

The political reception of the Vienna School: Josef Strzygowski and Serbian art history

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Introduction

A number of different factors determine the interpretation of the work of art historians and the adoption of their methods and approaches in specific cultural, scientific and social circles. Political issues have often played a key role in the reception of art historical texts; this was especially the case during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, a time when art historical scholarship as well as artistic production made a significant contribution to the formation of ideas of national identity.¹ A particularly striking example of the complexity surrounding the reception and the political importance attached to the work of art historians can be found in the case of the Vienna School of art history and the responses to the work of Josef Strzygowski by Serbian historians of art.² Although he was a highly controversial scholar in Vienna, one who was shunned by many of his colleagues at the Institute of Art History, Strzygowski became a hugely significant figure in Serbia. Accordingly, this article examines the responses to his work, not only amongst art historians but also in broader social and political circles.

Serbian art history, Byzantine art history and Strzygowski before the First World War

From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, the development of art history in Serbia was closely connected to the contribution it made, alongside other disciplines, to the formation of national identity.³ Accordingly, state support for art historical research was intended to lead to better understanding of the national past, the discovery and formation of a national artistic canon, and affirmation of the

¹ Hubert Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst 1750-1950*, München: Fink 2001, 195-202; Mathew Rampley, 'The Construction of National Art Histories and the 'New' Europe', in: Matthew Rampley-Thierry Lenain-Hubert Locher- Andrea Pinotti-Charlotte Schoell-Glass -Kitty Zijlmans, eds, *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: transnational discourses and national frameworks*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2012, 231-246.

² P. Dragojević pointed out to the importance of J. Strzygowski in Serbian art history: Predrag Dragojević, *Istorija umetnosti u Srbiji u prvoj polovini XX veka*, PhD dissertation, Belgrade University, Beograd: Filozofski fakultet 1996, 120-127; Predrag Dragojević, 'Uporedni metod Stšigovskog i njegov prijem u Srbiji. Ideološko i metodološko u mišljenju o umetnosti', *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti*, vol. 40, (2012), 163-172.

³ Sreten Petković, 'Istorija umetnosti kod Srba u XIX veku', *Zbornik Filozofskog fakulteta*, Vol XII No.1, 479-497; Dejan Medaković, *Istraživoči srpskih starina*, Beograd: Prosveta 1985.

identity of the Serbian nation.⁴ The study of medieval art in particular was regarded as vital, in that the Middle Ages were held to have been Serbia's Golden Age.⁵ Moreover, as Serbian medieval history and art were connected with the Byzantine Empire, Byzantine studies came to the fore as a focus of disproportionate Serbian academic and social interest.⁶

For most of the nineteenth century, European art historians generally viewed Byzantine painting as an underdeveloped and 'Oriental' art form and consequently Byzantine art was marginalized in the study of art history.⁷ Conversely, those scholars who did write about Byzantine and Serbian medieval art enjoyed what might be regarded as perhaps a disproportionate level of attention in Serbian political and social circles. It was believed that they contributed to a better international understanding of Serbian culture and Serbian political interests. This was particularly important at the time of the crisis of the second half of the nineteenth century, when the politics of the Balkan peninsula were marked by the so-called 'Eastern Question' that was prompted by the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire, the creation (or re-creation) of national states such as Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, uprisings against Ottoman rule, as well as wars and other forms of political conflict between European states with strategic interests in this region.

One of the first foreign authors to write in any detail about Serbian medieval art was Felix Phillip Kanitz (1829-1904), a journalist, ethnographer and travel writer based in Vienna, who was the first curator of the anthropological and natural historical sections of the imperial collections (later to become the Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna) and who wrote extensively about the ancient and medieval cultural heritage of the Balkan peninsula in general and Serbia in particular.⁸ Kanitz was author of the first book to be written about the Byzantine heritage of Serbia, *Serbia's Byzantine Monuments*, published in German in 1862 and translated into Serbian the same year.⁹ His work was highly esteemed and he was granted an honoured position in Serbian society.¹⁰ The work of Kanitz exercised great influence on the development of studies of Serbian medieval art, and on the construction of a

⁴ Nenad Makuljević, 'Inventing and Changing the Canon and the Constitution of Serbian National Identity in the Nineteenth Century', in: Ivan Stevović, ed., *Symeikta, Collection of Papers Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Institute for Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade*, Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy University of Belgrade 2012, 505-516.

⁵ Nenad Makuljević, *Umetnost i nacionalna ideja u XIX veku: sistem evropske i srpske vizuelne kulture u službi nacije*, Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva 2006, 66-67.

⁶ Radivoj Radić, 'Sto godina katedre i seminara za vizantologiju', *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik*, 56.1, 2008, 177-180.

⁷ Robert S. Nelson, 'Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art', *Gesta*, 35.1, 1996, 3-11.

⁸ Medaković, *Istraživači*, 216-225. Kanitz was the author of, amongst others, *Über alt- und neuserbische Kirchenbaukunst: ein Beitrag zur Kunstgeschichte*. Vienna: K. u. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1864; *Serbien: Historisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren, 1859-1868*. Leipzig: Hermann Fries, 1868; *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan. Historisch-geographisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1860-1879*. Leipzig: Hermann Fries, 1875-1879. 3 volumes.

