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The Pre-Romanesque Art of Pagan Slavs? More on what Josef Strzygowski did not Know.

Abstract

In this presentation the author would like to demonstrate the following.

1. That a view of European culture limited to Western Europe is untenable in the Europe of today.
2. That in Croatia only there are about 400 Pre-Romanesque monuments of Christianized Slavs and that the medieval art in the vast area between the Baltic and the Adriatic is rich and varied.
3. What about the Slavs in the same area before Christianization? They must have had some art and culture. The author admits his nearly total ignorance of the issue outside the area of his own research, and admits it gladly, hoping to initiate a dialogue with those who know more. A joint approach to the issue is more than overdue.
4. The author will present what he believes to be the first traces of a pre-Christian, pagan, Slavic cultural landscape in Croatia, identified with the help of an interdisciplinary effort involving also cultural anthropologists and linguists.
5. None of the above would have been possible without the lucid insights and intuition of Josef Strzygowski who, to quote David Buxton, “we all owe a debt.” Many new material discoveries have been made since Strzygowski’s time by which he would have been delighted, and which would have certainly made his theorizing more coherent and better founded. Here we will emphasize theoretical aspects that, we maintain, Strzygowski would most likely develop himself were he alive and working today, and which we would not have been able to formulate without his brilliant albeit apparently arbitrary vision.