

The Book That Has Made a Revolution in Scientific Studies of the History of Architecture

To the 100th Anniversary of the First Publication of Josef Strzygowski's "Architecture of the Armenians and Europe" Book

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Abstract—The book written by Joseph Strzygowski “Architecture of the Armenians and Europe”, published in Vienna in 1918, was an example of an entirely new approach to the monuments of Armenian medieval architecture. The central principle of Strzygowski’s study is the method of a comparative analysis, which reveals common features and differences of architectural monuments from different countries. As a result of this approach, he comes to the conviction that Armenian architecture, having an independent path of development, is the birthplace of some architectural styles and features that were of great importance for the creation of planimetric and three-dimensional compositions not only in Armenia but also in other countries.

Keywords—Architecture; monument; research; composition; approach; origin; analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the XIX century, the interest in Armenian architecture, which has long been expressed by travelers in the Caucasus region, has received the direction of scientific research. Not only Armenian researchers like S. Jalalyants [1], S. Shahatunyants [2], G. Alishan [3] and others, but also many well-known European scientists such as Frederic Dubois de Montperier (who visited Armenia in 1839) [4], Charles Texier (1939) [5], Auguste Choisy [6] and others who have never been in Armenia, in their description of the medieval Armenian monuments, noted the undoubted originality of their compositions, forms and individual details. However, even noting the importance of Armenian architecture in the context of world art, in the works of travelers and scholars of that period researchers always expressed doubts about the origins of numerous monuments, as the roots were sought in the art of other countries — mainly, of course, Rome, Byzantium or Iran. Although the variability was quite wide: Karl Schnaase, for example, believed that Armenian architecture had Persian-Arab influence [7].

The same applies to the considerations regarding the origin of the monuments of Armenian architecture in the works of Russian scientists of the late XIX-early XX century (A. Muravyev [8], N. Kondakov [9] and others). They almost

ignored the importance of early Christian monuments, believing that the heyday of Armenian architecture came at later centuries.

II. THE BOOK BY JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI — A NEW APPROACH TO THE MONUMENTS OF ARMENIAN ARCHITECTURE

The first researcher who spoke about the role and importance of Armenian architecture on a scientific basis was the great scientist and ascetic who devoted his life to the study of the monuments of Armenian architecture, the founder of architectural science in Armenia Toros Toramanyan [10]. In the context of this report, it is essential to mention his name and his work, because it, as well as, of course, natural studies, have become the basis for the most serious scientific study of Armenian architecture conducted by the foreign author — the famous Viennese scientist Joseph Strzygowski — “Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa” (“Architecture of Armenians and Europe”) presented in Vienna in 1918 [11]. The work consists of four books in two lengthy volumes. The author's in-depth scientific research and use of comparative analysis of architectural monuments of different countries allowed determining the role and place of Armenian architecture in the history of world architecture.

As another researcher of Armenian architecture Nikolai Tokarskiy noted: “[in his work Strzygowski] ... for the first time in the Western scientific literature has shown independence and the importance of the creativity of the medieval architects of Armenia” [12].

The study of the Strzygowski’s work, as well as the history the creation of the book and its translation to Russian rise particular interest, as important milestones in the study of Armenian architecture and its presentation to the world community.

The dedication in the book: “To the fighting mankind, as a warning, to the struggling people of Armenia as a consolation, to my German Fatherland, Beale near Bietlitc as a keepsake” is very interesting. If we take into account the date of the first publication of the book in Vienna — after

Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, and at the end of World War I — it becomes clear what exactly the author meant, and how right he was.

The book "Architecture of Armenians and Europe" consists of two volumes, each having two books, i.e., the whole work includes four books.

The first book of the first volume explores the early medieval monuments of Armenia (IV-VII centuries). The author categorizes types of Armenian architecture from hall churches, which he calls single-aisled basilicas (a term that was caught on in the scientific literature and then has long been used by various researchers) and three-aisled basilicas, which he calls "hall with the intermediate supports" churches, to domed churches, with their multiple subtypes — longitudinal domed (domed hall, the domed basilicas and triconch churches) and a cross-in-square churches with a lot of their subtypes. The monuments are presented separately, with all the details and comprehensive analysis of architectural, construction, epigraphic, decorative features.