⁹ Felix Kanitz, *Serbiens byzantinische Monumente*, Vienna: K. u. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1862. Published in Serbian as *Vizantijski spomenici po Srbiji*, Vienna, K. u. K. Staatsdruckerei, 1862.

¹⁰ Nenad Makuljević, *Crkvena umetnost u Kraljevini Srbiji 1882-1914*, Belgrade: Filozofski fakultet, 2007, 100.

national canon of Serbian architecture.¹¹ The scope of his influence on Byzantine studies in Vienna remains unknown, but he has continued to be held in high regard in Serbia and Bulgaria – he was the subject of exhibitions at the National Gallery of Foreign Art in Sophia and the National Museum in Belgrade in 2009 and 2010 respectively – and his positive reception served as a model for the subsequent acceptance of foreign researchers and treatment of their work in Serbia, and this was confirmed by the way in which Serbs responded to the work of Josef Strzygowski.

In many respects Strzygowski represents an isolated line of the Vienna school of Art History.¹² He extended the purview of traditional art history to encompass previously unknown or partly marginalized artistic spheres and cultural areas. In this context his activities concerned with the art of the ‘Orient’ (i.e. Asia Minor and the Balkan regions) and his interest in Byzantine art are of special significance, for they incorporated Serbian and Croatian art, as well as the wider field of the art of Yugoslavia and the Balkans; this fact was decisive in shaping the responses to his work on the part of Serbian art historians.

Before examining the details of Strzygowski’s work in this respect, it is important to take the broader political context into account. At the time of that he was becoming increasingly involved in co-operation with Serbian intellectual and scholarly environment, the kingdom of Serbia had an extremely poor relationship with Austria-Hungary. Following the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878, Belgrade cultural and political circles became entangled in recurring conflicts with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its cultural politics in the Balkans.¹³ The visual arts also become caught up in these wider political conflicts. The ideology of Habsburg propaganda promulgated the view that the monarchy had brought culture to the Balkans and that its representatives were *Kulturträger*, i.e. bearers of culture.¹⁴ This self-image on the part of the monarchy was accompanied with a belief in the deficient or, at best, derivative, nature of the local cultures of the Balkan region, including the Serbs. As Maria Todorova has demonstrated, the South Slavs in the Balkans were the objects of a primitivising and orientalisising discourse that perceived them as a backward people devoid of culture and history.¹⁵ This opinion was even shared by liberal and supposedly progressive Viennese art historians, such as Rudolf von Eitelberger and Alois Riegl.¹⁶

¹¹ Makuljević, ‘Inventing and Changing the Canon’, 513.

¹² See: Matthew Rampley, ‘Art History and the Politics of Empire: Rethinking the Vienna School’, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 91 No. 4 (2009), 456-457; Georg Vasold, ‘Riegl, Strzygowski and the development of art’, *Journal of art historiography*, 5, 2011

(<http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/vassold.pdf>); Heinz Schödl, *Josef Strzygowski-Zur Entwicklung seines Denkens*, Dissertation-Universität Wien 2011.

¹³ Dimitrije Djordjević, ‘Sučeljavanja sa Austro-Ugarskom’, in Andrej Mitrović (Ed.), *Istorija srpskog naroda*, Vol. VI-1, Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga 1983, 134-173.

¹⁴ Andreas Rathberger, ‘Vorstellungen und Klischees über den Balkan in der Habsburgermonarchie im 19. und frühen 20 Jahrhundert’, 7-11. In: *Kakanien Revisited*, 2009. Available online at: <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/ARathberger1/>; Robin Okey, *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg ‘Civilizing Mission’ in Bosnia 1878-1914*, Oxford University Press 2007.

¹⁵ See: Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford University Press 2009.

¹⁶ Matthew Rampley, ‘Dalmatia is Italian! The Politics of Art History in Austria-Hungary and South-Eastern Europe 1862-1930’, *Etudes balkaniques*, 4, 2008, 136-142; Rampley, ‘Art History and the Politics of Empire’, 455.

Such attitudes created much suspicion and resentment in Serbian circles, and awareness of this tension with the Habsburg monarchy is important for understanding the ideological impulse of much art historical activity in Serbia and the ways in which it used cultural heritage and the arts as a means of furthering the national interests of the state. Indeed, this response to Habsburg foreign policy also shaped approaches to education at European universities by the elite of the kingdom of Serbia. It explains why, for example, students from Serbia who studied abroad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were educated primarily at German universities, and not in Vienna.¹⁷ This certainly restricted the influence of the Vienna school on Serbian art history, but nevertheless the opinions and work of individual scholars who contributed to the affirmation of Serbian culture were received positively.

Strzygowski's activities had been followed in Serbian scientific circles ever since his earliest published works. Hence, Mihailo Valtrović (1839-1915), one of the founders of art history in Serbia, wrote a positive review of Strzygowski's book on the tenth-century Armenian 'Etchmiadzin Evangeliary' in *Starinar*, the magazine of the Serbian Archeological Society, as soon as it was published in 1891.¹⁸ Valtrović gave a detailed and extensive description of the book and its scientific results, and emphasized that Strzygowski had set new insights into the Byzantine art and that he excelled in 'his knowledge and experience'.¹⁹ Valtrović was one of the first scholars to have researched Serbian medieval art but his review was of additional importance given that he was one of the most influential people in Serbian cultural and social life at the time. For example, in addition to being a professor at the University of Belgrade and director of the National Museum, he designed the crowning ceremonies for King Aleksandar Obrenović in 1889.²⁰ As a result, his review in *Starinar* must have opened the way for the further reception of Strzygowski's work in Serbia.

