

APPRECIATING
THE ART OF OTHERS:
JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI
AND THE AUSTRIAN ORIGINS
OF NON-WESTERN
ART HISTORY

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One of the things universities, museums, and other cultural institutions like to do these days is to celebrate their embrace of multiculturalism, of perspectival relativism and the acceptance of all cultures as worthy of study and capable of producing fine art, great literature, and pathbreaking science. Sometimes this is combined with a backward glance at the 'bad old days', usually located in the nineteenth century, the period in which Eurocentrism and imperial hubris reached its zenith. This is all well and good, and even true, except that these self-congratulating narratives leave unexplained how it is that we got from the bad old days to the modern better ones – and conveniently fail to mention how much of the material displayed or pored over by scholars today was actually collected, edited, deciphered, translated and preserved by nineteenth-century Europeans, great and small. We can, and should, criticize their methods of collection, which were often hubristic, selective, and rapacious, resulting in the stripping of local and especially non-western countries of their artifacts and monuments; we can, and should, criticize the Eurocentric attitudes that embedded themselves in the products of this age, whether those be dictionaries, artifact collections, poetic translations, or archaeological excavations. But we cannot deny that there is a complicated and important history that connects the nineteenth century and ourselves, and that some Europeans, even in the most aggressively imperialist decades, were already laying the foundations for decentering the West.

Some of these foundation-layers may seem sympathetic creatures, scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher, whose longing to understand Islam led him to study at the El-Azhar in Egypt, and to the brink of conversion.¹ But there are others whose contributions make us rather more uncomfortable, sometimes because their scholarship proved to be deeply flawed in one way or another, and sometimes because they signed onto unpalatable political causes of one sort or another. Especially noteworthy among this latter category is the Austrian art historian

1 On Goldziher, see for e.g., Céline TRAUTMANN-WALLER et al., *Ignaz Goldziher: Un autre orientalisme?* Paris (Paul Geuthner) 2011.

Josef Strzygowski, Europe's first professor of non-Western art history and one of the top candidates for most obnoxious scholar of the twentieth century, quite a competitive category. Strzygowski wrote books on Coptic, Scandinavian, Islamic, Croatian, Carolingian and Armenian art – to list just a few. He knew a great deal about all the arts of all of the Orient at a time few others cared about the subject at all; his significance lies far beyond his anti-classicism, and his work tells us much that we should know about the collecting and evaluating of cultural goods in the nineteenth century.

Strzygowski's 'orientalist' career was shaped by the conditions of empire – but here we have to do with the conditions of the late *Habsburg* Empire, a place with imperial projects and a cultural politics all of its own.² As the literature on the late Austro-Hungarian empire expands, it has become increasingly clear that we cannot reduce this world to a pale imitation of the German *Kaiserreich*, nor exclude a careful reconstruction of the ways in which provincial nationalisms were generated; we should not presume the inevitability of this world's collapse, nor overestimate the weakness of its liberal elites.³ We are learning more all the time about its quasi-colonial relationships with the Balkans, its connections with the world economy, and about the remarkable diversity of its cultural flourishing in the era of Franz Josef.⁴ But as yet we know very little about Austria-Hungary's role in global cultural history, and in generation of *internal* criticisms

2 I shall not delve, here, into the thorny thicket of debates involving 'orientalism' and its relationship to imperialism, as I have already addressed these questions in my *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2009), especially p. xvii-xxxiv. It is my view, simply, that Said's structuralist starting point was just that, and that we now have a much deeper, richer, and more complicated set of questions to ask about how Europeans (and Americans) – all of *their* diversity – have understood, exploited, despised, admired, ignored, or instrumentalized the regions they, at various times called 'the Orient'.

3 See, for e.g., Pieter JUDSON, *Exclusive Revolutionaries. Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914*, Ann Arbor (Univ. of Michigan Press) 1996; IDEM, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*, Cambridge, MA. (Harvard Univ. Press) 2006; Jeremy KING, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans. A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948*, Princeton (Princeton Univ. Press) 2002; Tára ZAHRA, *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1945*, Ithaca, NY (Cornell Univ. Press) 2008; Deborah COEN, *Vienna in the Age of Uncertainty. Science, Liberalism, and Private Life*, Chicago (Univ. of Chicago Press) 2007; Elizabeth CLEGG, *Art, Design, and Architecture in Central Europe, 1890-1920*, New Haven (Yale Univ. Press) 2006.

4 Robin OKEY, *Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia, 1878-1914*, Oxford (Oxford Univ. Press) 2007; Alison FRANK, *Oil Empire. Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia*, Cambridge, MA. (Harvard Univ. Press) 2005.

of empire, as well as in the transmitting of those critiques to the non-western world. When I first wrote about Strzygowski some twenty years ago, these questions were only dimly on the horizon. It has taken a long series of encounters with experts in the art and archaeology of medieval Armenia, Croatia, India, Turkey, Iran, Scandinavia, Central Europe, and the Byzantine world to demonstrate to me that Strzygowski's anti-classicism belongs not just to European intellectual history – but to world global cultural history as well.⁵

In this context, Strzygowski shows us that empires can produce their own enemies, and methods of self-criticism that, once exported, can long outlive the empires which generated them. If we ask, however, how someone like Strzygowski managed to assemble intellectual explosives powerful and persuasive enough to win over Armenian, Romanian, or Swedish nationalists, it quickly becomes apparent that we cannot treat him simply as a crank, or a multiculturalist *avant la lettre*. Strzygowski's case is one in which we can see the contributions to anti-Eurocentrism made by imperial collecting projects themselves, projects which of necessity involved local scholars, antiquarians, guides, and workmen, imperial subjects who often knew a great deal more than did western Europeans about local monuments, landscapes and artifacts. What I will call cultural history's 'missing persons' are usually written out of art history and archaeology written on the heroic or hagiographic mode, and their contributions are very difficult to recover. Yet in Strzygowski's work, perhaps because it was so anti-canonical and geographically wide-ranging, it is possible to see just how dependent he was on such 'missing persons'; they provided him, crucially, with photographs of and information about artifacts he could never have studied in detail, but also – at least in some cases – suggested ways to interpret materials in accordance with their own views. Missing persons were also important to Strzygowski because he

5 My first foray here was *The Rhetoric of Artifacts and the Decline of Classical Humanism: The Case of Josef Strzygowski*, in: *History and Theory*, Beiheft 33 (December 1994), p. 106-130. I thought, I was finished with him then, but various encounters – especially with Balkan and eastern European art historians – made me think there was much more to the story. I owe new departures in my thinking in part to Alina Payne and Eva Koczinsky, and more recently, to Magdalena Dlugosz and Piotr Scholz, who encouraged me to return to him in papers for their conferences, and to a number of readers and friends who helped me see what I had missed before. These readers include: Garth Fowden, Daniel Barić, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Kris Manjappa, Jerrold Siegal, Gulru Necipoglu, Jasenka Petanjek, Talinn Grigor, Christina Maranci, Alina Payne, Josko Belmarić, Caspar Meyer, Günter Bischoff, Anthony LaVopa, and the many participants in the 2012 conference on Strzygowski held in Bielsko-Biala. I was fortunate, in the final draft, to be able to draw on Matthew Rampley's excellent book, *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State Press 2013).

so detested his academic colleagues; instead of looking to the Viennese court or liberal middle classes for legitimation, he sought, and found, his audience largely outside the usual circle of experts, and instead among local scholars, antiquarians, and intellectuals. Strzygowski's interlocutors were not all, strictly speaking, non-Europeans – for some lived on the continent, in the shadow of the old empires, Habsburg or Ottoman, and others were expatriot Europeans living and working abroad. But they helped him see new things – whether on shop shelves in Egypt, in local museums in Croatia, in out of the way towns in the Ukraine, or in photographs of places he never visited – which he, in turn, incorporated into his narratives. There is a deep history of exchange behind the appreciation of the art of others, and the story of Strzygowski and his interlocutors may help us to understand something more about how new forms of the scholarly imagination took shape in this late imperial period.

There are also deep histories of imperial institution-building and of inter-imperial trade behind Strzygowski's story. To understand the latter's career and context, it is essential to introduce briefly his arch-liberal predecessor, Rudolf von Eitelberger (1817-1885). Eitelberger had championed revolution in 1848, but the Habsburg Monarchy's liberalization, and the bureaucracy's embrace of his ideas and projects, made him, by the early 1850s, an ardent Habsburg patriot. He was the first professor of Art History at the University of Vienna, the founder of Austria's Imperial Monuments Service in 1862, and the creator of the Museum for Art and Industry (where Alois Riegl learned to curate textiles) in 1864. In the 1870s and 80s, horrified by the empire's backwardness in craft production with respect to the French, he oversaw the creation of a network of decorative art schools throughout the empire; these schools were the successors of the now-declining guilds, and would play an essential role in the massive building and decorating projects that took place in Habsburg cities (including Vienna, Prague, and Budapest) in the later nineteenth century. After three decades of bureaucratic and scholarly activity, he was made a member of the Austrian House of Lords, and an honorary citizen of the city of Vienna; after his death, the emperor himself visited Eitelberger's widow to express his regrets.⁶

6 *Eitelberger, Rudolf E. von Edelberg*, in: *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie und Neue deutsche Biographie*, vol. 55, Leipzig (Dunker & Humblot) 1910, p. 738. For an excellent overview of Eitelberger's career, see Matthew RAMPLEY, *The Idea of a Scientific Discipline. Rudolf von Eitelberger and the Emergence of Art History in Vienna, 1847–1873*, in: *Art History* 34, no. 1 (Feb. 2011), p. 54-79; Rampley's *The Vienna School of Art History*, presents an extensive view of the ways in which the Empire shaped the work of the Vienna School, and in this way, presents a similar perspective to the one expressed here, although Rampley and I came to our conclusions independently and by different routes.

