R. Lepke, Berlin, 14.4.1931, Nr. 151-245. – *Sammlung Herbert M. Gutmann. Versteigerungskatalog 132*, Paul Graupe, Berlin, 12.-14.4.1934, Nr. 566-712, Abt. X, *Islamische Kleinkunst*.

European art¹⁶ and more significantly, he spent three years (1927-30), cataloguing the comprehensive Jakob Goldschmidt Collection. The project involved producing ten volumes of paintings, both old masters and 20th century, as well as miniatures, sculptures, bronzes, majolica and Chinese ceramics. Jakob Goldschmidt (1882-1955), who was forced to emigrate from Germany in 1933, was a banker at the Darmstädter und Nationalbank (Danat Bank) and an influential commercial authority of his time. He not only owned one of the largest private art collections in Berlin but also belonged to the Experts Commission of the Islamic Art Department and was responsible for funding the purchase of major objects such as the large-pattern Holbein carpet on display in the Pergamonmuseum.¹⁷

Erdmanns 'Abbildungssammlung' as a method of accumulating knowledge

The enormous volume of his activities reveals Erdmann as a workaholic. He was restlessly active, allowing himself only brief periods for recovery at the resort of Ahrenshoop on the Baltic Sea. Throughout his life, he accumulated card index files and folders on all fields which were of interest to him and was extraordinarily adept at extracting information from them. This allowed him, at a moment's notice, to write about any number of subjects. Much of his correspondence consists of letters requesting photographs or data and information on works of art.

Erdmann's 'Abbildungssammlung' was a visual study collection of photographs on all fields and thus his working tool as well as his archive. Although such a collection already existed in the museum, he nevertheless found it necessary to have one for himself. This proved to be very useful for his work when he did not live in Berlin during the period from 1945 until 1958.¹⁸ However his own study collection was different from that of the museum because he used folders in which he systematically placed all material he collected. These could be pictorial documents such as photographs or prints, postcards, catalogue entries, notes on single objects or groups which aroused his interest and which he collected with great care, often with his handwritten cards or excerpts as well as correspondence and off-prints of articles. For Erdmann this visual study collection was at the basis of his research since numerous photographs of carpet groups had to be compared with one another to reach conclusions.

As this method was also typical for Friedrich Sarre, it may be possible that Erdmann was influenced by Sarre's way to collect material for his essays. However, Erdmann refined this system more than Sarre ever did. This is especially true for the 61 boxes of the 'Abbildungssammlung Teppiche' which was the most completed one of his collection.¹⁹

¹⁶ They were the collections of Robert Schlesinger and of Public Health Director Otto Bakofen. I was unable to find significant facts on these individuals and their collections in connection with Erdmann.

¹⁷ Anna Beselin, *Knots. Art & History. The Berlin Carpet Collection*. Skira – Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 2018, 72-75 cat. no.7 (Large-pattern Bondy Holbein carpet).

¹⁸ After Erdmann's death in 1964 it was used by Hanna Erdmann and others.

¹⁹ This collection has been digitized by Michael Franses and Rupert Waterhouse during 2010-2020 and is in the Erdmann Nachlass in the Zentralarchiv of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Not all the index cards have survived. The most painful loss was that of the many thousands of cards which he assembled when researching what Western sources had to say about the influences of the introduction of the oriental carpet in Europe.²⁰

Katharina Otto-Dorn (1908-1999),²¹ a volunteer at the Islamic Department in the 1930s, with whom Erdman was in close contact, gave him the turkicising nickname 'Zettelci', the master of Zettel (slips of paper), because Erdmann was surrounded by boxes on different subjects full of cards. Kühnel knew Erdmanns folders and boxes and during his work on the ivory corpus before 1964 discussed with him subjects for which Erdmann had collected sources.²²

Thanks to Ernst Kühnel's efforts as director from October 1931 until 1951, Erdmann was finally given a contract of employment in the Islamic Art Department on 1 April 1932. At the end of July the same year, the Mshatta façade was dismantled in the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, and by 17 December 1932 the new museum galleries were opened to the public in the newly built Pergamonmuseum. The galleries had been designed by Ernst Kühnel but were set up with the help of Kurt Erdmann and Richard Ettinghausen (fig. 1).²³



Figure 1. Kurt Erdmann and Richard Ettinghausen in front of the Kashan mihrab while mounting the new display of the Islamic Department in the Pergamonmuseum in 1932 (Images courtesy of the Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz).

²⁰ The reference to the existence of these cards is to be found in the preface to Kurt Erdmann, *Europa und der Orientteppich*. Berlin and Mainz: Florian Kupferberg Verlag, 1962, 9.

²¹ She was a specialist for Seljuk and Ottoman art. The excavations of the site of Kubadabad and the ceramics of Iznik were among her many topics, Joachim Gierlich, 'Katharina Otto-Dorn (1908-1999)', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 152/1, 2002, 4-9.

²² Jens Kröger, 'Ernst Kühnel and Scholarship on Islamic Ivories up to 1971', *Journal of The David Collection* 2,2, 2005, 285 notes 122-23.

²³ It is not known how Erdmann and Ettinghausen got along with each other during the years 1931-1933 in the department. In 1959 Erdmann dedicated his article on the Ka'bah tiles to Ettinghausen as a token of extended scholarly commitment and thankfulness for his editorship of *Ars Islamica*, see Kurt Erdmann, 'Ka'bah-Fliesen', *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, 192-7. Ettinghausen's obituary 'Kurt Erdmann', *Der Islam* 41, 1965, 253-60 may surely be seen as a sign of scholarly appreciation.

Richard Ettinghausen (1906-1979) studied Islamic history and culture as well as art history in Frankfurt/Main, Munich and Cambridge. He was the best trained volunteer at the Islamische Kunstabteilung at the period and later published widely on the history Islamic art.²⁴ Because after a looting of the Mughal-Indian miniature albums in 1929/30²⁵ Ettinghausen was asked to make a table of contents and a subject index from August 1931 until April 1933. He also identified the coin finds of the Ctesiphon excavations²⁶ and wrote on a paper about the woodwork of the collection,²⁷ Shortly after the opening of the Islamic Department the Nazi Party came to power on 30. January 1933 and as a consequence Ettinghausen emigrated on 2 April 1933 because he foresaw what would happen with Jewish Germans.²⁸

Erdmann who was favourable towards the ideas of the National Socialists, did not join the Party but became a member of some of its organisations because his ultimate goal was to belong to the curatorial staff of the Berlin Museums.²⁹ He therefore consented to attend necessary meetings or training courses. During the 1939-45 war this included a month-long lecture tour in 1942 for the troops in France.³⁰

In 1934 Erdmann was promoted to the position of Scientific Assistant (*wissenschaftlicher Hilfsarbeiter*), which, however, meant a drop in his income. He was now in the position of having to support his elderly mother as well as the rest of his family which, as he once wrote, had 'without exception been impoverished over the last two decades'. To help solve his financial problems he gave lectures at educational institutes such as the Lessing High School (1936), and also wrote an album on the subject of European painting for the A. Zuntz sel. Wwe company

²⁴ See Richard Ettinghausen, *Islamic Art and Archaeology – Collected Papers*, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag. Robert Hillenbrand, 'Richard Ettinghausen and the Iconography of Islamic Art' in *Discovering Islamic Art. Scholars, Collectors and Collections, 1850-1950*, Stephen Vernoit ed., London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000, 171-81.

²⁵ Regina Hickmann, 'Die Sammlung indischer Albumblätter im Museum für Islamische Kunst' in *100 Jahre Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin. Islamische Kunst in Berliner Sammlungen*, Jens Kröger and Désirée Heiden eds, Berlin: Parthas Verlag, 2004, (105-115) 107.

²⁶ Ernst Kühnel – Friedrich Wachsmuth – Maurice S. Dimand, *Die Ausgrabungen der zweiten Ktesiphon-Expedition (Winter 1931/32)*. Vorläufiger Bericht. Islamische Kunstabteilung der Staatlichen Museen. Berlin: Würfel-Verlag, 1933, 27.

²⁷ Richard Ettinghausen, 'Ägyptische Holzschnitzereien aus islamischer Zeit', *Berliner Museen. Berichte aus den Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 54, 1933, 17-20.

