

ACADEMIC REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. M Arch Panayot Krasimorov Savov, PhD

(Public Buildings Dept. at The Faculty of Architecture at The University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Sofia)

of the materials submitted under the procedure for acquiring PhD degree of M Arch Mitko Mitkov as a doctoral student in the Department of Architecture of NBU, Master's Faculty, in the doctoral program "Theory and History of Architecture" in professional direction 5.7. Architecture, construction and geodesy, with scientific supervisor Assoc. Zarko Uzunov

M Arch Mitko Mitkov was enrolled in doctoral studies by Order 3-PK-169/03.01.2018 of the Rector of the NBU and was dismissed with the right of defense by Order 3-PK-173/03.04.2020 of the Rector of the NBU. This review is written according to Order 3-PK-276/11.07.2023 of the Rector of the NBU concerning the determination of the Scientific Jury as part of the procedure.

1. Brief biographical data

M Arch Mitko Mitkov completed his secondary education at "Hristo Botev" high school in Vratsa in 2010. He graduated with a Master of Architecture in 2016 at NBU, specializing in "Architectural and Urban Heritage." As a part-time teacher at Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" for 2016-2017 arch. Mitkov conducted training and exercises as part of the theoretical course of Prof. M Arch Margarita Koeva, D.Sc. Between 2016 and 2019 M Arch Mitkov worked as an expert in the "Organizational Planning and Construction Control" department of the municipality of Vratsa, and from March 2023 until now, he has been the chief architect of the same municipality. Between 2016 and 2019, he managed his own architectural practice. M Arch Mitkov is a CAB (RC Vratsa) member with full planning legal rights for 2023.

2. General description of the materials presented in the procedure

M Arch Mitko Mitkov participates in the procedure with the following:

- Dissertation titled "Contribution to the Architecture of Bulgaria Between World Wars. Selected Projects by Vassiliov-Tsolov";
- Abstract for the dissertation work;
- Appendix to the dissertation work.

3. General characteristics of the applicant's activity

3.1. Educational and pedagogical activity

Data has yet to be provided for the educational and pedagogical activity of the doctoral student. Brief information in this sense is given only in the autobiography of M Arch Mitkov, where it is noted that between October 2016 and June 2017, the doctoral student worked as a part-time assistant/teaching assistant in the OKN specialty at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" as part of a team with leading teacher Prof. Koeva.

3.2. Evaluation of dissertation publications

The publications that the PhD student provided (pp. 100-101 in the thesis) - unfortunately only as titles and indicated years, issues and pages - are placed in the journals INSPIRO (3 publications) and SLEDVA (1 publication). Both journals are included in the National Reference List (NRL) of Modern Bulgarian Reviewed Scientific Publications with NRL ID 1468 and NRL ID 1022, respectively, as the first journal, which, according to its description in NACID, is a journal of *respiratory medicine* causes some confusion. For the 2019 scientific conference at the NBU, at which the doctoral student presented a report entitled "The Development of Bulgarian Architecture Between the Two World Wars, Vassiliov-Tsolov Design Office", no publication data can be found in the NRL. It should be noted that the described publications - judging by their titles, are related to a study of the architectural work of probably the most significant Bulgarian architects of the period between the First and Second World Wars, which allows the present review to relate them positively to the topic of the proposed dissertation work. As published in NRL journals, they provide the doctoral student with the necessary number of points for scientometrics according to the requirements of indicator 8 and group of indicators Γ for area 5 and professional direction 5.7, indicated in the relevant regulations.

3.3. Contributions (scientific, scientific applied, applied)

In the text of the dissertation, there are no listed and formulated contributions, nor is there a concrete thesis. Conditionally, the conclusions about the use of directionality of the audience (conditional axiality), preparatory space, and distributiveness of the vestibular space (pp. 93-96) can be accepted. However, these are more or less elements of any conventional public building. Instead, a contributing potential is found in the specific use of the so-called "tsela" by Vassiliov and Tsolov or "the place that is not for visitors, but is a symbolic element" (p. 96), as well as in the solutions of the tandem concerning design in a complex architectural environment - in the buildings of The Sofia's University Library and BNB.