Trained in law, philosophy, and classical philology, Eitelberger nonetheless had learned to appreciate medieval monuments by way of his friendship with Joseph Daniel Böhm, Director of the Academy of Engraving at the imperial mint. Böhm championed two artistic principles that impressed the young Eitelberger: he believed artists needed to understand the history of art in order to be good craftsmen, and he disapproved of contemporary and purely classical art's lack of religious commitment (not surprisingly, he championed Catholic medieval art, and was close to Johann Friedrich Overbeck, one of the leaders of the Nazarene movement).⁷ In his own art historical work, Eitelberger ranged across all artistic epochs, but he focused his attention on the medieval monuments so important to the identity of the Holy Roman Empire. He believed that true art was based on natural (that is, neoclassical) laws, and preferred Baroque and Renaissance styles; he became a key member of the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung (from which the Institut für Kunstgeschichte emerged in 1874), whose mandate was to foster the writing of patriotic, but inclusive, histories of the fatherland.⁸ History, and art history, were to be ecumenical, in part as a tactic to blunt Habsburg minorities' political and economic bids for autonomy, and in part to reform (in a historicist direction) the arts and crafts traditions of Central Europe, now increasingly threatened by the demise of the guild system and the rise in mass-produced imports, especially from England and France. Indeed, in the process of traveling, of reading antiquarian works, and of visiting with local conservationist advocates (many of them priests), Eitelberger developed a sincere interest in the monuments of Austro-Hungarian peripheries, and in the minor arts. He undertook his own 'topographical' surveys of little-known artistic monuments, preparing the way for the multivolume series of publications that would appear under the title *The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Words and Pictures*. Supported by the patronage of Crown Prince Rupprecht, this region-by-region survey of Austrian monuments, known colloquially, as the *Kronprinzenwerk*, began to appear in 1887. By 1902 there were 24 volumes in print, the collective effort of 432 collaborators, including many amateurs.⁹ Like the contemporary project produced in Leipzig by the Egyptologist Georg Ebers – *Ägypten in Bild und Wort* (1888-1889) – the *Kronprinzenwerk* was extensively illustrated, and intended for the edification of the well-to-do public, not for scholarly use.

7 RAMPLEY, Vienna School /note 6/, 11-12.

8 On the IföG, see Alphons LIHOTSKY, *Geschichte des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 1854-1954*, Graz (H. Böhlhaus Nachf.), 1954.

9 On the *Kronprinzenwerk*, see, now, RAMPLEY, Vienna School /note 6/, 74-95.

In many respects, Eitelberger laid the foundations for what would be Strzygowski's revolt against the canon by his liberal-inclusive attitude toward provincial nationalisms. He advocated the participation of all in the study of art, believing with what would prove to be a kind of imperious naiveté that every good scholar would interpret monuments in the same way: "The study of art is an area in which everyone with such a vocation is a welcome guest, regardless of whether he is an Austrian or a Russian citizen, or whether he is a German, Latin, or Slav."¹⁰ His work – and the institutions he created – activated a whole generation of local clerics, nobles, and commoners across the empire, involving them in saving old buildings from modernizing destruction, in collecting fragments of the local past for exhibition or imitation, and in promoting the beauties of their hometowns. Universities on the periphery hired their own Polish, Czech, Ukrainian, Croatian, and Hungarian-speaking art historians, and began training a new generation of bi- and trilingual scholars, many of them with nationalist agendas.¹¹ But of course not everyone could or did participate in the study of art – and not everyone's art received the same sort of recognition, from the museums, from the art academies, or from the professional art historians at the empire's center; here the focus continued to fall largely on classical, Renaissance, or Baroque art. Eitelberger's quasi-cosmopolitanism was well-meaning, but not without the taint of noblesse oblige – and he had his liberal prejudices, including, importantly, a dislike of Byzantine styles, which smacked of imperial degeneration, Slavic Orthodoxy, and Russian meddling in the Balkans.¹² By the century's end, champions of local monuments and styles (some of them educated precisely by the empire's schools and universities, or through the Monument Service and participation in the *Kronprinzenwerk*), had wearied of being treated as lovers of 'provincial' or, to describe the experts' views more honestly, 'second-rate' styles.

To this brief history of Austrian institutions in the era of high liberalism we need to add some background about Strzygowski's birthplace, and its position in the Central European luxury trade. Strzygowski was born in Biala near Bielitz (now Bielsko-Biala) in Austrian Galicia, a very poor, northern corner of the Habsburg Empire. One of his ancestors had surely been Polish, but according to Josef,

10 Rudolf von Eitelberger, *Mittelalterliche Kunstdenkmale Dalmatiens in Arbe [Rab], Zara [Zadar], Nona [Nin], Sebenico [Sibenik], Traw [Trogir], Spalato [Split] und Ragusa [Dubrovnik]*, in: *IDEM, Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften*, vol. 4, Vienna 1884, p. 132.

11 For an excellent and detailed description of art history beyond Vienna in the mid-nineteenth century, see RAMPLEY, *Vienna School* /note 6/, 52-73.

12 *Ibid.*, 176.

even his grandfather had been exclusively a German-speaker, and the family was ardently German-nationalist. In this area, the Germans were a tiny and wealthy minority, surrounded by 'Slavs', in this case, Poles; Galicia also had a larger Jewish population than did most of the rest of the Empire, and Bielitz was famous for harboring an unusual number of Lutherans (though the Strzygowski family was Catholic, as were the majority of inhabitants of Biala). It was also famous for being a center of textile production, and trade. Since at least the sixteenth century, Central Europe had been awash in 'oriental' textiles and beautifully-crafted Ottoman and Persian weapons, metalwork, leather goods, and rugs; but already by the mid-eighteenth century, the trade had begun to shift in the opposite direction, as porcelain manufacturers, for example, began making tea sets to please Ottoman consumers. The Strzygowski family was deeply involved in this world of cultural exchange; Strzygowski's father was himself an artisanal weaver who had traveled through Central Europe during his *Wanderjahre* in the early 1840s, learning a wide range of styles of craft production. He then purchased his own textile factory in Biala, and began to effect a slow transition from craft manufacturing into mass production. The Strzygowski factory proved successful, producing, among other commodities, *fezzes* for sale in the Ottoman Empire.¹³

Born in 1862, in the heady years of Ringstraße rebuilding and liberal self-confidence, the young Josef Strzygowski attended Realschule (not a classical Gymnasium), and then a school for weavers; he then spent a year as an apprentice in weaving and book binding workshops in eastern Saxony. The years of his apprenticeship were the same in which a vigorous revival of handicrafts were beginning in Galicia, spurred by the founding of the schools promoted by Eitelberger. In Galicia, this revival featured the rescuing of threatened 'Polish' traditions in the making of fine textiles and wooden architecture, and would culminate in the founding of numerous craft societies and local museums, and in masterpieces such as Stanisław Witkiewicz's villas in the mountain village of Zakopane. It took me all too long to recognize the relationship between these provincial nationalist efforts and Strzygowski's art history, but I now believe the art historian's later infatuation with wooden architecture – as well as with textiles – must be seen against the backdrop of the half-modernizing, half-nationalizing Central European revival of applied arts.¹⁴

13 PIOTR KENIG, *Die Strzygowskis in Bielitz und Biala*, paper presented at "Josef Strzygowski und die Kunstwissenschaften" conference, March 29, 2012, Bielsko-Biala.

14 For an excellent and detailed study, see Edyta BARUCKA, *Redefining Polishness. The Revival of Crafts in Galicia around 1900*, in: *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 28 (2010), p. 71-99.

As so often seemed to happen in the nineteenth century, illness provided the opportunity for reflection for the young Strzygowski, and in his case, he rose from his bed determined to abandon the family business and become an art historian.¹⁵ This commitment to a new career – and one for which his education ill-prepared him – surely required considerable fortitude; not only was he turning his back on the family business, but he was also committing himself to return to the school bench after his cohort had left it, for he could not enter university without re-enrolling in a Gymnasium to perfect his Greek and Latin skills. One can only speculate on how it must have felt, as a Realschule graduate and apprentice artisan to sit in a classroom with younger boys, and to memorize Greek verbs when he itched to study art. In any event, as he prepared to enter the academic world, Strzygowski found himself already something of an outsider by virtue of his unconventional background, his deep knowledge of artisanal weaving, his status as son of a member of the commercial, rather than the educated elite, and his Polish name.¹⁶ It is my feeling – unprovable, perhaps – that these experiences alienated him from the outset from the comfortable neoclassicism of the Viennese *Bildungsbürgertum*.