²⁸For a survey of these years see Jens Kröger, 'Ernst Kühnel und die Islamische Abteilung 1933-1945' in Jörn Grabowski – Petra Winter eds, *Zwischen Politik und Kunst. Die Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2013, 317-30.

²⁹ Erdmann also left the Protestant Church. Following the 1939-1945 war, Kühnel stated in 1946 that politically Erdmann was innocent and also that he lacked political judgement. At the same time as Erdmann, Oswin Puttrich-Reignard (1906-1942) was applying to join the staff of the Islamic Department. He was an early member of the National Socialist Party. According to Kühnel's opinion Puttrich-Reignard had shown that he was an excellent archaeologist as excavator of the Umayyad Palace of Khirbat al-Minya. On him and the site see Markus Ritter, *Der umayyadische Palast des 8. Jahrhunderts in Hirbat al-Minya am See Tiberias*, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2017, 36-37.

³⁰ Letter Kurt Erdmann to Katharina Otto-Dorn, 10. March 1942.

(coffee and tea merchants in Bonn and Berlin). Five thousand copies of the albums were published and sold out in six months. Further volumes on European paintings followed in 1937 and 1938 for the cigarette manufacturing company Reemtsma.³¹

In 1935 he published the catalogue *Orientteppiche* of the carpet collection for the museum visitors in the series of the *Bilderhefte*. The small guide gave an introduction of five pages and catalogue entries with the essential description, the literature and the illustrations of 46 of the most important carpets. It was the most complete carpet edition until 1987 and was especially useful after the loss of the famous Berlin carpet collection on 11 March 1945 when 18 of the carpets illustrated in this book were destroyed.³²

The years from 1935 until 1936 gave Erdmann the opportunity for a survey of the holdings of medieval and early modern Middle Eastern art in Germany. He travelled around the country and discovered numerous unpublished art objects in different collections and took notes of his finds in a card-index. Among them were little known ceramics, glass, rock-crystal objects, metalwork, textiles, carpets and miniatures. He took notes and asked for photographs. The results of this survey were later integrated in his publications.³³ It was a unique opportunity to become aware of numerous rock-crystal objects hidden in church treasures. In several publications from 1940 to 1959 he widened the horizon and introduced a large number of hitherto unknown rock crystals into the debate over an Islamic context and was thus one of the important contributors to this field. He further called attention for a broader chronology and found Fatimid Egypt only one of the options of the production of rock-crystals. For him pre-Fatimid-Egypt as well as the Abbasid period in Iraq and Iran where possible places where rock crystals could have been produced. He also urged additional acknowledgement for the possible influence between relief-cut glass from Iran on the Fatimid rock crystal ewers³⁴, a topic that

³¹The Reemtsma picture volumes (Reemtsma Cigarettenfabriken G.m.B.H. Altona-Bahrenfeld) with mounted coloured pictures had the titles 'Malerei der Gotik und Frührenaissance', 'Malerei der Renaissance' and 'Malerei des Barock'.

³² Kurt Erdmann, *Orientteppiche*, mit einem Hinweis von Ernst Kühnel. *Bilderhefte der Islamischen Abteilung*, Heft 3. Staatliche Museen in Berlin. Berlin: Würfel-Verlag, 1935.

³³ Kurt Erdmann, 'Orientteppiche in deutschen Museen', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 96, 1942, 393-417. After Erdmann's death in 1964 a publication in the spirit of these undertakings appeared: *Iranische Kunst in deutschen Museen*, bearbeitet unter Verwendung des Nachlasses von Kurt Erdmann von Hanna Erdmann mit einem Vorwort von Annemarie Schimmel. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1967.

³⁴ Kurt Erdmann, 'Islamische Bergkristallarbeiten', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 61, 1940, 125-46. Kurt Erdmann, 'Die Bergkristall-Arbeiten in der Islamischen Abteilung', *Berliner Museen, Berichte aus den Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 63, 1942, 7-10. Kurt Erdmann, 'Fatimid Rock Crystals', *Oriental Art* 3, no. 4, 1951, 142-46. Kurt Erdmann, *Die fatimidischen Bergkristallkannen*. Wandlungen christlicher Kunst im Mittelalter, in Johannes Hempel (ed.), *Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte und christlichen Archäologie*, 2. Baden-Baden: 1953, 189-205. Kurt Erdmann, 'Neue Islamische Bergkristalle', *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, 200-05. Kurt Erdmann with André Grabar and Hans R. Hahnloser, *Opere islamiche. Il Tesoro di San Marco*. Vol. 2. *Il tesoro et il museo*, Hans R. Hahnloser ed., Florence: Sansoni, 1971, 101-27.

had simultaneously been followed by Robert J. Charleston³⁵ and has been debated ever since.³⁶

Besides rock crystal and glass Erdmann also wrote on ceramics. Starting with a review of an exhibition on Persian ceramics in 1929,³⁷ he continued regularly with short articles. In 1942 he published a paper on a collection of ceramic sherds from the site of Afrasiab near Samarkand. Although these sherds had not been excavated but were surface finds from one of the sherd dumps in Afrasiab, they entered the Ethnographic Museum in Berlin in 1908 and were transferred to the Islamic Department in 1934. Erdmann found an interest in this huge collection because it had examples of nearly all types of Afrasiab glazed pottery as well as eighty wasters.³⁸ It was only later that this material of the 9th to 10th century could be linked to related sherds from the site of Nishapur in Iran.³⁹ Vessels from the art market said to be from the Nishapur region in Iran were acquired by Erdmann for the Islamic department in Berlin between 1958 and 1964 because of his long familiarity with these ceramics.⁴⁰

The period of the Nazi regime was one of restricted travel because foreign currency funds for scholars were difficult to obtain and thus collections outside of Germany could not easily be visited. In 1935 Friedrich Sarre, who had retired in 1931, as well as Ernst Kühnel attended the IIIrd Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology in Leningrad.⁴¹ Erdmann could not participate at the Congress but was granted funds in 1936 to travel to Leningrad to visit the exhibition of Iranian Art

³⁵ Robert J. Charleston, 'A group of Near Eastern glasses', *The Burlington Magazine* 81, no. 474, September 1942, 212-18.

³⁶ Jens Kröger, 'The State of Research on Some Rock Crystal Ewers and Related Vessels from Islamic Lands', in *Seeking Transparency. Rock Crystals Across the Medieval Mediterranean*, Cynthia Hahn and Avinoam Shalem eds, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2020, (13-33), 22-3.

³⁷ Kurt Erdmann, 'Islamische Keramik aus Persien im Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, Berlin', *Kunstchronik und Kunstliteratur. Beilage zur Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst*, Heft 11/12, Februar-März, 1929, 126-9.

³⁸ Kurt Erdmann, 'Ceramiche di Afrasiab', *Faenza, Bolletino del Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza* 25, 1937, 125-37. Kurt Erdmann, 'Die Keramik von Afrasiab', *Berliner Museen* 63, 1942, 18-28. 'Afrasiab Ceramic wares', *Bulletin of the Iranian Institute* 6, 1946, 102-10.

³⁹ Kurt Erdmann, 'Islamische Keramik des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts aus Nishapur', *Die Kunst und das schöne Heim*, 49, 1951, 413-15. In this article Erdmann dealt with glazed ceramics from the American excavations in Nishapur and illustrated his paper with vessels from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Kurt Erdmann, 'Eine neue Gattung persischer Keramik', *Pantheon* 18, 1960, 161-5. Kurt Erdmann, 'Ein unbekannter Typ frühislamischer Keramik', *Artibus Asiae* 23, 1960, 220-22.

⁴⁰ Kurt Erdmann, 'Keramische Erwerbungen der Islamischen Abteilung 1958-1960', *Berliner Museen N.F.* 10, 1961, 6-15. Kurt Erdmann, 'Keramische Erwerbungen der Islamischen Abteilung 1960-1963 (erster Teil)', *Berliner Museen N.F.* XIV, 1964, 8-18.