The second book of the first volume presents building materials, functions, shapes, and the content of monuments, followed by an analysis of specific structures from a functional point of view. In this part of the work, the author pays great attention to the history of the origin of monuments. After analyzing the evolution of architectural types, the author dwells on the coverage of the permanent features and peculiarities of Armenian churches — their fundamental laws, including such concepts as the interrelation of the masses, space, light, and color.

The third book, which is in fact the first book of the second volume, has not yet been translated and exists only in the original language, is devoted to the question of the degree of study of Armenian architecture, that is, a review of previous studies. The author there seeks to compare the results of his own research with the results of other researchers, noting the similarities and differences in views.

The fourth book, entitled "Dissemination", is devoted to the influence of Armenian architecture on the architecture of European countries. In this part of his work, he debates the general studies on the history of art, as well as particular scientific research of some academics. As he believes, in historical and philosophical aspect they are characterized by "indecisiveness, support of craft and the distancing of the researcher from the material." Then, on the example of a number of specific monuments, testifying to the application of various compositional and constructive achievements of Armenian architecture in the Romanesque and Gothic styles, he speaks about their widespread distribution in Europe.

The central principle of the Strzygowski's research is a method of comparative analysis, which reveals common features and differences of architectural monuments. At the same time, he refers to the building materials and technology, to the subject, form, and content, which are the basis for a comparative study. The most important and even fundamental to the monument study for him is the image that can be taken from the nature or artistic forms of works of the past centuries (the basis for determining the style), and the

spiritual essence, that is, the idea inherent in the work. To identify the artistic intent, the technique used, the creation of the work and a comprehensive analysis of the essence of the studied monument is the Strzygowski's approach to the study of a particular monument. He applied this method of scientific research to the monuments of Armenian architecture, and on the basis for a comparative analysis of the monuments of other countries. "It is necessary to approach works of art from a scientific point of view, not only establishing their essence in yourself but at the same time conducting a deep comparative analysis and identifying the evolution and their impact on a historical path. Therefore, in an effort to use these facts, along with the study of the essence, I use a comparative method", Strzygowski writes [13].

It is extremely important that unlike other scientists of his time, who believed that the flourishing of Armenian architecture took place at a later time — from X to XIII centuries, J. Strzygowski argued that the most important stage in the development of Armenian architecture was the period of early middle ages (IV-VII century), when many types of church buildings have been created.

Strzygowski divides this period into two phases: the initial construction covered with cylindrical vaults — aisleless or three naves churches, and then domed churches. At the same time, he believed that the type of churches with a longitudinal composition, covered with cylindrical vaults, was introduced in Armenia from Mesopotamia, while domed churches were the result of local creativity. It is crucial that Armenia is the birthplace of the dome on a square base, which is of primary importance for the creation of the three-dimensional composition of the central dome structures not only in Armenia but also in other countries: "From there, from the country of two rivers and the Ararat plateau, the evolution that deprives the soil of the Hellenistic predecessor ascends." Or: "the dome on a square base, as a common dominant type, spreaded from Armenia to the Mediterranean and Europe" [14].

"Various sorts and types of purely domed buildings considered so far should attract the most serious attention. How could such types of buildings appear in such an early period, and moreover — how could they remain outside the field of history of architecture?!" — Strzygowski exclaims and then adds: "Studies in the second through fourth books will show amazing facts. I ask, if possible, to realize the importance of the monuments considered so far. How is it possible that such types and varieties of churches could have arisen at a time when we almost exclusively encounter the dominion of the basilicas throughout the Mediterranean?" [15].

Already in the later period, many Russian scientists (including N. Marr, J. A. Orbeli, N.M. Tokarskiy, A. Y. Yacobson and many others) significantly contributed to the study of Armenian architecture, fairly and objectively assessing its place and importance on the pages of the history of architecture, but the book of Strzygovsky — a famous European scientist, who was the first to consider Armenian architecture from a scientific point of view in all its

significance and development in the context of world architecture, played an invaluable role in world architecture studies.