4. Significance of the research problem

Much has been written about the work of the "Vassiliov-Tsolov" tandem in a historiographical aspect. However, as an appearance, it is mainly concentrated in the period before 1989 - with the primary manifestation being the book on Dimitar Tsolov by Assoc. Prof. M Arch Iskra Dandoloва, Ds.C. from 1987. To date, Vassiliov and Tsolov, Belkovski and Dančov, as well as Ovcharov, are to some extent socially forgotten, although their buildings in the centre of Sofia are still operating with their inherent dignity and measure and a high level of cultural significance and purpose. In this sense, periodically examining and analysing the architectural creativity of the interwar period is particularly important - not only as a form of historical traceability but also as an opportunity for architectural identification. If in the time of Vassiliov and Tsolov, in the triad of client, contractor and architect, the latter was primal for architecture and construction, today he mainly occupies the administrative bottom of the arrangement, which condemns architecture to a fate where it cannot be an ambassador of culture. The essential rehabilitation of architecture as a cultural medium passes through research such as that proposed by the doctoral student M Arch Mitkov; the periphery still contains the potential for cultural revival; the rules here are much possible and susceptible to interpellation and authorial nuance.

5. Justification of the goals and objectives, compliance of the selected research methodology with the set goals and objectives

This review finds the study's object, subject, purpose, tasks and scope to be well chosen. The proposed manifestations of the system-structural analysis of the different levels of culture in the interwar period, the so-called genetics of the architectural manifestations, and the categorical utilitarian organization of the buildings, especially the urban planning types of solutions for the individual objects, represent the logical points through which each of the selected objects from the work of Vassiliov and Tsolov is examined. The remark here is more related to the possibility that each of the symbolic public typologies can be considered with two examples each (two community centres, two complexes with theatre halls, two administrative buildings, two libraries, and two banks) so that continuity and degree of sustainability can be traced in the authors' strategies and searches concerning the analytical points listed by the doctoral student.

6. Recommendations and critical notes

Among the main recommendations to the doctoral student is to increase his publication activity, which would help him to be analytically more specific and generally focused in his future texts. The historiographic basis of the building manifestations is fundamental and inevitable. However, in places in the dissertation text, it is more extensive than necessary, too monographic, and the narrative basis could be indicated as specific outer sources - among them mainly that of Assoc. Prof. Dandoloва. What could make the doctoral student proud is the alternative flow of information he sought - through conversations with Prof. Tsolov's students and by finding specific archival documentation. In the generally available literature relating to the Vassilov-Tsolov architectural practice, it is found that it ceased to exist in 1948. However, the personal life developments after that of the individual authors could reversibly shed new analytical light on the active years of the tandem and, accordingly, on the relationship between the two great architects both in working and psychological-personal terms. In this sense, the present review defines the documentation found by the doctoral student of Vassiliov's application for an associate professorship at EBI (now UACEG) in 1954 as significant (p. 48). After 1948, information about Vassiliov was far scarcer than that about Tsolov, mainly due to Tsolov's academic development, which was subsequently registered administratively. Nevertheless, in the course of the actions, doubt remains about a set of events that predetermined each author's different forms of realization after the end of their tandem. This review pays special positive attention to Mitkov's analysis regarding the design of the BNB building (p. 80). The doctoral student somewhat timidly approached his interpretative findings. However, his hypothesis about the rotated expected volume of the new building compared to that of the mosque is potential for an independent theoretical study, which in turn could provide guidelines for the conditional deciphering of Vassiliov's approach when solving similar complex morphological tasks of an urban planning nature, where two coordinate systems should meet not just mechanically, but also artistically and meaningfully (something that Tsolov had no way to handle so delicately with the building of the former Party House). In this line of thought, the bank's wings contacting the mosque can be seen morphologically and as extensions of the mosque itself, which would preserve the bank building. Last but not least, the dissertation lacks an analysis between the scales - Tsolov is half of the tandem that deals with paneling and furniture; he was responsible in general and for the residential branch of the architectural activity at the time when the clients were ordering houses and not blueprints of houses. In this sense, it is inevitable that the tandem, and Tsolov in particular, carried out forms of artistic continuity between the work with wood in the interiors of the buildings



and stone in their exterior. The opposite remains visibly characteristic but unexplored – the significance of the heavy stone cladding of the reception spaces of the large public buildings designed by the design studio.

7. Conclusion

Given the above and despite the criticisms, it is proposed that M Arch Mitko Mitkov be awarded the educational and scientific PhD degree in professional field 5.7 Architecture, Construction and Geodesy in the doctoral program "Theory and History of Architecture."

16.10.2023

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Assoc. Prof. M Arch Panayot Savov, PhD)