⁴¹ For the Congress, where Sarre and Kühnel met Richard Etinghausen for the first time after his emigration from Germany, and for the large exhibition in Leningrad see Yuka Kadoi, 'The Study of Persian Art on the eve of World War II: The Third Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology in 1935', *The Reshaping of Persian Art: Art Histories of Islamic Iran and Beyond*, in Iván Szántó and Yuka Kadoi eds, The Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, Piliscsaba 2019, 117-34.

which took place from 12 September 1935 to 1 September 1936 and assembled art objects in 84 rooms.⁴² During his visit he studied the museum collections there as well as in Moscow and Warsaw.⁴³ This visit was a unique chance to see the Sasanian silverware and all the other remains of the Iranian dynasties. In 1936 Erdmann published his most important and influential article on the Sasanian hunting plates but he did not mention whether his visit to Leningrad, where he saw numerous Sasanian hunting plates for the first time, changed any of his ideas.⁴⁴ Ever since its appearance his article was recognized as an outstanding standard reference work.⁴⁵ Thirty years later in 1967 Oleg Grabar called this study 'one of the most important works of scholarship devoted to Sasanian metalwork'⁴⁶ and Prudence O. Harper in 1981 pointed to the fact that his comprehensive study was a mine of ideas that had to be consulted by anyone working on royal hunting vessels.⁴⁷ In 1937 Erdmann published a small volume in a series of the *Bilderhefte* called *Sasanidische Kunst* on those museum objects that were from the Sasanian period or showed Sasanian influence but were produced after the fall of the Sasanian Dynasty.⁴⁸ Although parts of the short text was typical for the ideas of the Nazi ideology, it remained the only publication which gave a concise survey of more than 21 items from the museums holdings which were from the Sasanian period or influenced by the art of this dynasty. Most of the assembled objects had been collected by Friedrich Sarre, who understood the museum as a centre for Persian art.

In this period Erdmann also began to become very interested in Sasanian seals, of which there was a sizeable collection in the Islamic department which had been catalogued in 1896.⁴⁹ This seal collection was ideal for a systematic person like Erdmann who assembled an archive on Sasanian seals which eventually comprised 5.000 seals, copies of seals and photographs. He wrote to curators to receive photographs of seals in other collections. This archive was organized according to rigid systematic groups and was to be used for a future corpus.⁵⁰

⁴² After his return from Leningrad, Sarre wrote about this exhibition: 'Friedrich Sarre, Die Ausstellung iranischer Kunst in Leningrad', *Pantheon* 17, 1936, 157-62.

⁴³ It is unknown, why Erdmann had Warsaw on the list of cities which he visited.

⁴⁴ In an offprint of the article for Kühnel he wrote the date 17.XII.36 which shows that the article may have received final touches after Erdmann's visit to Leningrad.

⁴⁵ Kurt Erdmann, 'Die sasanidischen Jagdschalen. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung der iranischen Edelmetallkunst unter den Sasaniden', *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 57, 1936, 193-232.

⁴⁶ Oleg Grabar, *Sasanian Silver. Late Antique and Early Mediaeval Arts of Luxury from Iran*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1967, 25.

⁴⁷ Prudence Oliver Harper and Pieter Meyers, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period. Volume One: Royal Imagery*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, published in association with Princeton University Press, 1981, 40-2.

⁴⁸ Kurt Erdmann, *Sasanidische Kunst*, mit einer Einleitung von Ernst Kühnel. *Bilderhefte der Islamischen Abteilung*, Heft 4, Staatliche Museen in Berlin. Berlin: Würfel-Verlag, 1937.

⁴⁹ Paul Horn and Georg Steindorff, *Sasanidische Siegelsteine*. Mitteilungen aus den Orientalischen Sammlungen. Berlin: Königliche Museen zu Berlin, 1891.

⁵⁰ Kurt Erdmann, 'Die universalgeschichtliche Stellung der sasanidischen Kunst', *Saeculum* 1/4, 1950, 521.

In this period or already earlier Erdmann assembled everything within reach on Sasanian coins which he used for his articles on the crowns of the Sasanian kings. This theme was essential for all of his studies as his seminal study on the Sasanian hunting bowls shows.⁵¹ The materials of this archive were given to the Austrian numismatist Robert Göbl at the Institute für Antike Numismatik by Hanna Erdmann after Erdmann's death.⁵²

Erdmann eventually also received further funds to travel and thus was able to undertake his first journey to Turkey, from November 1937 until January 1938, with the aim of studying the carpets in Istanbul. He met with the former General Director of Museums in Istanbul, Halil Edhem (Eldem 1861- 1938) who gave him access to the legendary depot of earlier carpets rescued from Anatolian mosques. Out of some 1,500 carpets in the city's museums, he completed comprehensive examinations of 412, making technical analyses of 99 and drawings of 140. Thus in a few months of extraordinarily intensive work, he succeeded in studying a greater number of carpets than during the eight years from 1951 to 1958 he would later be living in Turkey teaching at the University of Istanbul. In his last publication on carpets he gives a lively picture of his meetings with Halil Edhem in the Türk ve Eserleri Müzesi and their discussions on the carpets.⁵³

In winter 1938 he was invited as Guest Professor to the Fuad I University in Cairo.⁵⁴ He had written on Mamluk carpets in these years but does not seem to have studied this topic during his Cairo sojourn.⁵⁵

In those years the Islamic Department staged only small special exhibitions. In 1935 Erdmann exhibited prints he had assembled on the topic of *Europäische Darstellungen aus dem Orient* in the Islamische Kunstabteilung in Berlin (1 October 1935 until 15 January 1936) and wrote a short accompanying essay.⁵⁶ When the 6th

⁵¹ See note 45 and Kurt Erdmann, 'Zur Chronologie der sasanidischen "Jagdschalen"', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 97, 1943, 239-83. Kurt Erdmann, 'Wie sind die Kronen der sasanidischen Münzen zu lesen?', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 99, 1945-1949, 206-11. Kurt Erdmann, 'Die Entwicklung der sasanidischen Krone', *Ars Islamica* 15-16, 1951, 87-123.

⁵² Robert Göbl, 'Zum Chronologieproblem der sasanidischen Kunst', in Oktay Aslanapa – Rudolf Naumann eds, *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens. In Memoriam Kurt Erdmann* 9. September 1901 – 30. September 1964, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, Türk ve İslam Sanatı Kürsüsü, İstanbul: 1969, (25-34) 30 note 11.

⁵³ Kurt Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, Hanna Erdmann (ed.) and translated by May H. Beattie and Hildegard Herzog, London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1970, 105-10.

⁵⁴ Erdmann followed in the steps of Kühnel, who had lectured in Cairo since 1935.

⁵⁵ Erdmann published on the carpet production in Cairo and on the Mamluk and Ottoman carpets, see Kurt Erdmann, *Kairo als Teppichzentrum. Forschungen und Fortschritte* 14, 1938, 207-10 and 'Kairener Teppiche. I. Europäische und islamische Quellen des 15. – 18. Jahrhunderts', *Ars Islamica* 5, 1938, 179-206 and 'Kairener Teppiche. Teil II: Mamluken- und Osmanenteppiche', *Ars Islamica* 7, 1940, 55-81. These studies were fundamental due to the many sources he found.

⁵⁶ Kurt Erdmann, 'Europäische Darstellungen aus dem Orient', *Berichte aus den Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, LVII. Jahrgang, Berlin 1936, 1-7. At that time he had already collected more material on this subject in his files because he may have planned a future publication.

International Congress for Archaeology took place in Berlin in 1939, the State Museums and several of its departments took part in the exhibition *Kunst der Spätantike im Mittelmeerraum*. Arranged by the Archaeological Institute of the German Reich, this was an attempt to bring attention to certain groups of objects from different collections of the museums in Berlin. Erdmann was responsible for the Islamic Department and displayed late Sasanian or early Islamic objects in the exhibition.⁵⁷ Due to the outbreak of the war the attempt for scholarly discussions on the topic of late antique art was not successful.

The war years from 1939 to 1945

When the 1939-1945 war broke out in September 1939, the Berlin Museum closed, and until autumn 1944 Erdmann was involved on a daily basis with the problems of safeguarding the works of art and the transfer of the museum's holdings. This was nevertheless a period of redoubled productivity for Erdmann, since aside from his work in the department he was able to devote himself to his scholarly interests. He continued his work in the two central fields of his interest, Iranian art and Oriental carpets, and most of his ideas were formulated in the years from 1934 until 1944.