III. THE HISTORY OF THE CREATION OF THE BOOK

There are a lot of people behind the very dramatic history of the book: first of all, it is the above-mentioned founder of the scientific study of Armenian architecture Toros Toramanyan, whose valuable research interested the famous Austrian scientist Joseph Strzygowski, who has put forward the question: East or West? In his book "East or Rome" ("Orient oder Rom"), published in Leipzig in 1901. That is, he turned to the issue of the huge contribution of Eastern culture to the creation and development of Western civilization, which was ignored by many researchers at that time. Gradually Strzygowski creates a whole scientific concept of the contribution of the East to the world civilization: many of his works are devoted to this topic, in particular, one of the first — "Hellas in the arms of the East", as well as the others.

A well-known Byzantine scholar, he was also familiar with Armenian art, and in 1892 he published his book "The Echmiadzin Evangel" ("Das Edschmiadsin-Evangeliar") in Vienna.

Another person who played a major role in the creation of the book was a young talented art historian Levon Lisitsyan, who in those years has studied at the University of Vienna. He interested Strzygowski in Armenian architecture, introduced the scientific works of Toramanyan to him, and then contributed to their meeting. At the request of Strzygowski, he wrote letters to Toramanyan, inviting the scientist to Vienna with his rich materials on Armenian architecture to work together on a study on Armenian architecture. T. Toramanyan replied: "It was with great pleasure to read your letter, and I am glad to supply the materials to European scientists engaged in the study of Armenian art. I will be delighted and grateful if Mr. Strzygowski facilitates my long-cherished goal. I know the love of the respected scientist for Armenian art and his work for the sake of introduction of it to the world. Often, I was guided by his opinions. I sincerely believe that now and, in the future, when the question touches the popularization of Armenian art, people will gladly remember the name of Mr. Strzygowski" [16].

In the spring of 1913 Toramanyan together with his materials arrived in Vienna, where they with the help and participation of Levon Lisitsyan started a very important scientific work. In the autumn of the same year a scientific team under the leadership of Josef Strzygowski, which also included well-known scientists Henrich Glück, the anthropologist Edmund Küttler and Levon Lisitsyan arrived in Armenia from Vienna. The 20 days spent in Armenia have been extremely productive: Strzygowski personally made sure of the artistic value and astonishing originality of Armenian monuments, at the same time highly appreciating the scientific research done by Toramanyan and his incredible dedication. The latter, inspired by the Strzygowski's

proposal, began to prepare the materials together with Strzygowski for the monographs published in Vienna.

Unfortunately, in 1914, the World War I began, and since the future co-authors were on the opposite sides of the warring powers, Toramanyan could not, as expected, go to Vienna to continue working together. After waiting long enough, J. Strzygowski decided to publish a book of only his authorship, using all materials submitted by T. Toramanyan. In the Preface of his book, the Austrian scientist, once again paying tribute to Toramanyan and highly appreciating his research, noted that his work is only an "introductory preparatory work" for the large and detailed research that Armenian scientist has yet to carry out. "Because I greatly enjoyed his works and photos, think it necessary to give information about his identity and writings," writes Strzygowski [17], and passes the word to Levon Lisitsyan, who presents activities of Toros Toramanyan in the book [18].

Strzygowski's book "Architecture of the Armenians and Europe" has caused a sensation in the scientific circles of Europe and around the world. The main belief of the scientist, his scientific approach was that there was no use of giving just bare facts or empty descriptions, but it was necessary to study and cover the essence of the ideological meaning, and an artistic idea of the studied monument and the features of the creative method applied. And do it with the help of comparative analysis. With this approach, the author reveals the national identity of Armenian medieval architecture and the significant contribution that it had in the creation of some styles and forms of world architecture.

Although the book made a decisive turn in the opinions of European scientists regarding the origin of Armenian architecture, it was not accepted by many researchers. So Strzygowski wrote: "I understand how difficult it is to move forward for some of my colleagues accustomed to the narrow European views. My strongest support is my belief that my fight is righteous" ("Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa", pp. 59-60). However, of course, after the publication of the book, he had followers among well-known scientists who began to speak openly about the importance of Armenian architecture and its role in the formation of numerous types of world architecture of the early Christian era. Among them there were such scholars as O. Dalton [19], J. Baltrusaitis [20] A. Grabar [21] and many others. Opinions of European scientists who on the basis of the Strzygowski's works have revised their views, convinced with the argumentation of his conclusions are especially valuable. For example, the well-known Byzantinologist Charles Diehl who, earlier, in the first edition of his book claimed that Armenian architecture was "...art, largely dwelling on the Byzantine tradition" - however, with the clarification that it was "still not a slave copy of the Byzantine" [22], after the publication of the J. Strzygowski's book, in the second edition of the book set the idea in following terms: "[Armenian architecture]...has acquired something from Byzantium", while adding that "...it would be interesting to investigate, albeit with great caution," the influence of this art "on the West and on the origin of Romanesque art" [23]. The value of the Strzygowski's labor and his scientific

legacy is still significant up to this day. It is reflected in modern historiographical studies [24] [25].