But Strzygowski's origins at the Empire's margins provided him with resources – for unlike most of his German-Austrian colleagues, he seems to have been able to at least pick his way through Russian, and other Slavic languages.¹⁷ And he certainly gravitated in eastwardly directions. Many of his teachers and early contacts themselves hailed from unconventional backgrounds, and boasted ties to the Slavic world. As a student at the University of Berlin (note that he did not choose to study at the University of Vienna), Strzygowski was much impressed

15 Alfred KARASEK-LANGER, *Josef Strzygowski: Ein Lebensbild*, in: Schaffen und Schauen: Mitteilungsblatt für Kunst und Bildungspflege in der Wojewodschaft Schlesien 8 (March/April 1932) no. 7/8, p. 38.

16 Margaret OLIN, *Alois Riegl. The Late Roman Empire in the Late Habsburg Empire*, in: Ritchie ROBERTSON and Edward TIMMS (eds.), *The Habsburg Legacy. National Identity in Historical Perspective*, Edinburgh 1994, p. 114.

17 Strzygowski claimed that he could not speak Polish and admitted in a footnote in *Orient oder Rom?* (1901) that he has not "so far been able to read" Dimitri Ainalov's important new work on the Hellenistic origins of Byzantine art, and had limited himself to looking at the pictures (STRZYGOWSKI, *Orient oder Rom?*, p. 43, n. 3). But I rather suspect he could pick his way through most Slavic languages, and he certainly had many friends and contacts who knew Slavic languages (including Russian), and knew about recent research being done in these languages on subjects Strzygowski would himself treat.

by the lectures of Eduard Dobbert, a specialist in medieval art who had been raised in St. Petersburg, and retained extensive ties to the Russian art world.¹⁸ Strzygowski then moved to the University of Munich, another center of Byzantine studies, although it was a classical archaeologist, Heinrich Brunn, who arranged for him to spend a year in Rome. But on arriving in the eternal city, Strzygowski seems to have spent relatively little time studying classical monuments. Instead, he made contact with the Russian princess Nadejda Schakowskoy (wife of the German art dealer and archaeologist Wolfgang Helbig), who brought Strzygowski into contact with the Russian community in Rome.¹⁹

Moving amongst the Russians, Strzygowski later testified, gave the young Austrian a much different perspective on the past than the one on offer from Germany's classical archaeologists. The classicists (like Eitelberger) considered Byzantine art degenerate and inept, and regularly ploughed through large amounts of Byzantine spolia in order to find the Attic Greek monuments coveted by both the scholars and the Royal Museums.²⁰ By contrast, by the 1880s, Pan-Slavic perspectives had already informed the studies of a generation of Russian scholars; Fyodor Buslayev and Nikodeme Kondakov, for example, had begun intense studies of early Christian mosaics and icons, the very materials Strzygowski would draw on for his dissertation, a study of the iconography of the baptism of Christ. In this study, Strzygowski would draw explicitly upon recent Italian excavations in the catacombs as well as Russian collections of Byzantine illustrations to address a topic of considerable theological interest both in Russia and in the West: how could one account for divergences in early Christian portrayals of Christ's image?²¹ Strzygowski argued that variations in formal depictions of the baptism – some with a bearded and some with a clean-shaven Christ, for example – might be used to tell the history of art before the Renaissance; that is to say, the evolution of styles might be used to understand historical changes rather than simply to glorify Renaissance naturalism. Contrasting the bearded and enthroned

18 *Dobbert, Eduard*, in: Dictionary of Art Historians, available at <http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/dobberte.htm> [accessed Nov. 17, 2012]. Dobbert also studied with Brunn.

19 Gabriele MIERKE, *Josef Strzygowski und die Sammlung spätantiker und byzantinischer Denkmäler*, in: *Zum Lob der Sammler. Die Staatlichen Museen und ihre Sammler*, ed. Andrea BÄRNREUTHER and Peter-Klaus SCHUSTER, Berlin 2009, p. 112. It is also possible that Strzygowski's connections with Dobbert helped cement his relations to this circle.

20 Kostis KOURBELIS, *Byzantium and the Avant-Garde: Excavations at Corinth, 1920s-1930s*, in: *Hesperia* 76 (2007), p. 398.

21 For e.g., STRZYGOWSKI, *Ikonographie*, 32.

Christ Pantokrator ('Almighty') with the mild and rather effeminate 'Hellenic' Christ already displayed – as W. B. Yeats would later observe – Strzygowski's understanding of the power, rather than the humanism, of the eastern Church.²²

It is worth noting that Strzygowski was already concerned with the evolution of forms of representation, rather than with the lives of particular painters; his interest in iconography, here, did extend to the deeper cultural meaning of artifacts, but this was something he would soon dispense with, in favor of more wide-ranging studies of the history of ornament and form. In many respects, his work in this period was similar to that of his contemporary Alois Riegl, who was also developing a means by which style could be understood in purely historical terms in his studies of acanthus leaves, oriental carpets, and Dutch paintings.²³ Strzygowski was not invested in religious matters (he seems never to have been a passionate Catholic, and later in life left the Church), and criticized the Slavophile idea that Russian folk and iconic likenesses were truer (because more continuous in their transmission, and reflective of deep, eastern spiritual truths) – he calls Byzantine painters, in contrast with medieval German artists, “will-less slaves of a type dictated by the Church”.²⁴ But already in the 1880s he was championing the importance of Byzantine *artistic* models. In his next major piece, *Cimabue and Rome* (1887), he made a strong case for the powerful influence of Byzantium on western Renaissance art. Perhaps for this reason, the young Riegl, who was too much of a liberal to celebrate a Slavophile conception of Byzantium, detested Strzygowski's *Cimabue*, and said so in a review published in *Kunstchronik*.²⁵ Ever afterward, these two very different founders of the study of late antique art would be bitter enemies.

In 1888-90 Strzygowski undertook an unusually 'oriental' and suspiciously Slavophile Grand Tour, visiting Mount Athos, Istanbul, Trapezunt, Moscow and

22 In 1925 Yeats wrote of Strzygowski: “From the Semitic East he derives all art which associates Christ with attributes of royalty. It substitutes Christ Pantokrator for the bearded and mild Hellenic Christ, makes the church hierarchical and powerful.” William Butler YEATS, *A Vision*, London (Macmillan and Co.) 1962, p. 257.

23 Following in the wake of the pathbreaking work of Margaret Rose Olin (*Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art*, University Park, Penn., 1992), there is now a large literature on Riegl, including: Michael GUBSER, *Time's Visible Surface*, Detroit (Wayne State Univ. Press) 2006; Peter NOEVER and Jas ELSNER (eds.), *Alois Riegl Revisited*, Vienna (Verlag der Öster. Akademie der Wissenschaften) 2010; and now Diana Reynolds CORDILEONE, *Alois Riegl in Vienna, 1875-1905: An Institutional Biography*, Farnham, England (Ashgate Press) 2014.

24 STRZYGOWSKI, *Ikonographie*, 40.

25 OLIN, *Forms of Representation* /note 23/, 113f.

St. Petersburg, where he attended the Russian archaeological congress of 1890. Here he surely met the Slavophilic art historian Dimitri Kondakov, as well as his student Dmitri Ainalov, whose work may well have contributed a great deal to the hardening of the Austrian's anti-Roman position. Ainalov would later become an influential expert on early Christian art in the eastern Mediterranean, and publish his breakthrough, anti-Roman study, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*, just one year before Strzygowski's polemical masterpiece, *Orient oder Rom?* treated the same subjects, with the same anti-western animus.²⁶ He would continue to cite the works of both Ainalov and Kondakov for many years, usually citing the translations of their texts, but sometimes also referring to images collections in Russian. Strzygowski surely visited the New Hermitage, where Graeco-Scythian art had been displayed since the 1850s, and perhaps also saw more icons. We have forgotten how active the Russians were in studying and excavating in the eastern Mediterranean and across their southern borders in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; they made essential contributions to Byzantine studies, to Armenian studies, and as Caspar Meyer has just shown, to Black Sea archaeology. The most famous of these scholars, Michael Rostovtzeff, who would later bring his rich knowledge of these unusual topics to Yale University, worked on subjects not terribly distant from those of Strzygowski, and in 1918 would accuse Strzygowski of having stolen Russian ideas.²⁷ 'Stolen' is too strong, surely; but it is remarkable how many of Strzygowski's later obsessions, rare in the West, were shared by Russians of his generation. These would include Armenian art and architecture, the early Buddhist art of Chinese Turkestan and the Silk Road, early Balkan art, and Indo-Iranian *Kleinkunst*. It might be more fruitful, in some respects, to see the young Strzygowski less as an iconoclastic member of the Vienna School, than as a corresponding member of the late imperial Russian academy of sciences.

If Strzygowski's 'Grand Tour' pulled him more powerfully into the Slavophile orbit, it also demonstrated his determination to see unusual places, and his remarkable ability to get locals to help him with his projects. In Bursa, he managed to around an official Austrian refusal to allow him further travel by hiring

26 On Ainalov, see Jefferson A. J. GATRAILL, *Polenov, Merezhkovsky, Ainalov: Archeology of the Christ Image*, in: *Alter Icons. The Russian Icon and Modernity*, ed. IDEM and Douglas GREENFIELD, University Park, Penn. (Pennsylvania State Univ. Press), 2010, p. 145-172; especially 152-156. Long ago, Cyril Mango noted that Strzygowski's *Orient oder Rom?* did not say much of anything that had not already been said in the Russian-language literature. See MANGO, preface to Dmitri AINALOV, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*, trans. E. and S. Sobolevith, New Brunswick, N.J. (Rutgers University Press), 1961, p. i-xv.