During the Nazi period Iranian studies followed the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* with its racial theories. This led Erdmann to a few dubious conclusions and formulations typical for the Aryan ideology.⁵⁸ On the Sasanian dynasty two books and numerous studies appeared during these years. The first was *Das Iranische Feuerheiligtum*, written on behalf of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft.⁵⁹ He tried to show the development of the then known fire-temples according to their architectural forms. For the text, which he called a first attempt, he collected all the sources he could find and thus was able to render a very complete picture from the literature. Due to the war conditions, he could not comment on all issues.⁶⁰ Despite the knowledge of many more buildings due to surveys and excavations after 1945 it remained the standard book on this topic until 1971, when his student Klaus Schippmann (1924-2010) was able to publish his *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer*. It was only natural that Schippmann dedicated his book to his teacher.⁶¹

For some time, Erdmann had also been working on a manuscript about the

⁵⁷ *Kunst der Spätantike im Mittelmeerraum. Spätantike und byzantinische Kleinkunst aus Berliner Besitz*, Berlin, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, 22 August until 30 September 1939. Ausstellung veranstaltet vom Generaldirektor der Staatlichen Berlin: in commission by de Gruyter, 1939, nos. 111-115.151-152.173-177.

⁵⁸ Kurt Erdmann, *Sasanidische Kunst*, mit einer Einleitung von Ernst Kühnel. Bilderhefte der Islamischen Abteilung, Heft 4. Staatliche Museen in Berlin. Berlin: Würfel-Verlag, 1937, 14.

⁵⁹ Kurt Erdmann, *Das Iranische Feuerheiligtum*. 11. Sendschrift der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1941. A reprint appeared in Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1969.

⁶⁰ Kurt Erdmann, Review of Takht-i-Suleiman *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 113, 1963, 314-23.

⁶¹ Klaus Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971. For Schippmann Erdmann's publication still remained the fundamental work on the subject, Klaus Schippmann, *Grundzüge der Geschichte des sasanidischen Reiches*, Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 1990, 107.

different art forms of the Sasanian empire and its far-reaching influence on other dynasties. The proofs of this manuscript called *Die Kunst Irans zur Zeit der Sasaniden* were issued in June 1942 and a limited number of copies appeared in 1943, but it was not until the middle of 1946 that the book could finally be distributed with a hunting-plate on its cover (Fig. 2).⁶² This first book about an Iranian dynasty was characteristic of Erdmann. Written without an extensive scientific apparatus, it demonstrated once again his ability to shape a text in a scholarly fashion and make it interesting to a wider public.

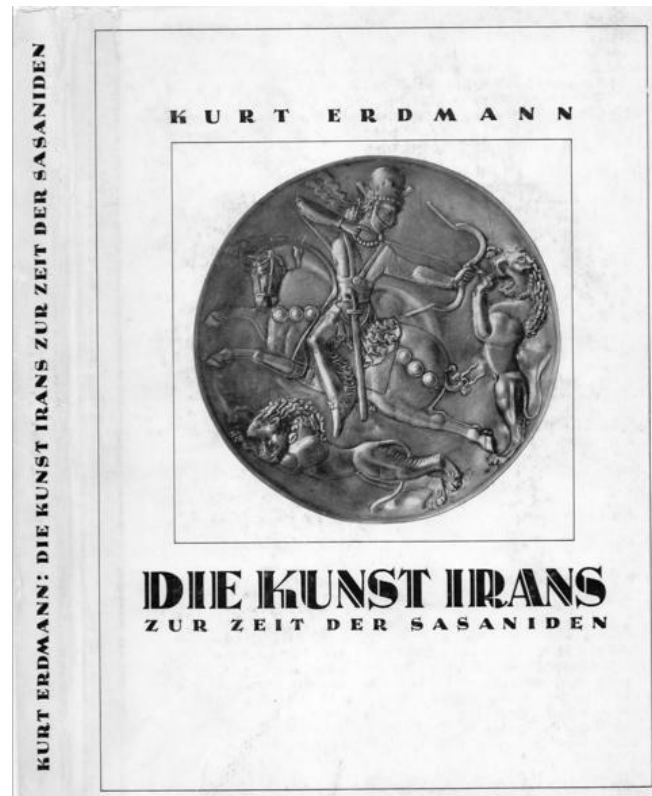


Figure 2. Design of the dust jacket of Kurt Erdmann, *Die Kunst Irans zur Zeit der Sasaniden*. 1946.
(Design by H. Mager, Bonn)

In Sasanian art history, linear thought is not always successful. While Erdmann was correct when focusing on coins to see the crowns of the royal figures as providing a solid chronological framework,⁶³ but these results could not automatically be transferred to other artefacts. Erdmann's main theme was his dating of the ruler on the rock relief on the large Iwan at Taq-i-Bustan to the reign of Peroz (457/59-484) in the 5th century and he built his chronology of the Sasanian art upon this date.⁶⁴ This led him to disputes with the scholar Ernst Herzfeld (1879-

⁶² K. Erdmann, *Die Kunst Irans zur Zeit der Sasaniden*, Berlin: Kupferberg Verlag, 1943 (Distribution 1946). 2nd edition with minor corrections by Hanna Erdmann, Mainz: Kupferberg Verlag, 1969.

⁶³ Kurt Erdmann, 'Die Entwicklung der sasanidischen Krone', *Ars Islamica* 15-16, 1951, 87-123.

⁶⁴ Kurt Erdmann, 'Das Datum des Tak-i Bustan', *Ars Islamica* 4, 1937, 79-97. According to a letter of Ernst Kühnel to Friedrich Wachsmuth on 23 November 1944 Erdmann finished a manuscript of one hundred pages on the subject of the Taq-i Bustan for the *Istanbuler*

1948).⁶⁵ Herzfeld on the contrary dated the large Iwan to the reign of Khosro II (591-628) which took a long time to be accepted.⁶⁶ Stylistically this date was much more acceptable than Erdmann's proposal. Besides the topic of Sasanian art, Erdmann was very productive in the field of Oriental carpet studies as in 1942 he completed *Die Formenwelt des Orientteppichs*, a text volume of 345 pages plus a volume of plates and drawings with a total of 477 illustrations.⁶⁷ It was written for the *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut. In four chapters the development of the knotted-pile carpet was analysed, starting from the formation of the designs, via design combinations and penetration to design disintegration.

Correspondence of 15 February 1943 from the Karl W. Hiersemann Verlag publishers in Leipzig hints at the fate of this work: 'At this time it will probably be difficult to obtain paper for printing a carpet book'. In 1944 a short summary appeared in the periodical *Forschungen und Fortschritte*,⁶⁸ which allowed a short survey of the future books contents. The post-war years too proved unfavourable for the publication of this cost-intensive work, and thus it never appeared in print. Hanna Erdmann's attempts at the end of the 1970s to publish the book with Oguz Press in London failed and it was impossible to revive it later on.⁶⁹

As his earlier work had already shown, Erdmann's interest in art history was focused on form and design. He saw carpets as pictures whose design had to be analysed, so that the technique of carpets, textile materials and structure analysis played no significant part. In his work on the oriental carpet, classification, design analysis and the drawing of the design to understand the group context occupied the foreground. Colour, on the other hand, was only an element of merely statistical importance because scholars at the time were rarely concerned with the carpets themselves but rather with black and white photographs. For a reconstruction of a pattern this was sufficient. During the 1940s he worked on other carpet projects such as *Die Geschichte des Orientteppichs* as the book was then called, and out of the different manuscripts his magnum opus on carpets *Der orientalische Knüpfteppich*,

Forschungen. It seems not to have survived. See also Kurt Erdmann, 'Neue Wege zur Erforschung der sasanidischen Kunst', in Hans Heinrich Schaeder ed, *Der Orient in deutscher Forschung*. Vorträge der Berliner Orientalistentagung Herbst 1942 (Deutsche Orientforschung. Gemeinschaftsarbeit deutscher Orientalisten und orientalistischer Archäologen unter Gesamtleitung von Walther Wüst), Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz 1944, 173-74.

⁶⁵ Herzfeld had detailed knowledge of Iranian art due to his travels in the country, had excavated in Iran but had to emigrate to the United States since he could not return to Nazi Germany in 1935. On Herzfeld see Stefan R. Hauser, 'Herzfeld, Ernst I. Life and Work', *Encyclopedia Iranica*, XII/3, 290-93, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/herzfeld-ernst-i> (accessed on 30 December 2012).