Of course, it was not Strzygowski, but the fate which deprived Toramanian of the opportunity to go to Vienna to participate in writing the book in collaboration with Strzygowski. But as a true devotee of his work, he bravely accepted the incident, believing that in that case, the justice that won the opening for the world and the correct assessment of Armenian architecture was essential. A cause he fought his whole life for.

IV. TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK INTO RUSSIAN

The book, which made a revolution in the history of architecture in the first quarter of the XX century, was waiting for its translation for almost 100 years. Fortunately, despite some issues, which the author could then revise as a result of the emergence of new research data (some of the building inscriptions on the monuments of both Eastern and Western Armenia that Strzygowski provided have been later clarified, excavations or cleaning works made, resulting in that many monuments have been re-examined, which led to the emergence of new data and revision of some of the provisions set out by the Austrian scientist), the book has not lost its importance in the study of the genesis of the types and forms of monumental structures of medieval Armenian architecture. Several generations of researchers and those who were just interested in this book, but didn't speak the language of its original got this happy opportunity just in 2011. The book was published by the Institute of arts of NAS RA, with the financial support of the Ministry of Culture. However, only the first book of the first volume of the folio was published. The second book of the first volume was published only in 2017, already with the assistance of The State Committee on Urban Development in the person of its Chairman Narek Sargsyan and the "MonArch" construction concern. To finally have these books in translation was equivalent to touching a stone from the surface of the moon: something which I have always known about heard a lot but couldn't imagine in reality.

It is necessary to recall the history of the translation of the book, which is also quite dramatic: During the Great Patriotic War, a specialist in German language Pavel Amburger was evacuated to Yerevan from Leningrad, where in 1945 the Chairman of the Committee for the Protection of Monuments of Armenian SSR, and a great devotee of the study of Armenian architecture, academician Varazdat Harutyunyan intrusted him to translate the Strzygowski's book. After the war it became clear that issuing the book translated into Russian language in the USSR, was not possible, since the theory of Strzygowski about the "Aryan Armenian architecture" and its influence on the creation of some of the European styles and structures were declared "reactionary", and the author was called a "bourgeois scientist" with "reactionary views". Years passed, but the rough Soviet attitude to the book was unchanged: its publication would have offended the people living nearby and hurt the "friendship of peoples." The working group on the publication of the book, established in the 1970s, soon realized that their efforts were in vain: the hand-written copy

of the translation of the famous book remained in the archives of the Institute, available only to a very limited number of specialists. So, it has been put on a shelf for almost seven decades...

Of course, as soon as the opportunity to publish the book appeared, the researchers of the Institute of Arts started working with great enthusiasm. A lot of work was done: the whole text was compared with the original, several fragments of the text that were missing in the preserved manuscript have been translated, references and comments have been clarified and extended.

V. CONCLUSION

Now the book is available to the Russian-speaking reader, and we hope that it will be translated into other languages. Despite the fact that during those long decades, new data has been introduced to the science of Armenian architecture, Joseph Strzygowski's major work has not lost its great scientific value in our days. He enriched science with a new approach to the study and analysis of architecture in general and made a huge contribution to the European art science of the early XX century.

The work made by Strzygowski is now also of great documentary importance because it makes possible to imagine not only the condition of the monuments of Armenian architecture in the early XX century but also the degree and level of their study. This is the history of not only Armenian architecture, but also scientific approaches to the subject in architectural science.

The value of this book is difficult to overestimate. The words that Strzygowski finishes the Preface to his book with, still apply today: "I was working, without losing faith in humanity. Being tied to my piece of land, I made this contribution to show the people who returned from the war a world worthy of their sacrifice. Will they take action to free the spirit of time from the greed and lust for power, and will they be able to transform themselves into true carriers of a new worldview, which many are already trying to make the basis of social life with amazing simplicity and optimism?" [26].

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