Strzygowski established direct connections with figures in Serbian political and academic life around 1902, at the time he was working on a fourteenth-century illustrated manuscript, the so-called Munich Psalter, which was housed in the State Library in Munich (Cod. Slav 4). The Psalter stood out as an important part of the history of Serbian visual culture, and was (and remains) one of the best illustrated surviving Serbian medieval manuscripts.²¹ In recognition of its importance Strzygowski devoted a substantial monograph to it in 1906.²² Although Kanitz had

¹⁷ Ljubinka Trgovčević, *Planirana elita. O studentima iz Srbije na evropskim univerzitetima u 19. veku*, Beograd: Istorijski institut: Službeni glasnik 2003.

¹⁸ Sonja Bogdanović, 'Mihailo Valtrović i Dragutin Milutinović kao istraživači srpskih starina', in: *Izlozi Srpskog učenog društva*, Beograd: Galerija SANU 1978, 7-81. Strzygowski's work was published as *Das Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar. Beiträge zur Geschichte der armenischen, ravenatischen und syro-ägyptischen Kunst*, Wien: Mechitharisten-Congregation, 1891.

¹⁹ Mihailo Valtrović, 'Byzantinische Denkmäler I. Das Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar', *Starinar*, No. VIII, (1891), 149-155.

²⁰ Makuljević, *Crkvena umetnost u Kraljevini Srbiji*, 93-99.

²¹ Jovanka Maksimović, *Srpske srednjovekovne minijature*, Beograd: Prosveta 1983, 119-121; Hans Belting, 'Einleitung' in: Hans Belting (ed.), *Der serbische Psalter*, Textband, Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag 1978, 7.

²² Josef Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters der Königl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München: mit 1 Tafel in Farben-, 61 in Lichtdruck und 43 Abbildungen im Texte / nach einer Belgrader Kopie*

written about Serbian art over 40 years earlier, this was the one of the first books on Serbian art to have been published by an internationally recognized art historian.

Strzygowski's monograph on the Psalter was a collaborative undertaking with Vatroslav Jagić (1838-1923), a prominent Vienna-based scholar of Slavic Studies, who wrote the introduction and provided a philological analysis of the manuscript text.²³ Strzygowski described the illustrations and subjected them to what he termed an 'art historical investigation' (*Kunstwissenschaftliche Untersuchung*), which consisted of iconographical and stylistic analysis, and its conclusion being that the Psalter was the work of a Serbian painter.²⁴

In the final chapters Strzygowski posed the question 'Orient or Byzantium?' (*Orient oder Byzanz*), that reprised the methodological issue of his earlier book *Orient or Rome*, and which claimed that there were possible Syrian influences on Serbian medieval miniature painting.²⁵ In the preface to the book on the Psalter, Strzygowski emphasized that his aim was to represent the unknown art of the Southern Slavs to an international academic audience, but he also recognized the potentially political significance of his project:

Together with the edition of the Miroslav Gospel by the Serbs, the project of publishing the Serbian Psalter can be seen as aiming finally to present, in reproduction, the treasures of south Slavic art to the scholarly world. The example presented here should demonstrate that it is not a matter merely of fulfilling the demands of justified national pride, but rather, that other things are brought into play that might open up unanticipated paths for international research that go far beyond this limited framework. I hope that as a consequence the South Slavs will acquire the means to publish their ancient national monuments.²⁶

When working on this manuscript Strzygowski came into close contact with Serbian and Belgrade-based scholars. According to correspondence that has been preserved from 1902, Strzygowski appears to have come into contact with the Serbian philologist and politician Ljubomir Stojanović (1860-1930), most probably with the help of Jagić, as well as meeting some of the most active art historians and archeologists in Belgrade of the time.²⁷ Stojanović and Mihailo Valtrović had already had experience of publishing reprints, for they had published the oldest Serbian mediaeval manuscript, the twelfth-century Miroslav Gospel mentioned by

ergänzt und im Zusammenhange mit der Syrischen Bilderredaktion des Psalters; mit einer Einleitung von dem wirklichen Mitgliede V. Jagić, Vienna : Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften : Alfred Hölder, 1906.

²³ Vatroslav Jagić, 'Einleitung. Zwei illustrierte serbische Psalter' in: Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters*, I-LXXVIII

²⁴ Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters*, 1-124.

²⁵ Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters*, 87-103. Strzygowski's earlier book was published as *Orient oder Rom. Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst*, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901.

²⁶ Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters*, II.

²⁷ Archive of Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Belgrade, No. 12952.

