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Josef Strzygowski in the letters and diaries of Gertude Lowthian Bell

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present the impact of Josef Strzygowski on the research of Gertrude Lowthian Bell. The history of their contacts can be recovered thanks to the invaluable correspondence and diaries of the English traveller which are now preserved in the Robinson Library at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Between 1896 and 1920, in notes and letters addressed to her father and stepmother, she expressed admiration and true respect for Strzygowski. Bell's early fascination with his approach concerning re-evaluation of art of the Near East was expanded at the turn of the century. An important part of this development is attributed to the French archaeologist Salomon Reinach who encouraged Bell to review Strzygowski's "Mschatta". This fact, mentioned in letters, can be claimed to be one of the key-points of her career. Strzygowski responded by reviewing her "Notes on a journey through Cylicia and Lykaonia" and expressed the belief that thanks to Bell's presentation of Christian art of the Near East the whole world will travel there to see this fruitful *Neuland* for the history of art.

In the following years their contacts became more frequent and developed into a partnership. Strzygowski's invitations to Graz and Vienna were meticulously recorded by Bell. After each trip to the Near East, she was personally presenting him new findings and information gained on the way. The effects of this collaboration were significant for the development of the issues and became widespread thanks to "Amida" co-edited by Strzygowski. As a result of his request, mentioned in one of the letters, Bell wrote a chapter about the art and architecture of the Tur 'Abdin plateau which is the first monograph of the early Byzantine churches and monasteries of that region.

Information included in the letters and diaries of Gertrude Lowthian Bell can supplement the methodological and historical analysis of the heritage of Josef Strzygowski at the conference in Bielsko-Biała. Contacts between these two scholars can be used in order to determine a range of Strzygowski's ideas and his impact on the new generation of researchers. Bell's opinion of her mentor is clearly expressed in comments making the claim that he is *the greatest living authority*.