27 Caspar MEYER, *Graeco-Scythian Art and the Birth of Eurasia*, Oxford 2013, p. 110, n. 36.

a member of a robber-band to escort the art historian on several weeks of travels throughout Anatolia.²⁸ Strzygowski also made his way to Armenia, where a local scholar showed him a rare and early Armenian illustrated Gospel fragment on which he would publish an article in 1891. How exactly he made contact with the Armenian community is unclear; he may have had introductions from Russian friends, or through Armenian cloth merchants, by way of the textile factory in Biala; but by 1891, at least, he had befriended the Archbishop of the Mechitarists' Congregation in Vienna, Dr. Arsenius Aidynian, who had taken on the costs of publishing Strzygowski's volume.²⁹ After this time, the Armenians would continue to patronize his writings, and he would continue to cultivate them as supporters, promising them, for example, that his publications would show his "complete conviction in the extraordinary value of ancient Armenian art".³⁰ And he would rely on the local knowledge of individuals such as the architect Toros Toramanian, who accompanied Strzygowski on his second trip to Armenia in 1913, arranging introductions to local notables (and making conversation with them possible), and afterwards providing the Vienna professor with large numbers of photographs of difficult to access sites.³¹

The dawning of the age of inexpensive, amateur, photography, was a crucial, but often forgotten, precondition for the diversification of art historical inquiry. It is true, of course, that art historians had used, and would continue to use, line drawings extensively to represent objects; but nothing says 'authenticity' like a photograph, and as it became increasingly easy to take pictures, and increasingly cheap to reproduce them in half-tone, more and more lavishly illustrated art histories, popular and scholarly, flooded the market. Strzygowski was a member of the first generation really able to capitalize on this new technology, and he did so from early on with enormous energy and with great success. Already during his Grand Tour he took some 700 pictures³², and his *Kleinasien: Ein Neuland der*

28 Josef STRZYGOWSKI, *Gegen den humanistischen Sturm* (in WKGA, Strzygowski, Kasten #4).

29 *Ibid.*, p. vi-vi. The Mechitarists or Mekhitarists were founded by an Armenian Catholic priest, Mekhitar of Sebaste (Sivas), who founded an order of monks in Istanbul dedicated to the study and publication of early Armenian religious texts, in the service of Patristics. Mekhitar and his monks moved to the Morea in 1706, and Venice in 1717, where they set up a printing press. This order became quite wealthy, was crucial in the collection and editing of Armenian texts and the furthering of Armenian studies in Europe. The Viennese congregation was formed in 1810.

30 Strzygowski to Frau Kananowa, 11 Dec 1913 (in WKGA, Strzygowski, Kasten #1).

31 Strzygowski to Toramanian, 5 April 1914, thanking him (in WKGA, Strzygowski, Kasten #3).

32 STRZYGOWSKI, *Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar*, v.

Kunstgeschichte of 1903 boasted some 162 illustrations in a book of just 234 pages. This particular book opened with deep thanks to the architects and travelers J. W. Crowfoot and J. I. Smirnov, who had permitted Strzygowski to publish their photographs of sites in Anatolia Strzygowski had not visited, but depended upon to make his arguments. We can already see developing here a pattern Strzygowski would follow throughout his life of badgering friends with knowledge and images of obscure places to send him what he referred to in *Kleinasien* as their “booty” (*Ausbeute*).³³ His ability to ‘show’ his readers monuments that few had ever or would ever see, from Buddhist murals recently carted to Berlin from Chinese Turkestan to carved wooden wagons in Sweden made him the master of the ‘oriental’ minor arts, and gave him the resources for the sweeping diffusionary histories of form that became his iconoclastic calling card. He gave credit, often, to those who supplied him with their ‘booty’ – but of course it was Strzygowski whose name went first on the publication, and who took credit for articulating the new vision.

By 1892, Strzygowski’s unique talents and contacts had won him a professorship at the University of Graz, already a hotbed of pan-German radicalism. At this stage, despite his unusual background and his contact with the Russians, Strzygowski could still be understood as a servant of the Empire, albeit in a way that differs greatly from our usual understanding of this term. Rather than imposing the culture of the center on the periphery, Strzygowski’s role was to celebrate the culture of the periphery, in the hopes that cultural pride and autonomy might be sufficient to ward off attempts at political independence. In this way, he was actually pursuing and pushing further (though I think not consciously) Eitelberger’s aims – though Strzygowski never had the cosmopolitan-liberal illusions of an Eitelberger – nor such generous instincts. He was a man of the next generation, one in which Russification and Pan-Germanism weighed more heavily on the Austrian borderlands, one in which the minor arts revived, and began to seek recognition alongside the ones the old academies had promoted. Even more than had Eitelberger, Strzygowski was able to travel and collect widely, and to make friends with a wide circle of local scholars, many of them now seeking in the artistic sphere the sort of democratization and nationalization provincial advocates were seeking in the political realm.

Strzygowski, then, adapted Eitelberger’s imperial ecumenicism and cultivation of provincial cultural pride for the brave new world that was the *fin de siècle*,

33 STRZYGOWSKI, *Kleinasien*, iv.

adding to it an anti-imperial vehemence – shaped initially by Slavophilic or proto-nationalist perspectives – that played well in the Habsburg provinces, and proved susceptible to translation to many situations across the globe. His books increasingly dispensed with iconography – for he dispensed with learning the necessary languages or deep contexts for the monuments he studied – and became positivist collections of pictures and architectural plans, with more than a little of the *Kronprinzenwerk* about them. They advertised their own encyclopedism, and their display of local monuments that the wider world *should* see. Or, at least, this is how his work fit into imperial projects – at least at first. But then, not surprisingly, both the local monuments and the local pride became ends in themselves, and linked to a growing tide of anti-imperial resentment; one can see in his language the increasing use of words such as ‘*einheimisch*’, or indigenous, to underline the uniqueness of eastern forms. Strzygowski began, for example, to think of Byzantine art as fully eastern, and racially different from the degenerate art of the late Roman Empire, reversing Eitelberger’s liberal perspective such that the Byzantine-oriental East, with all its empire-destroying potential, became the engine of progress, while the late classical, and now Judeo-Catholic, West appeared the degenerate party. And he began to range far beyond Byzantium and the Habsburg borderlands, to draw in Egypt, and then Syria, and then Anatolia and Persia. *Hellas*, as the title of one of his early works had it, had expired in the Orient’s embrace; those who clung to classicism – increasingly under attack by nationalists and modernizers of all sorts – were deluded, and destined for the cultural dustbin.³⁴

After his appointment at Graz, and thanks to a growing circle of contacts and collaborators, Strzygowski became increasingly confident of his mastery over non-canonical forms, and increasingly outspoken about the beauties of Oriental and eastern European art, and his readers – who were also in many cases those who had supplied him with information and ideas – began to see him, as he saw himself: as a crusader with an anti-colonial message, and an art historian who, for once, did not spout Winckelmannian platitudes or preach about the greatness of Renaissance Italy. Instead of reading books in Vienna or living in Florence, he came to their towns and took pictures of their monuments; he admired their

³⁴ STRZYGOWSKI, *Hellas*. I am nodding here also to Strzygowski’s interesting and ambivalent relationship to modern art, which RAMPLEY discusses in *Vienna School* /note 6/, 158-165. He did not see himself as crusading against modernism (except against Impressionism, which he loathed), and indeed thought his studies of oriental art helpful in opening new perspectives on modernist forms, which is probably correct, as the examples below of his Swedish readers, for example, suggest.

ancient manuscripts and appreciated the autonomy of their cultural histories, sometimes by linking them to grand racial narratives. And in an increasingly diverse and prosperous world of readers and institutions, there was space for Strzygowski to propose a radically different way of conceiving Asian – and Mediterranean – art and artifacts. He used his opportunities, his anti-Habsburgian anger, and his unique access to understudied objects to launch an assault on the European art historical establishment – from, as it were, within.