Strzygowski.²⁸ Stojanović subsequently discovered a copy of the Munich Psalter in the National library in Belgrade, and so he helped Strzygowski with preparing the Munich manuscript for publication and laid the groundwork for acceptance of his work in Serbia.²⁹

Following publication of the Psalter Strzygowski's activities gained particular attention, for his work was seen as attesting to the significance of Serbian heritage and culture. Strzygowski himself was aware of the nationalistic reception of his work, and he attempted to take further advantage of it. A surviving letter from the archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, written by Strzygowski to Stojanović, attests to this.³⁰ By political coincidence, Stojanović, as well as being a collaborator in editing the Munich Psalter, was elected Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Serbia 1905-1906,³¹ and Strzygowski took advantage of this, too, appealing to him to promote his work in Serbia and to emphasise its significance for Serbian culture. In particular, Strzygowski asked Stojanović to help him have the book reviewed in the most prominent Serbian scientific institution of the time: the Serbian Royal Academy.

Strzygowski's efforts were undoubtedly successful for his edition of the Munich Psalter was well-received, with positive reviews in Serbian scholarly and literary magazines.³² Vladimir Petković (1874-1956), an art historian educated in Belgrade, Munich and Halle, reviewed the book for *Starinar* while Božidar Nikolajević (1877-1947), the first Serbian holder of a PhD degree in art history, reviewed the book for the *Srpski književni glasnik* (Serbian Literary Gazette).³³ Nikolajević and Petković were the first lecturers at the department of art history of the University of Belgrade, and the fact that both expressed interest in Strzygowski's edition ensured that his prominence for Serbian art history. Their reviews have several common points that are worth considering. On the one hand they challenged Strzygowski's idea of the 'eastern' – Syrian – influence on the miniature paintings of the Psalter.³⁴ Yet although the idea of supposedly eastern origins was one of his most controversial positions that was widely criticised elsewhere, Nikolajević and Petković's challenge did not signify a wider rejection of Strzygowski's position. Indeed, they acknowledged the importance of his general interpretation of the sources of Christian art, agreeing with Strzygowski's contention that the world of Christian art could not be viewed only in terms of the dominant position of Rome and Byzantium. Thus, their differences concerned only

²⁸ Ljubomir Stojanović, ed., *Miroslavljevo jevandjelje. Évangélaire ancien Serbe du prince Miroslav*, Beč: Fotografska reprodukcija i štampa c. i k. dvorskog umetničkog fotografskog zavoda Angerera i Gešla Štampa c. i k. dvorske I universitetske štamparije Adolfa Holchauzena 1897.

²⁹ Strzygowski, *Die Miniaturen des Serbischen Psalters*, I-II.

³⁰ Josef Strzygowski, Letter to Ljubomir Stojanović, 26 February 1906. Archive of Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Belgrade, No. 12857.

³¹ Vidan Nikolić, ed., *Ljubomir Stojanović: život i delo*. Užice: Učiteljski fakultet, 2002.

³² Dragojević, 'Uporedni metod Stšigovskog', 169-170.

³³ Vladimir Petković, 'Josef Strzygowski, Die Miniaturen des serbischen Psalter', *Starinar*, Supplement (Dodatak), 2, 1907, 43-53; Božidar S. Nikolajević, 'Josef Strzygowski, Die Miniaturen des serbischen Psalter', *Srpski književni glasnik*, 1.18, 1907, 60-66.

³⁴ Strzygowski's idea of the Syrian influence on the Munich Psalter was challenged by the French Byzantinist Gabriel Millet. Petković informed Serbian public about Millet's opinion: Vladimir Petković, 'G.Millet, Byzance et non l'Orient', *Starinar*, 1907-No II, (Dodatak Starinaru), (1908), 85-92.

the specifics of the Munich Psalter, for they concurred with his broader view regarding the presence of 'Syrian' influences. Petković in particular accepted Strzygowski's emphasis on the role of Syria as an important cultural centre in the Middle Ages, and claimed to recognize 'eastern' influence in the sculpture of the so-called 'Jonah sarcophagus', an important fourth-century Christian sarcophagus in Belgrade.³⁵

Strzygowki, Meštrović and Yugoslav visual culture

Strzygowski's work on Serbian mediaeval art continued to enjoy acclaim; in 1914, for example, he was invited by the Serbian Royal Academy to participate in a research project involving photographic documentation of Serbian mediaeval churches.³⁶ However, Strzygowski gained additional attention due to his indirect participation in the formation of and support for the idea of new Yugoslav art in the interwar period. Alongside his initial co-operation with scholars in the sphere of mediaeval art, Strzygowski also established contact with Serbian and Croatian intellectuals, scholars and artists who were sympathetic to the idea of the unity of the south Slav peoples and were thus behind the creation of Yugoslavia after the First World War.³⁷ In particular, Strzygowski, who was also interested in events in the contemporary art world, established contact with the Croatian artist Ivan Meštrović (1883-1962).³⁸ Meštrović had exhibited with the Vienna Secession in 1910, and Strzygowski wrote a positive review of it.³⁹ Although a Habsburg subject, Meštrović had become the most prominent supporter of the Yugoslav idea, a view that was completely in line with the politics of the Kingdom of Serbia.⁴⁰ Consequently not only did he receive considerable political support for his work from the Serbian government, he also gained considerable prominence, almost functioning as a kind of state artist of the Kingdom of Serbia. His political commitments were evident in a number of works he executed, including a portrait of Serbian King Peter, sculptures of mythological heroes for the so-called 'Vidovdan temple' ('*Vidovdanski hram*', an unfinished monument to the Battle of Kosovo), as well as medals and public monuments dedicated to the victory of the Serbian army in the First Balkan War 1912.⁴¹ Meštrović's political views and stances were probably most explicitly expressed in the international exhibition in Rome in 1911,

³⁵ Vladimir Petković, 'Izveštaj o radu u odeljenju Narodnog muzeja za srpske i vizantijske starine u godini 1906', *Godišnjak Srpske kraljevske akademije*, XX, 1907, 219.