⁶⁶ Ernst Herzfeld, 'Khusrau Parvez und der Tāq-i Vastān', *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 9, 1938, 91-158.

⁶⁷ Letter Kurt Erdmann to Katharina Otto-Dorn, Berlin 10 March 1942.

⁶⁸ Kurt Erdmann, 'Die Formenwelt des Orientteppichs', *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 20, 1944, 147-49.

⁶⁹ Hanna Erdmann and Karin Adrian von Rocques made new efforts but funding the enterprise and the difficulty to find the numerous copyright holders proved impossible tasks.

Versuch einer Darstellung seiner Geschichte finally took shape and was published in 1955. Another manuscript *Europa und der Orientteppich* was also written at this time, although it was not published until 1962.⁷⁰ When Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman's *A Survey of Persian Art* appeared in 1938-9 it included a long chapter on carpets written by Pope himself.⁷¹ Erdmann could not agree with Pope's conclusions on Persian carpets and their probable places of manufacture and wrote a lengthy review on many important questions of Persian carpets that was published in 1941.⁷²

Teaching Iranian archaeology at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-University in Berlin

Erdmann was a man with abundant wit and humour who was able to tell a story and make it fascinating. He had a highly attractive dark voice and as a speaker he exerted a considerable power over audiences. These capabilities were called on in the summer semester of 1943 when he was awarded a contract by the Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Berlin to teach 'Archäologie des Iranischen Kulturkreises' in the Islamic Department. In the winter 1943/1944 and in the summer of 1944 his topic was the 'The art of Iran during the period of the Sasanians'. As could be foreseen his engagement with the university was short-lived as it ended in the fall of 1944 due to the war.

In 1942 Erdmann had already been trained as an interpreter near Berlin.⁷³ In the autumn of 1944, shortly after his appointment to the curatorial staff of the Islamic Department, men from all ministries and public institutions were made liable to be called-up for military service. He was again with the interpreters near Berlin. At the end of the war he became a prisoner-of-war in the American sector and since he failed to present papers allowing him to return to Berlin, he was freed to go to Hamburg in West Germany. His personal life in these years was somewhat in disorder. Erdmann's first marriage had ended in divorce and since he did not return to Berlin his house as well as the contents and his library were dissolved in 1946. The reasons of his new start in Hamburg are not well understood.

After the war 1939-1945: The years at the University of Hamburg from 1946 to 1950

In the summer of 1946 Erdmann was given a teaching post at the University of Hamburg with a restricted funding. Since all his teaching materials remained in the Islamic Department in Berlin, the period from 1946 to 1947 was taken up with the dispatch of postal parcels sent to Erdmann at his various addresses in Hamburg through the kindness of Ernst Kühnel in Berlin. In 1948 Erdmann was at last awarded the title of Honorary Professor for Islamic Art and Iranian Archaeology at the Hamburg University. During the years he read on the different topics of the Iranian fire-temple, Achaemenian and Sasanian art, on the history of carpets and on

⁷⁰ Kurt Erdmann, *Europa und der Orientteppich*, Berlin and Mainz: Florian Kupferberg Verlag, 1962.

⁷¹ Arthur Upham Pope, 'The Art of Carpet Making', in *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, A.U. Pope and Phyllis Ackerman eds, London and New York: Oxford University Press 1938-9, 2257-2430.

⁷² Kurt Erdmann, 'The Art of Carpet making' in 'A Survey of Persian Art', *Ars Islamica* 8, 1941, 121-91.

⁷³ In the 'Dolmetscherkompanie' near Berlin, intellectuals from all ways of life were working on different projects whose details are not well known.

Islamic decorative arts.

Since Erdmann was in the British Zone in Hamburg, Kühnel asked him in 1947 to examine the condition of the works of art of the Islamic Department in Celle. From Berlin they had been transferred to the salt mines at the end of the war and were later taken to the Central Collecting Point of the British Zone in Schloss Celle. On request of the British Erdmann arranged an exhibition of Islamic art in Celle.⁷⁴ A small catalogue was issued but because of unknown reasons Erdmann failed to inform Kühnel in Berlin. This led to a row as Kühnel could only travel to Celle with difficulties because of the restrictions by the Russian and the allies and only arrived after the exhibition in Celle had already been closed. However, after some time had gone by, they eventually reconciled.

In 1949 Erdmann married Hanna Meurer, whom he met in 1941 while writing a catalogue of Max von Oppenheim's Islamic art collection in Berlin. Throughout their lives together, Hanna Erdmann (1920-1996), whom he called his best assistant, made analytical drawings of carpet designs as well as architectural plans and was his photographer and later published the books Erdmann had left unfinished.⁷⁵ The couple had two daughters and Hanna Erdmann managed the practical sides of their life.

While in Hamburg he organized an exhibition in 1950 on carpets in collaboration with the art historian Erich Meyer (1897-1967) at the Museum of Kunst und Gewerbe. Its aim was a survey of the existence of Oriental carpets in the Federal Republic of Germany after the 1939-45 war for which he wrote a useful catalogue with an introduction in which he published his new ideas on carpets and very systematic object entries.⁷⁶

University in Bonn 1949 to 1951

In 1949 he became a guest professor at the Institute of Art History at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-University in Bonn where he read on themes of Iranian iconography, on Persepolis after the American excavations, on Sasanian art and on the different art forms of the Islamic lands. Erdmann also published papers that were concerned with the influence of Sasanian art on other cultures⁷⁷ or which were aimed at possible future enterprises, a topic that he had already written about in 1944.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Islamische Kunst*. Ausstellung von Arbeiten in Fayence, Glas, Bronze, Gold, Elfenbein, Stuck, Miniaturen, Kalligraphien, Bucheinbänden und Stoffen aus islamischer Zeit (9.-18. Jh. n. Chr.) aus Persien, Turkestan, Indien, Mesopotamien, Syrien, Anatolien, Ägypten, Sizilien und Spanien im Central Repository Schloß Celle vom 5. April bis zum 4. Mai 1947. Einführung und Katalog von Kurt Erdmann. Celle 1947 (also in English).

⁷⁵ The art historian Ernst J. Grube (1932-2011), who was in close contact with her, wrote an obituary, see E.J.Grube, 'Hanna Erdmann', *Hali* 92, 1997, 69.

⁷⁶ *Ausstellung Orientalische Teppiche aus vier Jahrhunderten*. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Kunstgewerbeverein zu Hamburg e.V. 22. August – 22. Oktober 1950. Hamburg: 1950.

⁷⁷ Kurt Erdmann, 'Die universalgeschichtliche Stellung der sasanidischen Kunst', *Saeculum* 1, 1950, 508-34.

⁷⁸ Kurt Erdmann, 'Neue Wege zur Erforschung der sasanidischen Kunst. Der Orient in

In 1950 he received an invitation to teach at Istanbul University to give courses in Islamic and Turkish art history. Erdmann, who was 49, wanted to teach in Istanbul because he could not find any prospect for the establishment of a chair for Islamic art and archaeology in the Federal Republic of Germany. Otto Spiess (1901-1981), the orientalist and director of the Orientalisches Seminar in Bonn had hoped he could be of some help for Erdmann, but this proved to be impossible.⁷⁹

Teaching at Istanbul University Turkish and Islamic Art History and Archaeology 1951 – 1958

The Institute of the Istanbul University ‘Turkish and Islamic Art History and Archaeology’ had been founded in 1943 by the Austrian art historian Ernst Diez (1878-1961).⁸⁰ Diez taught from 1943 onwards and his assistant was Oktay Aslanapa (1914-2013), who had studied art with Diez and wrote a Ph.D. in Vienna and had returned to Istanbul together with his teacher. Diez had been asked to write a textbook *Turkish art. From the beginnings to the present* for his students. It was published in Turkish in 1946. Because it contained his ideas of Armenian and Byzantine roots of several Turkish architectural features which were not officially accepted, he had to return to Vienna in 1949.⁸¹ Contrary to Diez, Erdmann had not been asked to write a textbook for the students.

Erdmann left for Istanbul in January 1951 and his wife followed in May 1951, where they lived on a low budget. Erdmann had initially hoped to work on the numerous carpets in the Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi in Istanbul and thus to continue the work he was able to start during his first visit in 1937/1938. However he was not given official permission by the Turkish authorities and forbidden to enter the storerooms to view the carpets⁸² and thus decided to plan field trips with his students. The Erdmanns were soon traveling in the country to learn about its numerous important Islamic monuments and as a result Erdmann became very interested in Seljuk architecture.