Strzygowski's engagement in Byzantine and Armenian studies opened the gateways; but his next move would be eastward, and backward in time. In 1894-1895, Strzygowski went to Egypt, not to see the pyramids but to study early Christian and Coptic art. In 1900, he agreed to undertake another trip to Egypt, both for his own purposes and to help Wilhelm von Bode, of the Berlin Royal Museums, build his collection of Byzantine and early Christian objects. A letter to Bode, written in March of 1900, shows that Strzygowski was already grinding his anti-Roman axes: "...if you really want to assemble a pathbreaking collection", he told Bode, a man already famous for his studies and collections of oriental carpets, "you must systematically play the Orient off against the conventional view of Rome and Italy's stranglehold on saintedness. Then Egypt, Palestine and Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Greek Italy and finally Constantinople must be brought in, and represented by characteristic pieces. (...) The French and Russians are moving in the same directions..." Strzygowski warned: "Let's get there before the others."³⁵

Bode gave Strzygowski the then sizable sum of 20,000 Marks to buy artifacts, and between October 1900 and March 1901 the Austrian art historian obtained about 1600 objects, not through excavating them, but by buying them. For our purposes, it is interesting just briefly to mention some of the names of the dealers with whom Strzygowski treated in Egypt – in many cases we don't know much more about them. He obtained many objects from one Mohammed Mossaib, who had operated an antiquities shop in Luxor since the 1880s; in Alexandria, he dealt with Greeks, buying a tablet from a certain Lopasaki and an 5th century stamp from Panayotis Kyticas. In Gizeh, he purchased textiles, lamps, and vessels from one dealer (or possibly two) named either Farag or Ali and from another called Mohareb Todrus. In Heluan, he dealt with a merchant with the Swiss-sounding name of Heltzl, and in Luxor he dealt with a probably Egyptian Mallawi; in Cairo he dealt with Abdallah Effendi, Maurice Nahman, and a certain Minotto; the last

35 Strzygowski to Bode, 25 March 1900, in: Gabriele MIECKE, *Josef Strzygowski und seine Tätigkeit für die Berliner Museen*, in: Josef Strzygowski und die Berliner Museen, eds. EADEM et al., Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin) 2012, p. 7.

two, at least, were surely expatriots of some ilk. His collections were packed in boxes and shipped to Graz, where he sorted and cataloged them, and then sent on to Berlin, where some of them would eventually be transferred to the Islamic or Egyptian collections, and others would remain in the early Christian Byzantine section, and largely be destroyed in the course of WWII.³⁶

During his trip, Strzygowski also worked in the collections at the Cairo Museum; but he had found them disorganized, and the other books on the subject of limited use. Frustrated by the archaeologists' failure to treat Egyptian art properly, he decided to leap disciplinary barriers and write a study of Hellenistic and Coptic art himself. Interestingly, this study – published in 1902, again courtesy of the Mechitarists' Armenian publishing house – started by contrasting Strzygowski's local knowledge, gained through visiting antiquities dealers with the more Eurocentric literature on early Christian art. Drawing attention to the indigenous genre of carved bones, Strzygowski criticized scholars for ignoring a form that clearly illustrated the transition from classical to Christian art.³⁷ He paid tribute to the local members of the Société archéologique d'Alexandrie, who had championed the importance of their region, while outsiders ignored it,³⁸ and placed himself in the company of scholars of Hellenistic religion rather than scholars of western art. Again, we do not know how much Strzygowski learned from local (Greek) antiquarians, Coptic Christians, or from Egyptian intellectuals about the endurance and unique beauty of their art, and the superficiality of Hellenism; but he clearly felt he was speaking their language, which was one of local advocacy. It was his contribution, then, to take this language, and turn up the volume such that the scholars at the empire's center could not help but hear it, to turn provincial ploughshares, as it were, into polemical battering rams. And at this, Strzygowski, it transpired, excelled.

In 1901, Strzygowski took what he had learned in Russia, in Rome, in Armenia, and in Egypt – from his collecting endeavors, from the dealers, from his local contacts – and poured into his polemical masterpiece, titled, provocatively, *Oriental oder Rom?* Emboldened by his on the ground experience, which he believed gave him the right to criticize his classicizing, liberal Catholic colleagues, Strzygowski now moved his argument backwards in time and eastward in geography, insisting on the deeply anti-classical and oriental origins not just of medieval art, but now

36 Elisabeth EHLER, *Josef Strzygowskis Ägyptenreise im Winter 1900/1901*, in: MEYKE et al eds., *Strzygowski und die Berliner Museen* /note 35/, 11-14.

37 STRZYGOWSKI, *Kunst in Alexandria*, vii.

38 *Ibid.*, x.

of early Christian art as well. *Orient oder Rom?* addressed itself to a very hot topic in Austrian art circles of the day, the origins of western Christian art (and more generally, the origins of Christian doctrine and ideas), but also invoked in its title one of the most vehemently anti-Habsburgian movements of the day, namely the Pan-German attempts to separate Austrian German from the Catholic Church known as the 'Los von Rom' (or Split from Rome) movement, a movement which found many supporters in Strzygowski's stomping grounds in Graz. It was this context that initially gave *Orient oder Rom?* its notoriety, but the controversies it provoked, as well as the title itself, have given the book long-lasting salience, despite the fact that – except for the opening polemics directed at Eitelberger's successor Franz Wickhoff – it is for the most part a narrowly-conceived and dry read.

Strzygowski surely did sympathize with the Pan-German cause, at least in its anti-Roman animus. But it was not high politics that stirred his passions, but rather his hatred for the Habsburg-loyal members of the Vienna School, and their Rome-centered historiography and aesthetics; feeling ignored and excluded, he hitched his art historical wagons to a hyper-nationalist rhetoric he hoped would vex his smug antagonists. What gave the book argumentative force, however, was also the unusual and novel visual evidence Strzygowski offered. The frontispiece, for example, depicted a painted grave chamber from Palmyra, only recently investigated by archaeologists. To this Strzygowski added material from Russian museums, and from Turkish collections. He depended not on major pieces of architecture or painting but on Egyptian bone carvings, wooden sculptures, carved ivories, encaustic grave paintings, and sarcophagi; a lengthy chapter treated early Egyptian textiles. In every genre, the point was the same: the early Christian art of the Near East could *not* be a Roman imperial import; it was indigenous, *einheimisch*. Of encaustic paintings, for example, he wrote: "I believe that an artistic movement that is so remarkable and so intensely cultivated, even in its everyday applications, cannot have been introduced from outside and overnight; it must be original to Egypt and have had its home there for a long time."³⁹ He reiterated the point in his catalog of Hellenistic and Coptic art, published the next year, in 1902, arguing that the advent of Christianity reawakened and strengthened "the latest power of the pre-Alexandrine Orient, for centuries suppressed by Greece and Rome (...). Gnosticism had already allowed the ancient religions of Egypt, Judea, Syria, Assyria, and Persia to speak again; by the fourth century, however,

39 STRZYGOWSKI, *Orient oder Rom?*, 7.

the Orient was truly in flames. If perhaps Rome retained the upper hand over these tumultuous elements in church matters, in the area of the plastic arts, the newly awakened orientalism triumphed over Rome and Greece."⁴⁰

In invoking Gnosticism, Strzygowski was putting himself in the company of several iconoclastic – and as it happens, hyper-Protestant – German theologians, who had begun to explore the intertestamental, Hellenistic world, and to emphasize the ‘oriental’ nature of Gnosticism, and with it, early Christianity. “On this point”, he wrote, referring to the importance of Alexandria and Syria, “which I perceived spontaneously in examining artistic monuments, I find myself fascinated by the work of men such as Adolf von Harnack and Hermann Usener, who see much farther than I.”⁴¹ In his 1903 *Kleinasien* Strzygowski would return to Harnack to make the points that Asia Minor had never been more than superficially Hellenized, that there had been churches in Syria before Constantine, and that the world of the apostle Paul was essentially an ‘oriental’ one.⁴² It would be taking us too far afield to delve into this context, in which scholars, buoyed up by another recent set of discoveries in Egypt, that of the so-called Oxyrhynchus papyri, began to investigate the deeply ‘oriental’ origins of Gnosticism, and of the New Testament. Suffice it to say that in theology and classics, too, work was underway which emphasized, albeit in studies of the *ancient* world, the power of the East in shaping western thought and practices. Especially after the 1903 death of the great liberal ‘realist’ Theodor Mommsen – whose last volume of Roman history had already begun treating the peculiarities of Rome’s provinces – younger classicists such as Franz Cumont and Richard Reitzenstein turned to the study of ancient mystery religions and ‘oriental’ cults.⁴³ Long before WWI took away Germany’s colonies, these scholars were already hot in pursuit of subjects such as the similarities between Buddha and Christ, the Assyrian origins of the Iliad, and the Persian origins of western monotheism.⁴⁴ Rome, so rich in classical and

40 STRZYGOWSKI, *Kunst in Alexandria*, ix.

41 *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

42 STRZYGOWSKI, *Kleinasien*, 160, 181.

43 See SUZANNE MARCHAND, *From Liberalism to Neoromanticism: Albrecht Dieterich, Richard Reitzenstein and the Religious Turn in Fin de Siecle German Classical Studies*, in: *Out of Arcadia* [British Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 79, 2003], eds. Martin RUEHL and Ingo GILDENHARD, London 2003, p. 129-160; also CORINNE BONNET et al eds., *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain; cent ans après Franz Cumont (1906-2006)*, Rome: Actes du Colloq. Rome, 2009.

44 See here MARCHAND, *German Orientalism /note 2/, Chapter 6*, entitled “Toward an Oriental Christianity”.

Renaissance beauties, but so clerical, aristocratic, and imperial, was no longer interesting, or even threatening for a generation, like Freud's eager to 'stir up the depths', and excavations and scholarship instead moved eastward. Strzygowski was in no way alone in his generation in seeking the oriental underbelly of the western beast.