³⁶ Dragojević, "Uporedni metod Stšigovskog", 169; Strzygowski visited Serbia during 1914: Schödl, *Josef Strzygowski* 186.

³⁷ On the role of intellectuals in the creation of state of Yugoslavia: Ljubinka Trgovčević, *Naučnici Srbije i stvaranje jugoslavenske države 1914-1920*, Beograd: Narodna knjiga: Srpska književna zadruga, 1986.

³⁸ Schödl, *Josef Strzygowski*, 6.

³⁹ Josef Strzygowski, 'Meštrović in der Sezession', *Die Zeit*, 19 January 1910, 17. See, too, Laurence Schmeckebier, *Ivan Meštrović, sculptor and patriot*, Syracuse University Press 1959, 18-19; Irena Kraševac, *Ivan Meštrović i secesija. Beč-München-Prag 1900-1910*, 123.

⁴⁰ Norka Machiedo Mladinić, 'Političko opredjeljenje i umjetnički rad mladog Meštrovića', *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 1, 2009, 143-170.

⁴¹ Ivan Meštrović, *Uspomene na političke ljude i događaje*, Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1969, 7-25; Aleksandar Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904-1941*, Beograd: Gradjevinska knjiga, 2007, 43-60.

where he not only exhibited his work, but also designed the decoration of the pavilion of the Kingdom of Serbia.⁴²

Given Meštrović's public prominence, Strzygowski's contacts with the sculptor cemented his endorsement by Serbian and, later, Yugoslav art historians. Translations and publications of texts by Strzygowski indicate, too, the extent of his acceptance. Strzygowski's essay on Meštrović's Secession exhibition, originally published in *Die Zeit*, was translated in the Belgrade *Štampa* in the same year.⁴³ Strzygowski's lecture on 'The Place of Ivan Meštrović in the Development of Art in the World', delivered in Zagreb in 1924, was translated and published in the magazine *Nova Evropa*.⁴⁴ This was particularly noteworthy in that Meštrović was himself a collaborator and political supporter of the magazine, which supported the ideology of 'Integral Yugoslavism' that supported the legitimacy of the new kingdom.⁴⁵ The close relation between Strzygowski, Meštrović and *Nova Evropa* continued when in 1937 the editorial staff of the magazine published a monograph on Meštrović's memorial chapel (Our Lady of the Angels) to the Račić family of 1922 in the small Dalmatian town of Cavtat, with an accompanying text by Strzygowski in German, English and Serbo-Croatian.⁴⁶

Strzygowski analyzed the work of Ivan Meštrović using his familiar 'Blut und Boden' racial theory. Thus he recognized in Meštrović's art the 'spirit' of the Yugoslav 'race' and interpreted it as an example of 'genuine art' that derived from the power of the blood and soil of Yugoslavia. Consequently, too, he argued that 'the soil and blood of the fatherland are stronger [in Meštrović] than in any other Yugoslav man'.⁴⁷ Although often compared with reactionary racial theories in Germany, Strzygowski's interpretation sat well with certain right-wing ideologically driven theorists of the Yugoslav nation, such as the philosopher Vladimir Dvorniković (1888-1956).⁴⁸ As Dvorniković and others argued, it was exactly in the idea of a 'common soil' and a 'common South-Slavic blood', that one could find basis for the construction of a new Yugoslav nation. This racial theory was particularly appealing because it enabled the religious divisions and different historical pasts of the southern Slavic peoples to be overcome.

Meštrović's popularity in Yugoslav circles as a leading representative artist

⁴² Katarina Ambrozić, 'Paviljon Srbije na medjunarodnoj izložbi u Rimu', *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja*, No. III-1960/61, (1962), 237-266.

⁴³ Josef Strzygowski, Meštrović in der Sezession, *Die Zeit*, (19. 1. 1910), 17; 'Značaj Meštrovića', *Štampa*, No. 322, (1910), I

⁴⁴ Strzygowski gave the lecture in Zagreb in German on 31 May 1924. It was translated as Josif Strigovski, 'Meštrovićevo mesto u razvoju svetske umetnosti', *Nova Evropa*, 10.1, 1924, 2-10.

⁴⁵ See Ranka Gašić, 'Konceptija jugoslovenstva u Novoj Evropi', in: Marko Nedić and Vesna Matović, eds., *Nova Evropa 1920-1941*, Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2010, 139-147. Meštrović, *Uspomene*, 183-184; Nenad Makuljević, 'U ime jugoslovenstva: Ivan Meštrović u Novoj Evropi,' in: Marko Nedić- Vesna Matović, eds, *Nova Evropa 1920-1941*. Belgrade: Institut za književnost i umetnost, 2010, 589-600.