Erdmann succeeded to the Chair of Turkish and Islamic Art History at Istanbul University, where he would have a major and lasting influence on Islamic art scholarship in Turkey. At the university Erdmann and his assistant Oktay

deutscher Forschung’, *Vorträge der Berliner Orientalistentagung Herbst 1942*, Hans Heinrich Schaeder ed, Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1944, 170-181. Kurt Erdmann, ‘Lückenforschung im iranischen Kunstkreis’, *Kunst des Orients* 1, 1950, 20-36.

⁷⁹ Letter Claus-Peter Haase to Jens Kröger, Berlin, October 2022.

⁸⁰ Burcu Dogramaci, ‘Kunstgeschichte in Istanbul. Die Begründung der Disziplin durch den Wiener Kunsthistoriker Ernst Diez’, in: *Kunstgeschichte im „Dritten Reich“. Theorien, Methoden, Praktiken*. Ruth Heftig, Olaf Peters and Barbara Schellewald eds, Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2008, 114-33.

⁸¹ Little is known on the scholarly relationship between Ernst Diez and Kurt Erdmann. In the memorial volume for Diez, Erdmann wrote a paper ‘Die beiden türkischen Grabsteine im Türk ve Islam Eserleri Müzesi in Istanbul’, *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens. In Memoriam Ernst Diez*. Oktay Aslanapa ed, Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sanat Tarihi Enstitüsü No. 1. Istanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1963, 121-30.

⁸² To study the carpets, he was only given permission to look at copies of photographs which his students had made but did not receive a set of photographs to work with them. This was a missed chance for the study of Turkish carpets in Turkey.

Aslanapa, who also acted as a translator since Erdmann had no knowledge of the Turkish language, were a team until 1958. As Hanna Erdmann learnt Turkish quickly, she soon translated during the field trips. Erdmann's teaching focused primarily, Semra Ögel recalled, on the origins of Islamic art and the medieval period, later periods were treated less intense.⁸³ He also gave courses on pre-Islamic Turkish art and Turkish architecture at the Academy of Fine Art (later Mimar Sinan University).



Figure 3. Kurt Erdmann in 1957 during an excursion in Turkey

One of the most noteworthy features of Erdmann's tenure were his regular field trips to study Turkish monuments (fig. 3). He and Hanna Erdmann undertook no less than 52 such expeditions, mainly in the company of his students, usually a small group of 10 persons. For all those who took part – including Oktay Aslanapa, Nurhan Atasoy, Semra Ögel, Barbara Stelzer and Şerare Yetkin – they remain an indelible memory (fig. 4).



Figure 4. Image of an excursion group in Turkey, 1955-1957. Upper row standing Kurt and Hanna Erdmann in the centre surrounded by participants and local people. Lower row from left to right Oktay Aslanapa and four of the students.

⁸³ Letter Semra Ögel, Istanbul to Jens Kröger in Berlin 2001.

Stelzer remembered how the group would be kept on its feet from early morning to night. Thorny hedges had to be cut, notes, measurements and drawings to be taken. For the duration of the study all arrangements were kept as simple as possible – everyone slept on straw in schoolhouses. In the evenings Erdmann withdrew and wrote the 37 travel day books which, thanks to a sponsor, are now in the collections of the State Museums in Berlin. What participants found most remarkable was the collegiate atmosphere – something completely unheard of at the time – that existed between the students and the professor. Two reports on the excursions give a good introduction.⁸⁴

An excellent teacher, Erdmann was much liked and appreciated by his students, many of whom went on to become most respected Turkish art historians. Almost all, as Ögel has noted, remained in the profession, in libraries, museums and at the university. Later, during his illness in Berlin, he would say that his only real friends were among the Turkish professors and students. Nurhan Atasoy still vividly remembered the tears in his eyes when after her Ph.D. had been completed he left for Germany. In Ögel's words, 'Erdmann placed great value on method and went to much trouble to ensure that we did our work methodically. Despite so much thoroughness he was lenient in his approach to examinations; he believed that one had to bring out what people knew, not what they did not know. After all, one's ignorance is endless.'⁸⁵

Kühnel and Erdmann had agreed that Erdmann was the ideal choice to follow Kühnel as successor in the directorate of the newly founded Islamic Department that had been inaugurated in the western part of Berlin. Kühnel wanted Erdmann to come back to Berlin as soon as possible, which would have been 1954 as Kühnel wanted to retire in that year, but Erdmann felt he could not leave Turkey and his students and thus he finally agreed to come in 1958.

While in Istanbul, Erdmann received an invitation to visit carpet collectors and museum collections on the East coast of the United States. He was asked to give an opinion on the collections of carpet collectors as well as dealers who also seem to have financed his visit.⁸⁶ Visiting the United States for the first time in 1956 Erdmann found, as Kühnel had predicted, the informal uncomplicated American

⁸⁴ Patricia Blessing, 'Recording the transformation of urban landscapes in Turkey: the diaries of Kurt Erdmann and Ernst Diez', *Studies in Travel Writing* 16, 2012, 415-25. Robin Wimmel and Tolga Bozkurt, 'Zwei bahnbrechende Forschungsreisende in Anatolien. Edmund Naumann and Kurt Erdmann' in Claus Schönig – Ramazan Çalik - Hatice Bayraktar (eds): *Türkisch-Deutsche Beziehungen. Perspektiven aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Berlin: Schwarz 2012, 234-58.

⁸⁵ Letter Semra Ögel, Istanbul October 2001 to Jens Kröger, Berlin.

⁸⁶ As his travel diary shows he was in the U.S.A. from 17 July to 14 October 1956 during which he visited the Islamic Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Frick Collection and other museums as well as the carpet collection of Joseph MacMullan and the Kevorkian Collection. He also travelled to Boston and Cambridge, Mass., as well as to Cleveland, but he does not seem to have gone to the Textile Museum in Washington D.C. Later he corresponded with Charles Grant Ellis and the letters are kept in the Textile Museum.

lifestyle extremely congenial.⁸⁷ In 1960 Erdmann took part in the IVth International Congress on Iranian Art and Archaeology (24 April – May 3, 1960) in New York and Washington.

These years in Istanbul saw the completion of one of Erdmann's most influential books, *Der orientalische Knüpfteppich. Versuch einer Darstellung seiner Geschichte*.⁸⁸ In this study he gave a historical survey of the oriental carpet and presented his interpretations. As the subtitle shows, he was well aware that his enterprise was a first effort. Since 1929 he had written many papers on different single pieces or groups of carpets and he felt it necessary to write a synthesis of his ideas, an art history of these textiles.

Erdmann did not follow earlier studies which had always treated Persian carpets first. Instead, he started with the Anatolian carpets, which included the Seljuk Konya carpets from the 13th century, continued with animal carpets which were also depicted on European paintings followed by the early Ottoman group, i.e. Holbein and Lotto carpets and finally concluded this part with Mamluk carpets. He found the repetitive designs of these groups well suited for textiles. Erdmann also reviewed the different types of production, namely nomadic, peasant, town as well as court production, which later on became much studied topics. He then continued with the revolution of the designs. Persian carpets with geometrical designs were only known from depictions on miniature paintings of the 14th and 15th centuries but had not actually survived. The carpets from the Safavid period of the 16th to 17th had designs with very different compositional arrangements. Because the designs were influenced by draughtsmen trained in the art of book patterns. Thus central medallions and figural themes became typical. Erdmann had a negative evaluation of the Persian carpet and he expressed this in the Foreword of his book:

...one must start out from the supposition that the knotted rug, as a product of textile art, can be measured only by textile standards. If we grant this, the focus of attention shifts to the Turkish carpets, for the Persian carpet of the Safavid era, which until now had provided our measure, actually represents a side track which is loosely connected to its precursors as also its successors, and in consequence, no matter how magnificent his achievements, it plays no more than a subordinate role in the evolution of the Oriental rug.⁸⁹

Richard Ettinghausen has shown, that Erdmann's view of the Persian carpet could

⁸⁷ This trip gave him ample time to think about private as well as art historical matters and he voiced the theme of writing an autobiography but postponed this to a later date. His idea was to give a business-like report.