Strzygowski knew how to mobilize theology for his purposes, and in his early work it proved very helpful in filling in gaps in his arguments. Harnack's claims about the easternness of Paul were a great help in suggesting that Christian art, too, must have oriental ancestry. "Just as little as Christianity itself was born in Rome, so it appears is the case for Christian art", Strzygowski wrote in 1903.⁴⁵ For Strzygowski, dating the birth of Christian art to the period *before* Constantine was essential; this made possible an Armenian and perhaps even Persian origin for elements such as the basilica form or the catacomb paintings. In *Kleinasion*, he insisted that the case had already been proven for Ravenna; it was now generally acknowledged, he argued, that the early Christian art of this city had its origins not in Rome, but in the East. The same was true of Milan and Marseilles, he extrapolated; together these 'northern' cities formed a protective wall against Rome to the South, while opening their backdoors to influences from the North and East.⁴⁶ The end game was to argue for the power of the *völkisch* and possibly Aryan (though he does not use the word) interior as opposed to the superficially Hellenized coastal Mediterranean, and to suggest only in the 15th century did western, classical forms begin to dominate European art. "In this era, for the first time, the conviction set in that Greece and Rome in the Orient as in the West had been dominant since the time of Christ's birth and had only superficially been suppressed by the Gothic style. This book, I believe, comes full circle; it contests [this view], and hopes to bring one of the darkest periods of art history into a securely-established [fest], unified account of development."⁴⁷

Racist lines of thought are, here, already more clear in Strzygowski than they were in Harnack – though in the hyper-Protestant rethinking of Christianity's origins there was also a strong tendency to 'purify' Christian belief of its 'Semitic legalism' and its Roman 'elitism' and 'paganism' by seeking alternative, often Indian or Persian, origins for Christ's fundamental ideas.⁴⁸ If the concept of race, as such,

45 STRZYGOWSKI, *Kleinasion*, 183.

46 *Ibid.*, 208.

47 *Ibid.*, 234.

48 MARCHAND, *German Orientalism* /note 2/, 259-267.

is rarely articulated in Strzygowski's prewar work, that may well owe in part to the intense and enduring positivism of his day, which made scholars extremely hesitate about stating grand theories they could not prove.⁴⁹ An overwhelming majority of Strzygowski's pages are devoted to sheer description of forms, and to depictions of monuments. But I do not believe that, fundamentally, the young Strzygowski was driven by racism, and especially not by anti-Semitism. He was far less careful than many of the linguists and theologians of his day in laying out his grand historiographical conceptions and articulating his polemical positions, even where – as he regularly admitted – he really did not have sufficient evidence to make his cases. Had racial conceptions – and especially anti-Semitic ones – really driven him, he surely would have been willing to articulate these more directly. The object of his hatred was, instead, the one upon which he lavished polemic after polemic: Rome. It was Rome and all it stood for that he wanted to destroy: Habsburg-patriotic history, popery, elite classicism (including the Gymnasium educated *Bildungsbürger*), snobbish Renaissance aesthetics, Viennese noblesse oblige. The Orient, eastern Christendom, Armenian architecture, Serbian minor arts, Egyptian textiles, Persian design, and later Croatian medieval stone carvings, eastern European wooden churches, and Swedish wagons: these were all means to unseat the hegemony of things Roman, though they also – in part because they won him a following – became ends in themselves.

Over the years, Strzygowski's hatred of his all-too-Rome centered colleagues and of imperial Austrian Catholic culture deepened; he loathed and rejected the Riegl-Wickhoff school's comforting narrative of Central European cultural history, one that traced continuities from Rome to the Holy Roman Empire. He found their tendency to homogenize differences and their celebration of the Baroque appalling, and worse, oppressive. He was not even mollified when, in 1909, in one of the Monarchy's typically disastrous attempts at compromise, Eitelberger's chair at the University of Vienna was divided into two, and both Strzygowski and a representative of the Riegl-Wickhoff school, Max Dvořák, received appointments. Strzygowski's position was specifically designated as chair of non-European art history (*außereuropäische Kunstgeschichte*), which made Dvořák (ironically

⁴⁹ As Margaret Olin and others have commented on his use of anti-Semitic stereotypes, I will forego discussing this here, except to say that his discussion of Semites is extremely limited for someone of his day working on the Orient. He does cite Houston Stewart Chamberlain once in *Kleinasien* (p. 181, n. 3), but his reference is incidental, and rather dismissive.

himself hailing from Bohemia) the real insider and favorite.⁵⁰ Strzygowski would continue his alienation from the Habsburg Empire and the Vienna School proper for the rest of his life – while living and working in the heart of Baroque, liberal and then ‘red’ capital city.

Instead of making his peace with the Rome-fanciers, Strzygowski committed himself to liberating national artistic ‘personalities’ from the classicizing, imperial yoke. His publications after *Orient oder Rom?* are far too numerous and diverse to describe here; they range from investigations of Sassanid architecture and Serbian illuminated manuscripts, from Carolingian architecture to Albanian folk art. Consistent throughout is his emphasis on the history of form; he rarely dwells on the meaning of the artistic pieces in question, but describes (and depicts) in lavish detail their architectural and ornamental elements as a means to integrate them into his larger histories of artistic evolution. It is critical to observe how important chronology is for his arguments; already in *Kleinasien* there is a long section entitled ‘Datierungsfragen’, (‘Dating Questions’) in which the author acknowledges the difficulty of dating brick monuments or ornamental panels which lack inscriptions or descriptions in texts. Many churches that *probably* existed before Constantine’s time in Asia Minor, too, he argues, were either destroyed by the Turks or simply haven’t been studied yet.⁵¹ Speculation, in his work, often ended up in polemical assertions, based on scanty, ambiguous, and difficult to access materials. It was one of the keys to Strzygowski’s success, and notoriety, that he was often the first professional art historian to write on subjects others thought incidental or trivial; this meant that his claims, especially on dating questions, were difficult to dislodge. It took a considerable amount of effort and expertise, for example, not to mention the chutzpah to take on Strzygowski’s formidable rhetorical skills, as did Ernst Herzfeld, for example, in his successful attempt to overturn Strzygowski’s extremely early dating of the Mschatta Gate.⁵²

In the course of his investigations of non-canonical forms of art, Strzygowski made friends in far away, and often Habsburg-hostile places. He had enjoyed, for example, a good reception in Serbia, especially in the wake of his 1906 publication of one of the first studies of Serbian art to appear in a major western language

50 Julius Schlosser’s history of the Vienna school leaves Strzygowski out entirely. A new translation of this important text is now available online: Julius VON SCHLOSSER, *The Vienna School of Art History*, transl. Karl Johns, <http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/karl-johns-schlosser-trans-wienerschule-revised.pdf>.

51 STRZYGOWSKI, *Kleinasien*, 158-176.

52 On this controversy, see MARCHAND, *Rhetoric of Artifacts* (note 5).

(characteristically, the Psalter on which Strzygowski wrote had been found by a Croatian linguist, Vatroslav Jagić).⁵³ During his trips to Belgrade, he got to know the leading Serbian scholars, including one who became prime minister in 1905-1906; as a recent essay has shown, Strzygowski pressed his friend to get his book favorably reviewed in Serbia.⁵⁴ He was in such good standing with King Peter of Serbia that in 1909 he was appointed to the jury to decide on a design for the Church of St. George in Topola, which was to feature the mausoleum of the Karadordević kings.⁵⁵ In 1914 – the year a horrific war began precisely between Austria and Serbia – Strzygowski happily accepted the invitation of the Serbian Academy of Sciences in Belgrade to help photograph frescoes in old Serbian churches.⁵⁶ He fell in love with the work of Yugoslav patriot Ivan Meštrović, and by the 1920s, Strzygowski was championing a view of Croatian art, in particular, which was too anti-Roman even for most Croatian nationalists.⁵⁷

In 1912, Strzygowski was even allowed to set up his own small institute, though he did not get the two assistants he desired, scholars who were to be posted to Teheran and Beijing.⁵⁸ With his own collections and those he acquired from others Strzygowski built up this institute, and large numbers of students were trained there. A map of the premises made in the early 1930s shows, in addition to a lecture room, darkroom, and bookbindery, large rooms for western Asia and eastern Europe, and smaller ones marked 'Islam' and 'Austria'; East Asia and Western Europe had to share the same office space. The collection, by this time, amounted to about 4,000 books and a remarkable 52,000 photographs and images, as well as 19,930 slides.⁵⁹ Before entering the institute's seminar, students

53 Nenad MAKUŠEVIĆ, *The Political Reception of the Vienna School: Josef Strzygowski and Serbian Art History*, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 8 (2013), p. 5 (<http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/8-MN/1>).

54 *Ibid.*, 6.

55 Bratislav PANTIĆ, *Nationalism and Architecture: The Creation of a National Style in Serbian Architecture and its Political Implications*, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56 (1997), no. 1, p. 39, n. 68.

56 STRZYGOWSKI, *Altslavische Kunst*, xiii.

57 For an extensive discussion of Strzygowski's work on Croatia, see Suzanne MARCHAND, *The View from the Land: Austrian Art Historians and the Interpretation of Croatian Art*, in: *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean. Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence*, ed. Alina PAVNI, Leiden (Brill) 2014, p. 21-58.