⁴⁶ Josef Strzygowski, 'A Memorial Church by Ivan Meštrović', in: Ivan Meštrović, ed., *Gospa od Andjela. Zadužbina porodice Račić Cavtat*, Zagreb: Nova Evropa 1937.

⁴⁷ Josef Strzygowski, Meštrovićevo mesto u razvoju svetske umetnosti, *Nova Evropa*, knj. X, No. 1 (1924), 5.

⁴⁸ Vladimir Dvorniković's most prominent work in this respect was his *Karakterologija Jugoslovena*, Beograd: Geca Kon, 1939.

of the new state ensured that he extensively written about in popular publications as well as academic art historical literature.⁴⁹ Commentators picked on Strzygowski's writings as providing international recognition and serious scientific verification both of his value as an artist in general and of his 'authentically' Yugoslav character in particular. Even some of the earliest writings about Meštrović attest to this, such as that by the art historian Kosta Strajnić (1887-1977), who drew attention to the fact that Strzygowski 'felt' and understood the real national significance of Meštrović.⁵⁰ It should be noted that Strzygowski's interpretation of Meštrović was completely accepted by Serbian and Yugoslav art critics in the interwar period.

Strzygowski in Serbian cultural life

Strzygowski's reputation came to extend beyond the narrow sphere of art history, and his prominence in Serbian public life reflected not only the subjects of his writings, but also the wider political and ideological situation. This was the case even before the First World War and began shortly after the publication of the book on the Munich Psalter, which was followed by intense public exposure to his work. In 1907, for example, the newspaper *Štampa* published an article by Strzygowski on the iconography of Christ.⁵¹ *Štampa* was not a professional academic journal, and his article was therefore almost certainly intended to contribute not only to formal scholarship on medieval art, but also to current polemics about Christian iconography and the role of orthodoxy in contemporary Serbian church painting.⁵² The search for an 'authentic' national and religious artistic canon in Serbian society led to attempts to re-create a link with Byzantine traditions and Strzygowski's article became an important source of the revival of Byzantine iconography.⁵³ Although this issue was a topic of wider public debate, Strzygowski's view stood out on the basis of his authority as an expert on the subject. Indeed, in the wake of the growing importance attached to medieval architecture and art, Strzygowski was elevated to the role of expert commentator and advisor on this development.⁵⁴ In 1909, for example, a time of considerable political tension between Serbia and the Habsburg Empire following the latter's formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina the previous year, Strzygowski was involved in the evaluation of the project for the mausoleum of the royal family, the Karadjordjević's, at Oplenac, south of Belgrade, one of the most significant public sites in Serbia.⁵⁵ As Meštrović subsequently recalled in his *Memoirs*, the architect of the church in Oplenac, Kosta Jovanović, brought the plans to Vienna for checking by Josef Strzygowski, who confirmed it

⁴⁹ Vladimir Petković, 'Ivan Meštrović-refleksije pred Vidovdanskim hramom', *Delo*, Vol. 57, No. 2, (1910), 297-298.; Branko Lazarević, *Tri najviše jugoslovenske vrednosti: (Narodna pesma-Gorski vijenac-Ivan Meštrović)*, Beograd: Geca Kon 1930.

⁵⁰ Kosta Strajnić, *Ivan Meštrović*, Beograd: Čelap i Popovac, 1919, 16-17.

⁵¹ Josif Strigovski, 'Kako je izgledao Hristos. Ideal grčki i ideal istočnjački', *Štampa*, No. 345, (1907), I.

⁵² See: Miodrag Jovanović, 'Neki teološki i estetički pogledi iz XIX veka na srpsko crkveno slikarstvo', *Saopštenja Republičkog zavoda za zaštitu spomenika kulture* (1997), 193-201.

⁵³ Makuljević, *Inventing and Changing the Canon*, 508-515.

⁵⁴ Aleksandar Kadrijević, *Jedan vek traženja nacionalnog stila u srpskoj arhitekturi (sredina XIX –sredina XX veka)*, Beograd: Gradjevinska knjiga 1997, 11-105.

⁵⁵ Miodrag Jovanović, *Oplenac*, Topola: Centar za kulturu Topola 1989, 47-48.

was in line with Byzantine architectural concepts.⁵⁶ Seeking to present himself as a connoisseur and patron of the arts, King Peter decided to bring experts into the construction of the royal mausoleum, and hence an international advisory committee was set up for the Oplenac project, with Strzygowski being one of its members.