⁸⁸ Kurt Erdmann, *Der orientalische Knüpfteppich. Versuch einer Darstellung seiner Geschichte*. Tübingen, Wasmuth, 1955. 2nd edition 1960. 3rd edition 1965. 4th edition 1975. Kurt Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets: An Account of their History*, translated by Charles Grant Ellis, London 1960. Kurt Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets: An Essay on Their History*. Translated by Charles Grant Ellis, New York 1960. 2nd Edition New York 1962.

⁸⁹ Kurt Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets*. Translated by Charles Grant Ellis, A. Zwemmer Ltd. London 1960, 9. See also Kurt Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, Hanna Erdmann (ed.) and translated by May H. Beattie und Hildegard Herzog. London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1970, 36-8.

not be maintained and he therefore added major points which Erdmann had not written about.⁹⁰ However Erdmann's paradigm shift towards a start with Anatolian carpets was generally followed in future carpet studies.⁹¹

Der Orientalische Knüpft Teppich quickly became popular with a public interested in Oriental carpets and English translations were soon published. Erdmann hoped that a lively discussion would follow. Reviews were written by Carl Johan Lamm,⁹² Ernst Diez,⁹³ Richard Ettinghausen,⁹⁴ Ernst Kühnel⁹⁵ and in a lengthy review Ernst J. Grube suggested that Erdmann had written an iconography of carpet design and pattern structure.⁹⁶

In 1957 Erdmann published a small book named *Der türkische Teppich des 15. Jahrhunderts*, which appeared in German and Turkish as a publication of the Faculty of the University of Istanbul. It was an unpretentious book produced only for a Turkish public. In a letter to Carl Johan Lamm Erdmann wrote about the book 'that it is not available in the book-trade. I will send you a copy in the next days, but I am not doing this with great pleasure since this is not a scientific work.'⁹⁷ Erdmann's statement is difficult to understand, because this book was one of his significant contributions on this subject. Both in his *Der Orientalische Knüpft Teppich* and in *Der türkische Teppich des 15. Jahrhunderts* Erdmann presented his shift of paradigm from the Persian to the Turkish carpet. A new enlarged edition of *Der türkische Teppich des 15. Jahrhunderts* by Robert Pinner in 1977 in German and in English gave this title its proper place and its recognition.

Erdmann may have been aware about the importance of carpets in major political ceremonies,⁹⁸ as he sent a copy of *Der Orientalische Knüpft Teppich* to the

⁹⁰ Richard Ettinghausen, 'Review of Kurt Erdmann, *Der orientalische Knüpft Teppich*', *Oriens* XI, 1958, 257-64, 320.

⁹¹ In 1955 Kühnel also started with this hypothesis undoubtedly under the influence of Erdmann in the 4th edition of the volume Wilhelm von Bode - Ernst Kühnel, *Antique Rugs from the Near East*, Revised edition, translated by Charles Grant Ellis, London: Bell and Hyman Limited, 1984, see also the review by Kurt Erdmann, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107, 1957, 652-54.

⁹² C.J. Lamm, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 1957, Nr. 5/6, 207-208.

⁹³ Ernst Diez, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 108, 1958, 211-15. Diez was very much in favour of Erdmann's new approach beginning with Anatolian carpets.

⁹⁴ See note 75.

⁹⁵ Ernst Kühnel. *Bibliotheca Orientalis* XVI, 1959, 24-6.

⁹⁶ E.J. Grube, *Der Islam* 35, 1960, 208-27.

⁹⁷ Letter Kurt Erdmann to Carl Johan Lamm, Berlin, 23. January 1962. Kurt Erdmann, *Der türkische Teppich des 15. Jahrhunderts. 15. Asir Türk Halisi*. Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları 715. Istanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1957 (German und Turkish). See Kurt Erdmann, *Die Geschichte des frühen türkischen Teppichs*, London, Oguz Press, 1977. K. Erdmann, *The History of the Early Turkish Carpet*, Engl. Edition by Robert Pinner. London: Oguz Press, 1977.

⁹⁸ On this topic see Costanza Caraffa and Avinoam Shalem, 'Hitler's Carpet': A Tale of One City, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 105, 2013, 119-43, 133. On 21 September 1949 the Allied High Commission handed the charter of the Allied occupation over to Konrad Adenauer as Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. Caraffa and Shalem wrote about this event:

German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), and received a kind answer in which Adenauer mentioned that he found the book interesting and the plates splendid.⁹⁹

Erdmann's first visit to Iran and the Near East in 1957-1958

Apart from the student excursions in Turkey, it was only during these years that Erdmann was able to travel the first time to Iran in the fall of 1957, a country on whose art and architecture he had written on extensively but which he had never seen. He was asked together with Ernst Kühnel to visit the ruins of the Takht-i Sulaiman for the German Archaeological Institute, which considered the ruins for a future excavation.¹⁰⁰ Due to bad weather conditions Erdmann and his wife were not able to go there and as an Iranian carpet museum had not been established yet in Tehran, they travelled to Isfahan to look at the carpets in one of the Safawid palaces.¹⁰¹

Before returning to Berlin, a second trip in February 1958 took the Erdmanns to Cairo as well as Syria, Lebanon and Jordan in June 1958. A last excursion with his students in Istanbul was finally undertaken in August. Erdmann and his family returned to Germany in October 1958 and he immediately embarked on an intensive period of work in the Islamic Department.

Erdmann as head of the Islamic Department in Berlin-Dahlem from 1958 to 1964

This period of his life included directing the Department's purchasing policy. For the first time he could decide to acquire numerous art objects for the museum. The next years saw him widening the collection by acquiring Persian works of art – then coming onto the art market in large numbers. Among these were objects of Sasanian and early Islamic glass¹⁰² as well as numerous different types of ceramics

He [Adenauer] was asked to remain at the edge of the 'red' carpet on which the latter were standing during the official ceremony, in order to create a sense of distance. Adenauer however, violated formal procedure and stepped onto the [Persian] carpet, thus symbolizing Germany's will to enter the Western alliance and reclaim an active role for itself in the post-World War II era.

Erdmann may have known this as he lived in Bonn at the time.

⁹⁹Letter from Bonn, 7. February 1956, 'Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Der Bundeskanzler', to Prof. Dr. Kurt Erdmann, Istanbul-Arnautköy, Mumhane Sok 15.: '...Ich habe an den prachtvollen Wiedergaben, die Sie so überaus sachkundig erläutert haben, viel Freude... Adenauer'.

¹⁰⁰ Erdmann had always had close contact with the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul and that branch was also in charge for German research in Iran. A first report on the research project was published in 1961. *Takht-I-Suleiman. Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen 1959*, edited by Hans Henning von der Osten und Rudolf Naumann. Teheraner Forschungen vol. I. Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1961, 9 (Foreword). See also the review of this volume by Kurt Erdmann, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 113, 1963, 314-23, which gives a concise survey on the ruins before the excavations.

¹⁰¹ Kurt Erdmann, 'Türkische Gebetsteppiche in Tschihil Sutun. Dacca Museum', *Nalini Kanta Bhattasali Commemoration volume*, 1966, 87-93.