58 Faculty report c. 17 June 1912 (in WUAPF, *Mappe Strzygowski*, p. 96-99).

59 [Anon.], *Anhang*, in: *Josef Strzygowski Festschrift: Zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern*, Klagenfurt 1932, p. 193. The rooms were reorganized when the institute moved in 1922 to conform to Strzygowski's new methodological formulations.

had to pass exams covering the key features of western European art history since the birth of Christ. But they could then choose dissertation topics in European, Asian, Meso-American, African, Polynesian art, or *Volkskunde* – and the list of 40 dissertations produced here by 1932 did indeed range from Chinese mirrors to medieval synagogues. The additional 98 dissertations which Strzygowski oversaw as professor at Graz and Vienna varied just as widely, from the Athena Parthenos to sacred building types in South India; strikingly, 37 of these theses were produced by women.⁶⁰

During and just after the war, Strzygowski continued to cultivate his friends on Europe's peripheries, focusing particularly on eastern Europe, Armenia, and the Balkans. He begged them to send him pictures of newly excavated or hard to get to monuments; a few, such as the Armenian architect Toros Toramanian, supplied Strzygowski with large numbers of photographs and sketches for *Die Baukunst der Armenier*, and were unhappy when Strzygowski did not – as he had promised – put their names on the final publication.⁶¹ But most of them, such as the private scholar Ella Antonias, who provided Strzygowski with architectural drawings of the Haghia Sophia, considered it, in her words, “a great honor” to have him published their carefully-made plates, and raise the profile of their monuments.⁶² For those whose art had never been considered ‘high’ or historically significant, Strzygowski’s work offered encouragement that their scholarship and their monuments were artistically and historically significant – and should not be forgotten.

Strzygowski was, indeed, a vengeful extremist, a man who championed the art of others precisely in order to define what he was not: a member of the classicizing, Catholic, Habsburg elite. And yet, many of the pathways he explored and claims he made sound eerily modern. In an essay of 1913 written for the newly-founded journal *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, Strzygowski made a pitch for the development of a global, comparative art history, which would dispense with classicism as its basis and with aestheticizing as its end object; instead it would be a truly historical and universal science. He regretted bitterly that so many of his art historical colleagues knew almost nothing about even Egyptian

⁶⁰ Ibid., 196-200.

⁶¹ Christina MARANCI, *Basilicas and Black Holes. The Legacy of Josef Strzygowski and the Case of Armenian Architecture*, in: *Acta Historiae Artium* 47 (2006), p. 315.

⁶² Antonias to Strzygowski, 26 January 1906 (in WGKA, Strzygowski, Kasten #1); her drawings were of Haghia Sophia.

art, to say nothing of Islamic, Persian, Indian or Chinese forms.⁶³ He criticized the irrational and demeaning housing of Southasian and East Asian art in museums for ethnography or for natural history, and insisted that art historians should give up trying to find classical traces in the Art of Central Asia and thoroughly historicize and contextualize artifacts such as the newly imported cave paintings and scrolls from Buddhist Central Asia.⁶⁴ In the introduction to *Altslawische Kunst*, Strzygowski made a plea for his readers not to accept the label 'barbarian' for all the forms Mediterranean specialists did not like.⁶⁵ In many places, Strzygowski sounds remarkably like recent critics of aestheticizing connoisseurship, and seems a champion of what we would call global, non-aestheticizing, art history.

In the 1920s, the quarrel between Strzygowski and Dvořák and between eastern (or local) and western origins was replicated in many eastern European nations, and Strzygowski's influence began to outpace that of his western-oriented colleagues.⁶⁶ He was often in Sweden, where his admirers nominated him for a Nobel Prize in 1922.⁶⁷ He also spent time in Finland, where he exerted an enormous impact on – among others – the Swedish-speaking vitalist and student of non-naturalist visual perception, Lars-Ivar Ringbom.⁶⁸ Invited to lecture in Prague in 1924, Strzygowski fueled Czech nationalism by emphasizing the originality of Czech art; so strident was his lecture that he was attacked by the another Riegl-Wickhoff pupil, Vojtěch Birnbaum, who accused Strzygowski of writing like a Czech nationalist and depending on the dilettantish sources.⁶⁹

63 STRZYGOWSKI, *Ostasien*, 1.

64 In a passage probably directed at the leader of the 1st and 2nd Turfan Expeditions Albert Grünwedel, Strzygowski argued that any careful historian would recognize the importance of local developments and intuitively understand that these works could not be explained essentially as Greek imports. Strzygowski argued: "It would never occur to the universal historian working from systematic foundations to put the millennia of Indian art on Greek crutches." *Ibid.*, 6.

65 STRZYGOWSKI, *Altslavische Kunst*, 12.

66 Matthew RAMPLEY, *Introduction*, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 8 (2013), p. 3 (http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/06_8-MB/1).

67 KARASEK-LANGER, *Lebensbild* Inote 15/, 44.

68 Marja VÄÄTÄINEN, *From Ringbom to Ringbom: The Art of Art History of Lars-Ivar Ringbom and Sixten Ringbom: A Myth-Maker and a Myth-Breaker in Åbo, Finland*, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 7 (December 2012), p. 2-3 (<http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/12/vaatain.pdf>).

69 Marta FILIPOVA, *Between East and West: The Vienna School and the Idea of Czechoslovak Art*, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 8 (2013), p. 8 (http://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/06_8-MF/1).

In return, Birnbaum received scathing attacks on the ‘Germanness’ of his methods in the Czech press.⁷⁰ Similarly, Strzygowski found hyper-nationalist friends in Romania, the most prominent being his own student Coriolan Petranu.⁷¹ He spoke at the festivities commemorating the 1,000th anniversary of Croatia in 1925, but also lectured in Budapest and Belgrade – though the Serbs criticized the “Croatocentrism” of *Altslawische Kunst* – and his interpretations of Croatian medieval art continue to be debated among Balkanists even today.⁷² His numerous English fans invited him repeatedly to lecture in the British Isles. Of course he lectured in Germany; but he was welcome, too, in the new Poland. Leiden University, in the Netherlands, tried to acquire the whole of his Art Historical Institute, and even the Swiss were granted a series of lectures in 1921.⁷³ It is said that in Leningrad, post-revolutionary Russians, perhaps forgetting their own art historical traditions, hailed him as “the spiritual leader of the new [era of] scholarship”, though it is dubious that he kept this position long into the Stalinist era;⁷⁴ as we have seen, Mikhail Rostovtzeff had not forgotten, but in accusing Strzygowski of having stolen Russian ideas, Rostovtzeff acknowledged how much the Austrian shared with his Slavophile countrymen.

Within Europe, and on its peripheries, then, Strzygowski was a hero to those who studied folk art, and to individuals we would call cultural pessimists, including W. B. Yeats, Oswald Spengler, and Hermann Graf Keyserling, all of whom developed their own brands of anti-Eurocentrism. Yeats, in a privately published book of 1925, acknowledged that Strzygowski, “that most philosophical of archaeologists”, haunted his imagination; Yeats shared Strzygowski’s view that the East had continuously influenced the West down to the time of the Renaissance, and found his analysis of Northern art suggestive for the non-representational art of his own era.⁷⁵ Strzygowski continued to be despised by his western-oriented colleagues,

70 RAMPLEY, *Vienna School* /note 6/, 178.

71 *Ibid.*, 129f.

72 MAKULJEVIĆ, *Political Reception* /note 53/, 8-12.

73 KARASEK-LANGER, *Lebensbild* /note 15/, 43f.

74 *Ibid.*, 45.

75 YEATS, *A Vision* /note 22/, 203, n. 1. Yeats writes: “From the South, whether India or Egypt, he derives all representation of naturalistic human form (...). He finds amid the nomads Aryans of northern Europe and Asia the source of all geometrical ornament, of all non-representational art. It is only when he comes to describe such art as a subordination of all detail to the decoration of some given surface, and to associate it with domed and arched buildings where nothing interferes with the effect of the building as a whole, and with a theology that so exalts the Deity that every human trait disappears that I begin to wonder if the non-representational art of our

and the feeling was mutual; but he had many friends in Vienna, too – including Alma Mahler-Werfel, who delighted in his ‘creative brain’⁷⁶, and Viennese students and colleagues who would defend his legacy vehemently after his death.

As recent scholarship is showing, by the 1920s Strzygowski had also developed a very large following beyond Europe’s peripheries. His ideas were warmly received by Indian nationalists, who applauded his attempt to throw off the ‘colonial’ classical forms⁷⁷; he befriended Rabindranath Tagore, who once called him “one of the leading spirits of Europe”; Strzygowski reciprocated by dedicating his savage 1923 attack on European culture, *The Crisis of the Humanities*, to Tagore.⁷⁸ The Indian art historian A.K. Coomaraswamy adopted Strzygowski’s segregation of northern and southern racial psychologies to delineate the differences between Aryan abstract symbolism and Dravidian anthropomorphic iconography in his popular and influential *Introduction to Indian Art* of 1923.⁷⁹ In Attaturk’s new Turkish state, Strzygowski was widely cited by Republican nationalists seeking to find Anatolian origins for western styles.⁸⁰ He undertook a strenuous lecture tour in North America in 1921, during which time he seems to have hit every major university on the East Coast, as well as several in the Midwest and Canada. He was offered a job at Santiniketan University in India in 1920, at the (now Polish) University of Warsaw in 1922, at the University of Dorpat (which had become Estonian Tartu) in 1923, and in 1926 at the all-female Byrn Mawr in the United States⁸¹ – a hotbed of avant garde and iconoclastic art connoisseurship.