In the interwar period Strzygowski was a constant presence in the scientific and cultural life of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but the experience of the First World War, in which Serbia and Austria-Hungary had been in armed conflict, meant that attitudes towards his work could sometimes be more ambivalent and, on some occasions, openly critical. The year 1922 was Strzygowski's sixtieth birthday and the University of Vienna tried to use the celebration of this event to re-establish earlier academic connections with other states, so it invited Serbian scholars to join the celebration. Despite Strzygowski's personal popularity, the invitation prompted mixed responses in the Serbian academic community. Miloje Vasić (1869-1956), a renowned archeologist, director of the National Museum (1906-1919) and professor at Belgrade University published a letter in the magazine *Novi život* in 1921 on the invitation to the forthcoming event.⁵⁷ Vasić did not deny the importance of Strzygowski's work, but he renounced any co-operation in the proposed Festschrift as a sign of a protest due to the plundering of the National Museum in Belgrade by the Austro-Hungarian occupying army,⁵⁸ and he indirectly accused Strzygowski of participating in the robbery of the treasuries of the Serbian monasteries.⁵⁹ In one sense Vasić's stance was an exception. Vladimir Petković, who was now Chair of Art history at Belgrade, had a somewhat different approach to the matter, in that he contributed to the Festschrift. His essay demonstrated his acceptance of Strzygowski's ideas in that he posed the same question, Orient or Byzantium, while pointing out 'Eastern influences' in his analysis of the Serbian mediaeval church of Djurdjevi Stupovi (near Novi Pazar in southwestern Serbia).⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Strzygowski did endure other frictions and misunderstandings with the Serbian academic community. Thus, in 1927 he was supposed to speak about the impact of Balkan painting across Europe at the Second Congress of Byzantology, which was organized in Belgrade. His lecture was cancelled, however. A number of reports from the congress indicate that there had been a misunderstanding with him due to certain unspecified 'unfortunate circumstances',⁶¹ but one can surmise that it may have been a consequence of the negative attitude to him on the part of some of the audience, for as one of the reports stated: 'Everyone except J. Strzygowski was met with a warm welcome'.⁶²

⁵⁶ Meštrović, *Uspomene*, 218.

⁵⁷ Miloje Vasić, 'Šezdesetogodišnjica Stžigovskoga', *Novi život*, 4.12, 1921, 364-368.

⁵⁸ Vladimir Popović- Neda Jevremović, *Narodni muzej u Beogradu 1844-1994*, Beograd: Narodni muzej, 1994, 19.

⁵⁹ The Festschrift that was eventually published was Heinrich Glück, ed., *Studien zur Kunst des Ostens : Josef Strzygowski zum 60. Geburtstage von seinen Freunden und Schülern*. Vienna, Avalun Verlag, 1923.

⁶⁰ Vladimir Petkovic, 'Eine Kirche des Königs Nemanja', in *ibid*, 159-165.

⁶¹ Vladimir Ćorović, 'Vizantološki kongres u Beogradu', *Srpski književni glasnik*, 21.2, 1927, 127-131.

⁶² K.S. 'Utisci sa Vizantološkog kongresa', *Nova Evropa*, 16.1, 1927, 30.

Although a certain section of the Serbian public adopted a negative attitude to Strzygowski, he continued to undertake extensive research projects in the region of Dalmatia.⁶³ A significant number of his writings – some sixteen articles – were translated from German and published in Serbo-Croatian scientific and literary periodicals. Strzygowski also gave numerous public lectures and published a book on mediaeval Croatian art.⁶⁴ This last book, however, fell foul of the complex internal politics of Yugoslavia, and met a hostile reception in Serbia. Disputing Strzygowski's assertion that there was an autochthonous Croatian medieval architecture, Djurdje Bošković (1904-1990), a curator at the National Museum and author of several works on medieval architecture, and accused the Austrian of 'Croatocentrism'.⁶⁵

At other times, however, Strzygowski could sidestep internal differences. In the interwar period he undertook a wider analysis of the Balkan region in his work on the wider development of European art. As is well known, this involved challenging the traditional art historical emphasis on Italian Renaissance art and placing importance instead on the art of 'the north' and 'the east'.⁶⁶ As part of his attempt to restructure the geography of art history, Strzygowski gave the Balkans a particular role as a territory of cultural transfer from the 'East' to the rest of Europe. His crucial point here was that the art of the Balkan region was the product not only of foreign influences, but also of the strength of the southern Slavic race. This met with a sympathetic hearing for, notably, one of the essays in which he put forward this argument, as well as propounding his totalitarian political views, was published in Belgrade in a journal of Balkan studies.⁶⁷

Strzygowski's death in 1941 was commented on in various obituaries, including one by the art historian Milan Kašanin (1895-1981), who was director of the Museum of Prince Paul, who in *Umetnički pregled* (Art Historical Review) underlined the view that Strzygowski had been 'one of the greatest art historians of our time', emphasizing in particular the fact that he had been a scholar of Serbo-Croatian art.⁶⁸

Despite the German invasion of Yugoslavia in World War Two and the subsequent occupation, Strzygowski continued to be held in high regard by Serbian art historians after 1945. Of course, his pro-Nazi and racial attitudes contradicted the ideology of the new communist Yugoslav state, and these were consequently set aside; instead, he was written about primarily as simply a 'renowned Viennese

⁶³ Vladimir P. Goss, 'Josef Strzygowski and Medieval Art in Croatia', *Acta Historiae Artium*, 47, 2006, 335-343.

⁶⁴ Josef Strzygowski, *O razvoju starohrvatske umjetnosti. Prilog otkriću severno-evropske umjetnosti*, Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska, 1928.

⁶⁵ Aleksandar Ignjatović, *Jugoslovenstvo u arhitekturi 1904-1941*, Beograd: Gradjevinska knjiga 2007, 169-171.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Josef Strzygowski, *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung: Ziergeschichtliche Untersuchungen über den Eintritt der Wander- und Nordvölker in die Treibhäuser Geistigen Lebens*. Leipzig: J C Hinrichs, 1917.