¹⁰² Kurt Erdmann, 'Neuerworbene Gläser der Islamischen Abteilung, 1958-1961', *Berliner Museen N.F.* 11, 1961, 31-41.

supposedly mainly from north-eastern Iran which were soon collected in all museums. Erdmann received much praise for his acquisitions as well as for the tendency to publish the new acquisitions as soon as possible in the periodical *Berliner Museen, Berichte aus den Staatlichen Museen*.¹⁰³ Although acquisition funds were available, he could not buy the very finest objects which usually went to American collections, but he upgraded the collection in many ways. Apart from ceramics which had a Persian provenance, ceramics from other countries were only seldom on the art market. Due to his stay in Istanbul, Erdmann wrote a sizeable number of articles on Turkish ceramics since 1959.¹⁰⁴

In addition there was the opportunity to purchase a number of carpets from the Bernheimer Collection, the Sarre Collection and other sources. Although it was impossible to regain the large format Persian and Turkish carpets mostly given by Bode on the occasion of the founding of the Islamic Department in 1905 that had been destroyed on 11 March 1945, the acquisitions gave the museum a good number of unique carpets.¹⁰⁵ During these years Erdmann wrote numerous essays on carpets and collections in a textile magazine which were published posthumously by Hanna Erdmann as *Siebenhundert Jahre Orientteppich*. This book was translated into English and reached a wide audience.¹⁰⁶

After Hanna and Kurt Erdmann's return to Germany in 1958, they worked on a three-volume study of the Anatolian caravansarai of the 13th century, of which the first volume was completed in 1961.¹⁰⁷

During this period Erdmann was also responsible for the installation of a new exhibition gallery in the Berlin-Dahlem complex of a new Museum of Asian Arts. It was also the time when large exhibitions in the Federal Republic of Germany belonged to the cultural life, an Iran exhibition *7000 Ans D'Art en Iran* which had been shown in Paris in the Musée du Petit Palais in 1961, later toured through Europe and for the German public was shown in Essen's Villa Hügel. Erdmann was responsible as he was the only German scholar who could deal with the pre-Islamic as well as Islamic part and thus also selected objects from the Berlin collection to be

¹⁰³ Kurt Erdmann, 'Keramische Erwerbungen der Islamischen Abteilung 1958-1960', *Berliner Museen N.F.* 10, 1961, 6-15.

¹⁰⁴ Kurt Erdmann, 'Ka'bah-Fliesen', *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1959, 191-97 (Notes). Kurt Erdmann, 'Die Fliesen am Sünnet odasi des Top Kapi Saray in Istanbul. Aus der Welt der islamischen Kunst', *Festschrift für Ernst Kühnel zum 75. Geburtstag am 28.10.1957*. Berlin: 1959, 144-53. Kurt Erdmann, 'Neue Arbeiten zur türkischen Keramik', *Ars Orientalis* 5, 1963, 191-219.

¹⁰⁵ Friedrich Spuhler, *Oriental Carpets in the Museum of Islamic Art Berlin*, translated by Robert Pinner. London: Faber and Faber, 1987, Introduction.

¹⁰⁶ Kurt Erdmann, *700 Jahre Orientteppich*, edited by Hanna Erdmann. Herford: Bussesche Verlagshandlung, 1966. Kurt Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets*, edited by Hanna Erdmann, translated by May H. Beattie and Hildegard Herzog. Berkeley and London: Faber & Faber, 1970.

¹⁰⁷ K. Erdmann, *Das anatolische Karavansaray des 13. Jahrhunderts*. 3 Bde. Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1961-1976 (Bd. I Katalog: Text. Katalog: Abbildungen. Bd. II und III Hanna Erdmann, Baubeschreibung und Ornamentik mit Zeichnungen von Gerd Schneider), Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1976.

shown in the exhibition *7000 Jahre Kunst in Iran*.¹⁰⁸ Because of a more thriving art market and more dealers all over Germany than in former years, Erdmann was asked questions regarding the authenticity of art objects from all different periods of Iranian history by museums and collectors.¹⁰⁹

Erdmann accepted an invitation by the historian Bertold Spuler (1911-1990) and the art historian Wolfgang Schöne (1910-1989) to lecture at Hamburg University during the period when he led the Islamic Department in Berlin. This was to become an opportunity for an unprecedented number of students to eventually earn their Ph.D. degrees in different subjects of Near Eastern history and art. During the semester he flew on alternate Fridays from Berlin to Hamburg, gave his lecture, which was also attended by many members of the public on the Friday evening and then at 9.15 am on Saturday morning held his famous seminar in the art historical institute in the picture gallery, called Kunsthalle. An impressive number of students assembled around Erdmann, many of whom were later active in the field of Islamic art as well as Persian art. Among others were the Iranist Gerd Gropp (1935-2022)¹¹⁰, the historian Claus-Peter Haase¹¹¹ and the Iranist Klaus Schippmann (1924-2010).¹¹²

The art historian Michael Meinecke (1941-1995)¹¹³ met Erdmann in Istanbul and later wrote his Ph.D. *Fayencedekorationen an seldschukischen Sakralbauten in Kleinasien* which was published in 1976. He used the same system of cataloguing the buildings that Kurt Erdmann had developed for his work on the Anatolian carawansaray. Friedrich Spuhler had studied art history in Mainz but wanted to change his subject and met Erdmann in Berlin in 1962 where they agreed that Spuhler should study a group of Persian silk carpets known as Polish carpets. His Ph.D. was published in 1968.¹¹⁴

When Erdmann died in 1964, his students carried on and it was the time for Hanna Erdmann to eventually publish some of his unfinished manuscripts. Oktay Aslanapa and the archaeologist Rudolf Nauman were able to publish the memorial volume *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens* in 1969 for Erdmann with the help of numerous scholars and many persons who had known Erdmann.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ *7000 Jahre Kunst in Iran*. Ausstellung Essen, Villa Hügel, 16. Februar bis 24. April 1962. Essen-Bredeney: Verein Villa Hügel e.V. 1962 17-8 (Zum Geleit).

¹⁰⁹ Jens Kröger, 'Germany VI. Collections and Study of Persian Art in Germany', *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 10, New York: N. Y. 2001, 559-64.

¹¹⁰ Publications on Iranian, also pre-Islamic art, archaeology, epigraphy and Zoroastrian studies.

¹¹¹ Director of the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin from 2001-2009, his dissertation on early Islamic Syria was projected with Erdmann.

¹¹² Klaus Schippmann later published his *Die iranischen Feuerheiligümer*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971.

¹¹³ Meinecke later became the Director of the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin 1988-1995.

¹¹⁴ Friedrich Spuhler, *Seidene Repräsentationsteppiche der mittleren bis späten Safawidenzeit. Die sog. Polenteppiche*. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung eines Doktors der Philosophie der Philosophischen Fakultät der Freien Universität Berlin, 1968.

¹¹⁵ *Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens*. In *Memoriam Kurt Erdmann* (9. September 1901- 30. September 1964). Oktay Aslanapa and Rudolf Naumann (eds.), *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk ve İslam Sanati Kürsüsü*, Istanbul: Baha Matbaası 1969.

Many students involved with the history of medieval and early modern art of Iran as well as with Near Eastern art will sooner or later come across Kurt Erdmann and he will be remembered for the abundant information and documentation he collected in many different fields. Richard Ettinghausen called him 'a true trail-blazer and... a stimulating and inspiring teacher.'¹¹⁶ His significant contributions for Sasanian art and the numerous stimulations he gave make him an early pioneer in this field and because of his numerous studies on carpets in the period from 1929 until well after his death due to the editions by Hanna Erdmann, he will be remembered as a dominant figure of Oriental carpet studies.

As a scholar Erdmann was fascinated by numerous art forms. During his whole life he wrote on carpets and their patterns and thus became one of the foremost scholars in this field. The second field which he chose from the very beginning was the art and architecture of the Sasanian dynasty in Iran. Although he never travelled in the country he was able to write important contributions on architecture, rock-reliefs, metalwork and coins which made him a most respected scholar. Apart from these topics he published innovative ideas on glass, rock crystal objects and ceramics. His analytical way of organising large groups of objects such as Sasanian coins or seals were unique and helped him in writing his articles.

Jens Kröger is curator emeritus of the Museum of Islamic Art – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. He participated in exhibitions and published on Sasanian and Islamic architectural decoration (Jens Kröger, *Sasanidischer Stuckdekor*. Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Phillip von Zabern 1982), Islamic glass (Jens Kröger, *Nishapur: Glass of the Early Islamic Period*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995) and rock-crystal (Jens Kröger, 'The state of research on some rock crystal ewers and related vessels from Islamic Lands' in *Seeking Transparency': Rock crystals across the medieval Mediterranean*, Cynthia Hahn and Avinoam Shalem eds, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag 2020, (13-33), as well as on historiographical themes concerning the museum in Berlin and its scholars (Jens Kröger, 'Friedrich Sarre, Kunsthistoriker, Sammler und Connaissanceur', in *Wie die Islamische Kunst nach Berlin kam. Der Sammler und Museumsdirektor Friedrich Sarre (1865-1945)*, Julia Gonnella and Jens Kröger eds., Berlin: D. Reimer Verlag, 2015, 13-46).



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¹¹⁶ Richard Ettinghausen, II. Nachrufe 'Kurt Erdmann (1901-1964)', *Der Islam* 41, 1965, 253-60.