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978-1-107-43450-9 - Russian Mediaeval Architecture: With an Account of the Transcaucasian Styles and their Influence in the West

David Roden Buxton

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RUSSIAN MEDIAEVAL
ARCHITECTURE

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Church of the Intercession on the River Nerl, at Bogolyubovo, near Vladimir. 1166

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R U S S I A N M E D I A E V A L
A R C H I T E C T U R E

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
TRANSCAUCASIAN STYLES AND THEIR
INFLUENCE IN THE WEST

BY

DAVID RODEN BUXTON

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1934

Cambridge University Press

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107434509

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First published 1934

First paperback edition 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-43450-9 Paperback

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NOTE ON ILLUSTRATIONS

I have to thank Professor E. H. Minns for two interiors [Plates 48–9]; for two views of Moscow [Plates 50, 2; 51, 1]; and for the books from which certain Ukrainian views [Plates 56, 2, 3; 57] were reproduced. (Those on Plate 57 with the sanction of the Orchis Verlag, Munich.)

The Rev. H. W. Harcourt kindly lent ten valuable photographs of Armenian buildings taken by himself in 1921–2 [Plates 83, 1; 88, 1; 89; 90].

The block for an interior [Plate 47] was supplied by the Oxford University Press.

Professor Josef Strzygowski of Vienna kindly allowed the reproduction of the six plans on page 83 from his work *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*.

The following drawings and photographs derive from various Russian sources: Plates 7, 4; 18–20; 28, 2; 56, 1, 4; 72, 2; 73, 1, 2; 74, 2. All the plans and sections (except those of Transcaucasia) are also taken from Russian books. I have, however, myself added the domes in D, p. 65.

The remaining 192 photographs reproduced are from my own negatives. The following date from 1927: Plates 50, 1; 51, 2; 55, 4; 64, 1, 2; 65, 2. Among the rest, all those of the central Russian and Volga towns, and most of Moscow, as well as those of Novgorod, Pskov and Kiev, were taken in 1928. All those of wooden architecture and of Transcaucasia, as well as the one of Veliki Ustyug and some of Moscow are the product of my last Russian journey, in 1932.

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PREFACE

This book is the outcome of an interest in Russian architecture originally stimulated in 1927, when I visited the Soviet Union for the first time. The bulk of the photographs were accumulated in the course of two long journeys undertaken for that special purpose in the summer and autumn of 1928 and 1932. Between these dates, owing to preoccupation at Cambridge in a wholly different field of learning, I was obliged to leave the subject until an opportunity should come to pursue it. Since the middle of last year, however, I have been able freely to devote myself to the absorbing study which now finds fruit in this volume.

I have no doubt that many students of mediaeval architecture will welcome an account, short and imperfect though it be, of a style so much neglected, and on which literature is so scarce, that there are few to recognise its existence as a possible subject of study. At the same time I hope that even those who take no special interest in architecture may enjoy the illustrations, which in this country have at least the merit of novelty.

To the writer, however, these pictures must always have a meaning which others cannot share with him. Journeys in obscure parts of Russia could only be performed under conditions so peculiar and so uniformly difficult that to fulfil any part of one's programme seemed at the time a notable achievement. One and all the photographs recall, sometimes with startling vividness, incidents and experiences of travel, with their attendant thoughts and emotions. There are those which suggest moments of high satisfaction—the end of a tedious and sleepless railway journey lasting through the night; the first sight of some remote village, the goal of a long day's tramp through the forests round the White Sea; the triumphant conclusion of a stiff climb in the Caucasus.

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PREFACE

There are others whose message is painful, so that one prefers to turn the page lest the memories they harbour should come back too forcibly.

My photographs, moreover, have lived through dangerous vicissitudes, and their survival calls for thankfulness. Those of 1928 underwent abuse and violation truly horrifying to a photographer; a few were destroyed or lost, but the remainder I carried home in safety. Those, on the other hand, of 1932, were seized and retained by the Customs authority of Batum, and for months their recovery remained a matter of uncertainty.

In the hope of increasing the value of the book to those more deeply interested, I have included a number of plans and sections, especially in Part I, as materials on Russia are so difficult of access. I have refrained, however, from fully describing these diagrams in the text; they are left to convey their own message to those who care to study them. The two maps, I believe, will be acceptable to all. In them prominence is given more especially to places of architectural importance, and many small villages are included solely because they find mention in the text. Modern towns are mostly omitted, but frontiers, for the sake of convenience, are shown following the often fantastic courses which recent political changes have given them.

It is not merely from a sense of duty that I here make known my indebtedness to those who have helped in the creation of this book. Firstly I would offer my cordial thanks to Professor Minns of Cambridge, who has given freely, and on many matters, help and advice which he alone is able to give; and has shown an appreciation and tolerance which, in view of his immense learning, have been a particular pleasure and encouragement to me. To the staff of the University Press I would express my gratitude for the trouble they have taken in the production of the book. My obligations in the matter of illustrations are particularised in a special note, and the great deal I owe to the authors of works in various languages may be gathered from the bibliography.

But my greatest debt remains to be recorded. To Charles Roden and Dorothy Frances Buxton is due the very existence of this book, and all

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PREFACE

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of mine that it contains. For assuredly, without their constant help, not only in practical, but also in more abstract ways, there would have been no journeys in Eastern Europe; no photographs; no book. To them, therefore, I dedicate it; and I am glad at this moment, when about to sail for another quarter of the globe, to leave in their hands a small token of true appreciation.

D. R. B.

LONDON

October 1933

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

A standard system has been used in the transliteration of Russian words and place names. The following list contains only the less obvious English equivalents employed.

Russian e	English e (generally pronounced ye)
ë (printed e)	yo
й (following vowels other than и and я)	y
ы	y
ий (revised spelling ий)	i
ий	y
ь and ъ	(omitted)
ж	zh (as <i>s</i> in <i>leisure</i> ; French <i>j</i>)
х	kh (as <i>ch</i> in <i>loch</i> ; German <i>ch</i>)

The other consonants used have their ordinary English values. The vowels all denote single sounds, as in most continental languages, not as in English.

The word *собор* (originally denoting *assembly* or *synod*) is applied by extension of the meaning to important churches in Russia. Although this word is generally translated 'cathedral', a Bishop's seat is not implied, and I have sometimes used the simple transliteration *sobor* instead.

Where a transliterated Russian word appears for the first time, it is always given in the nominative singular.

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