⁶⁷ Josef Strzygowski, 'Balkankunst das Ende von Byzanz und der Anfang des Neuhellenismus in Europa', *Revue Internationale des Etudes Balkaniques*, 2, 1935, 10-21

⁶⁸ U. (Milan Kašanin), 'Jozef Strzygowski', *Umetnički pregled*, 1, 1941, 31. See, too, Dragojević, 'Uporedni metod Stišigovskog', 171.

scholar'. A canonical interpretation of Strzygowski's significance for Serbs was rendered by an eminent professor from the art history department, Svetozar Radojčić (1909-1978), who pointed to his prominent place in the historiography of the Serbian art, and stressed Strzygowski's importance in securing a place for Serbian art into the sphere of international art history.⁶⁹

Recognition of Strzygowski's significance for Yugoslav culture was also confirmed in three encyclopedias that were published during the second half of the twentieth century: *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (The Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia), *Enciklopedija leksikografskog Zavoda* (The Encyclopedia of the Lexicographical Institute), and *Enciklopedija Likovnih Umjetnosti* (The Encyclopedia of the Fine Arts).⁷⁰ All three referenced Strzygowski even though the editor-in-chief and managing director of the Yugoslav Lexicographical Institute, Miroslav Krleža, supervised the texts strictly and ensured that encyclopedias were only published within the framework of communist ideology.⁷¹ The entry on Strzygowski in *Enciklopedija Likovnih Umjetnosti* from 1966 provides a clear explanation of his importance for Serbian art history. The author of the text, Djordje Mano Zisi, underlined his role in the study of Serbian and Old Croatian art and concludes that despite the fact that a number of Strzygowski's theses were now outdated, 'his support for the research of marginalized areas is vital for the development of art history'.⁷² It is notable that the entry in the same encyclopedia on Alois Riegl accorded him considerably less attention, indicating Strzygowski's continuing significance even though his political beliefs set him at odds with the Communist régime.⁷³

Strzygowski's texts have been used once again in Serbian art history in recent years; his idea of the Balkans as a space of cultural transfer, for example, has taken on renewed importance for contemporary studies of Balkan visual culture.⁷⁴ His work had also taken on other unintended historical roles, too. His publication of the Munich Psalter described a seventeenth-century copy of the manuscript in the National library in Belgrade that was subsequently burned in 1941. His study has thus inadvertently become an important source for understanding Serbian miniature illuminations of the Ottoman Age.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Svetozar Radojčić, *Staro srpsko slikarstvo*, Beograd: Nolit, 1966, 13.

⁷⁰ Mirko Šeper, 'Josef Strzygowski', in Miroslav Krleža, ed., *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije*, vol. 8, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod 1971, 200; Anonymous, 'Josef Strzygowski', in Marko Kostrenčić-Miljenko Protega, eds., *Enciklopedija leksikografskog zavoda*, Vol 7, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod 1964, 216; Djordje Mano Zisi, 'Josef Strzygowski', in: Slavko Batušić-Andre Mihorović-Mirko Šeper, eds, *Enciklopedija likovnih umjetnosti*, vol. 4, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod 1966, 338.

⁷¹ Miroslav Krleža, *Marginalije*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik 2011.

⁷² Djordje Mano Zisi, 'Josef Strzygowski', *Enciklopedija likovnih umjetnosti*, vol. 4, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod 1966, 338.

⁷³ Luc Menaše, 'Alois Riegl', in: Slavko Batušić-Andre Mihorović-Mirko Šeper, eds., *Enciklopedija likovnih umjetnosti*, vol. 4, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod 1966, 93.

⁷⁴ Nenad Makuljević, 'From Ideology to Universal Principles: Art History and the Visual Culture of the Balkans in the Ottoman Empire', in: Jaynie Anderson, ed., *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence. The Proceedings of the 32nd International Congress of the History of Art*, Melbourne: Miegunyah Press 2009, 98-103.

⁷⁵ Zoran Rakić, 'Kopija Minhenskog Srpskog psaltira nastala 1672-30. godine i njen odnos prema originalu', in: Ivan Stevović, ed., *Symeikta, Collection of Papers Dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the*

Conclusion

The reception of Strzygowski in Serbia offers a clear case study of the ways in which Viennese art history spread its influence. Beginning with the Munich Psalter study, Strzygowski became a celebrated figure amongst Serbian art historians. Although a number of his claims about Serbian medieval art and the illustrations of the Munich Psalter have since been disputed, his works were accepted as providing important readings that continued to be used by researchers of mediaeval art during the second half of the twentieth century.⁷⁶ Yet more was at stake, however, than merely academic questions of art historical research. For consideration of Strzygowski reveals the ways in which political and national contexts can shape the interpretation and re-interpretation of art historical texts. Certain fields of study he focused on, such as Byzantine art, cultural exchange in the Balkans or contemporary Yugoslav art, were of special importance for Serbian scholars, and the widespread and continuing acceptance of Strzygowski did not depend only on its general scientific importance, but also on the fact that it coincided with larger ideological currents in Serbia and, later, Yugoslavia. As such, it illustrates clearly the intermeshing of scholarship and the demands of state politics.

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⁷⁶ Dragojević, "Uporedni metod Stšigovskog", 170-171.