Now we should make no mistake; Strzygowski loved and promoted the arts of Croatia, Armenia, and the Bukowina in part because he thought all of these styles might help him *prove* his claims about the superficiality of classical forms, and the

time may not be but a first symptom of our return to the *primary tincture*.” (p. 257f.) The primary tincture for Yeats seems to be the state in which men look beyond themselves to a transcendent power; it precedes the articulation of subjectivity.

76 Alma MAHLER-WERFEL, *Mein Leben*, Frankfurt/M. (Fischer Verlag) 1974, p. 73. Thanks to Frank Trommler for making me aware of this connection.

77 See his essay for the Indian Society in London c. 1925.

78 KARASEK-LANGER, *Lebensbild* Inote 15f, 43.

79 Juhjung RHI, *Reading Coomaraswamy on the Origin of the Buddhist Image*, in: *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 70 (2010), no. 1, p. 162f.

80 Udo KULTERMANN, *Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte: Der Weg einer Wissenschaft*, Wien 1966, p. 294; see Christina MARANCI, *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation* (Louvain: Peeters 2001); Kishwar RIZVI, *Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse on ‘Persian Art’ in the Early Twentieth Century*, in: *Muqarnas* 24 (2007), p. 59.

81 *Nachruf Josef Strzygowski* (in V-WA Philos. Fac., *Mappe Strzygowski*, p. 125-127).

real origins of all important styles in what he began terming the 'Aryan' East.⁸² "To him," wrote Yeats in 1925, "the East (...) is not India or China, but the East that has affected European civilization, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Egypt"⁸³ – that is to say, Strzygowski's Orient, and to some extent his 'North', too, remained a means to anti-Roman, or anti-Western, ends. Increasingly invested after the Great War in juxtaposing the racial psychologies of the North and South, he became also, increasingly, a self-pitying megalomaniac, resentful that he did not enjoy the acclaim among western art historians he knew he deserved. It is quite clear that he cared about politics only insofar as events aided him in his art historical crusades. There is a particular ugly letter in his Nachlass in which he pled with Kaiser Karl to pay to publish his *Baukunst der Armenier* as a means of *Wiedergutmachen* for having allowed the Turks to murder so many Armenians.⁸⁴ But it is hardly credible that someone who spent an entire career promoting non-western forms could have been entirely insensible to their charms. He seems to have spent a great deal of his own money on travel, books, and photographs, and he did train students – including a considerable number of women – in fields that his colleagues eschewed. He placed students in Turkey, Romania, Poland, and India; some of them, such as Stella Kramrisch, who made a successful career as an anti-colonial art historian in India, went on to inspire many non-western as well as western scholars. His polemics offended some, but in later years would also give many non-racist scholars of early Islam and late antiquity – such as Oleg Grabar and Peter Brown, Garth Fowden and Thomas DaCosta Kauffmann – much food for thought. The fields into which he wandered and the local scholars on whose work he drew often had reason to thank him for raising the profile of their subjects, and their nationalist causes – though they also would have to struggle with the very long shadow he, and his Aryan racism, cast.

This Aryan racism, and Strzygowski's enthusiasm for Nazism in the 1930s, was reason for the more western-oriented and liberal members of the Vienna School to dismiss him already in the 1920s, and has prevented scholars in the West from discussing the Austrian's impact until relatively recently. In the last twenty years, however, this important aspect of Strzygowski's thought and career has been more

82 In *Altslawische Kunst*, he said the following about Croatian art: "There is almost no other country in all of Europe in which the remains of the pre-Roman era, that is, the period before the Kaiser and Pope sacrificed all indigenous art to their will to power and implemented everywhere an elitist form of art, can be so exactly documented through inscriptions as in Dalmatia and in one example also in the interior of Croatia itself." STRZYGOWSKI, *Altslawische Kunst*, 65.

83 YEATS, *A Vision* /note 22/, 257.

84 STRZYGOWSKI to Kaiser Karl, 27 June 1918 (in WKGA, Strzygowski, Kasten #1).

closely studied, and it continues to be under investigation.⁸⁵ It seems to me clear that sometime during the Great War he became a convinced Aryanophile and champion of Iranian origins; there are signs he was moving in this direction before the war, but it is my belief that he did not really articulate a full-on Iranian origins thesis until his *Altai-Iran* of 1917. By this time, he had long since given up on Slavophilism; if he ever believed in it, he had done so not as a self-conscious Slav, for he never saw himself as such, but simply because it seemed a useful means by which to harry Habsburgian smugness. One might say that he had always been a Pan-German, of sorts, except that his tastes and research ranged far, far beyond things German and Gothic. He had occasionally voiced anti-Semitic perspectives, but I don't believe that hatred of the Jews is what drove him. Although he sympathized with the Nazi party, and in 1938 called Hitler Austria's "Heiland" or savior, who would strengthen the country's resolve to resume its role as a barricade (Schutzwall) against "Jewdom flooding in from the East" (vom Osten wachsenden Judentums), he also found the Nazis' cultural policy disappointing. Ernst Gombrich later claimed that just after the Anschluss, Strzygowski had eagerly urged the Nazis to erect a Zarathustran fire temple on one of the hills outside of Vienna, but was keenly disappointed and had little more to do with the party when this idea went nowhere.⁸⁶ In a manuscript I found in his archive, he also complained bitterly about the regime's preference for Volkskunde over his own 'comparative art history' and the Nordic movement's inability to appreciate the Iranian (rather than Greek) origins of Northern art. He wrote: "With respect to the volksdeutschen Bewegung I feel completely cold, although I still regard it with concern and full of grateful affection (Liebe) for having freed the homeland from the Habsburgian swindle (Habsburgschwindel)."⁸⁷ So perhaps it is no irony that in the end, his contributions to art history were valued more by Armenian and Iranian patriots than by German ones.⁸⁸

85 Margaret OLIN, *Art History and Ideology: Alois Riegl and Josef Strzygowski*, in: *Cultural Visions: Essays in the History of Culture*, ed. Penny SCHINE GOLD and Benjamin C. SAX, Amsterdam (Rodopi) 2000, p. 151-170; it is perhaps interesting to note that the Viennese scholar who oversees Strzygowski's archive told me in the summer of 2013 that requests to see this (disorganized and small) collection now exceed requests to see the papers of all of the other members of the Vienna School.

86 GOMBRICH interview with Richard WOODFIELD, April 1988. Thanks to Richard Woodfield for providing me a copy of this interview.

87 JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI, *Die Vergleichende Kunstforschung bricht Bahn*, unpublished undated mss (in WKGA, Strzygowski, Kasten #4).

88 See MARANCI, *Medieval Armenian Architecture* (note 80); RIZVI, *Art History and the Nation* (note 80); TALINN GRIGOR, 'Orient oder Rom?': *Qajar 'Aryan' Architecture and Josef Strzygowski's Art History*, in: *Art Bulletin* 89 (2007) no. 3, p. 562-590.

Strzygowski told these readers what they wanted to hear – or they picked out of his work the tributes to national autonomy and to cultural and ethnic continuity they found appealing and useful – in part because he had listened to and depended on some of their anti-imperial forefathers.⁸⁹ It is too much to say that Strzygowski's Schadenfreude orientalism was merely the West's repackaging of our "missing persons" campaigns for cultural autonomy – for they learned from him, as he learned from them. They shared an unhappiness with empire, and a desire to see things differently than did the liberal elite. We should be able now to see Strzygowski's connoisseurship, as it were, in a new light – but perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised by what we have learned. Part of the appreciation of the art of others lies in seeing their monuments in their terms; another part lies in the giving up, or in the case of Strzygowski, of the passionate critique, of the hegemonic aesthetic philosophy of the day. Sometimes understanding otherness takes the form of inclusion; in the case of Strzygowski, it took the form of revenge. It seems to me that modern art history's multicultural imagination owes something both to inclusion, *and* to revenge, both to Strzygowski, and to the "missing persons" who enabled, admired, and in some cases continue his work.



ARCHIVAL REFERENCES:

WKGA: Wien, Kunstgeschichtliches Institut Archiv, Nachlass Strzygowski
WUAPK: Wien, Universitätsarchiv, Fakultät Kunstgeschichte, Mappe Strzygowski.

89 L. Török also nicely summarizes the reasons for Strzygowski's appeal to later art historians in his discussion of his impact on the study of Coptic art: "It is due to the highly characteristic amalgam of Strzygowski's imposing knowledge of monuments from wide areas of art history, the positivist pedantry of his technical descriptions of the items in his catalogue, and the elementary force of his apodictic statements on the character and international context of Coptic art that his *Koptische Kunst* continued to define the main current of the discourse on the history of Coptic art for the next seventy or so years – even though he offered no more than a sort of ethno-psychological characterization of his subject instead of providing an academic framework for its chronological, stylistic, and iconographic assessment. The emotional charge of Strzygowski's sympathetic image of the artistic production of a suppressed people is also responsible to a considerable extent for the subjective approach of many modern art historians." László Török, *Strzygowski's Coptic Art*, in: *Acta Historiae Artium* 47 (2006), p. 309.