

ARCHITECTURE IN MACEDONIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF BORIS CHIPAN

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ABSTRACT

The versatile contribution of Boris Chipan to shaping the identity of architecture in Macedonia can be viewed through the main fields of his work – conservation, architectural design, architectural research and theory and pedagogy. Throughout his professional career he was devoted to modern ideas correspondent to the time period, as well as to devising a balance between the built heritage and the contemporary architecture - never separating his theoretical views from his efforts to apply them in his practical work.

His career started with the restauration of the church St. Sophia in Ohrid. The most notable buildings from his architectural opus are the Summer resort for the scout association in Ohrid (1954) and the Court buildings in Shtip, Veles and Bitola (1965). For the building of the Macedonian Academy of Arts in Skopje (1976) he was awarded the highest Yugoslavian award for architecture by the publishing house "Borba".

A considerable part of his career was dedicated to issuing publications which left a permanent trace in the modest architectural and theoretical publishing in Macedonia. He dedicated most of his writing to issues related to architecture, especially the interplay between tradition and modernity in architecture, emphasizing the need to preserve cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary demands. Through analytical methods grounded in modernist thought, he investigated the values of historical and contemporary architecture, particularly within the Macedonian context. His work highlights the tension between conservation and development; themes of continuity, transformation, and identity emerge throughout, alongside reflections on urban evolution, socio-political change, and the ethical responsibilities of the architectural practice in a globalized world.

Boris Chipan's built work and his thoughts about future development of architecture are not strictly based on one paradigm. The aim of this paper will be to give a thorough but concise overview of his work in its entirety, as well as provide a summary of his critical evaluations that are still relevant in today's context.

KEYWORDS _ *Boris Chipan, Architecture, Modernism*

INTRODUCTION

Born in Ohrid (1918), educated in Belgrade (1932-1941), Boris Chipan is one of the first Macedonian architects to graduate. Working in the fields of architectural design, conservation, education and publicism, he undoubtedly occupies one of the most significant places in the history of Macedonian modern architecture.

His life and professional path took place in a very specific period for the development of Macedonian architecture. In the years immediately after World War II, when the country was recovering from the war, the young Boris Chipan returned from his studies, having just graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. After the first few years, in which he received a variety of professional tasks related to the reconstruction of the devastated country, he was appointed the first director of the newly created institution of great importance for the republic – the Institute for the Protection of Cultural and Historical Monuments of the People's Republic of Macedonia in 1949. This is probably where the complex intertwining of Chipan professional activities begins in two, seemingly opposing domains, in which he would be equally successful – as a conservator and researcher of the architectural heritage on the one hand, and as a designer and contemporary author on the other. In 1959, Boris Chipan began working as a professor at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje, at the Department of Public Buildings, where he worked with numerous generations of students until his retirement.

From today's perspective, it is impressive to perceive his extensive and diverse professional work, which perhaps distinguishes him as the only Macedonian architect who worked in parallel in all branches of architecture and left a significant mark in each individual sphere. He spent most of his professional life outside of Ohrid, but with great love and enthusiasm he constantly returned to the memories of his hometown as an eternal inspiration in his work.

ARCHITECTURE IN MACEDONIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The second half of the 20th century was a period of significant transformation for the architecture of Macedonia, especially after the country became a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After World War II, much of Macedonia was in a state of disrepair due to the devastation caused by the war. The newly established socialist government began a process of urban and infrastructural reconstruction, which aimed to modernize the country and promote the ideals of the socialist state. During this time, Macedonia witnessed substantial political, social, and cultural changes that were reflected in its urban planning and architecture. The urbanization of the country had a modernization character, following the international functionalist approach. Macedonia was lacking in educated professionals, except a small number of architects which had the opportunity to study in Belgrade or Zagreb. At the beginning of this period, most of the authors of the regional and city urban plans as well as the architects designing in Macedonia were professionals from the other constituent republics in SFRY.

The weaker momentum of modernist processes in Macedonia compared to the other federal republics in the first decade of the existence of (former) Yugoslavia, due to its low position in its political geography, changed with the unfortunate circumstance of the Skopje earthquake in 1963 and the engagement of the UN in its post-earthquake reconstruction. During the reconstruction, Skopje became an experimental field with a fruitful architectural production of international and local architects. Part of the international assistance was the education of a number of Macedonian architects at prominent architectural schools in the United States through scholarships from the UN, who would continue to create on the soil of Macedonia. The international focus on Skopje gave rise to the transformative role of modernism in Macedonia. Furthermore, of particular importance for Macedonian architecture is the fact that starting from this second decade of the period, the number of Macedonian architects dominates among the architectural realizations throughout the country, and will continue to during the second half of the 20th century.

In addition to the global influence of modernist movements, Macedonian architecture in the second half of the 20th century was also deeply shaped by a desire to affirm national identity and cultural heritage. While socialist architecture sought to promote the collective values of the state, there was also an ongoing effort to incorporate elements of traditional Macedonian architecture into contemporary buildings.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the decline of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the eventual independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 and its transition to parliamentary democracy, the political and architectural landscape of the country began to change. The emphasis on socialist realism and modernist architecture began to wane, and new architectural directions began to emerge, reflecting the desire for a more diverse, pluralistic society.

BORIS CHIPAN: CONTRIBUTION TO ARCHITECTURE IN MACEDONIA

After his graduation in Branislav Kojic's class at the architectural department of the Technical Faculty in Belgrade in 1941, he returns in Macedonia where he encounters a lack of possibilities for professional engagement. Aware of the difficulties in the architectural field, for the better part of the first decade of his professional life he takes on every work opportunity presented to him. He worked in the Technical Departments at the District Offices both in Ohrid and in Bitola, in a state project for building bridges on the territory of Macedonia as an engineer in the Macedonian Liberation Army, as well as on the reconstruction of villages in Macedonia and an engineer in several construction companies in Skopje.

Conservation

His appointment as the first director of the newly created Institute for the Protection of Cultural and Historical Monuments of the People's Republic of Macedonia in 1949 marks the beginning of his significant contributions to conservation. Until 1959, when he left the Institute for the Protection of Cultural and Historical Monuments, Boris Chipan would manage the conservation works at the archeological site of the ancient city Stobi, "Daut Pasha's Hamam" in Skopje, the church "St. Pantelejmon" in the village of Nerezi, Skopje, the church "St. Clement (St. Virgin Mary Perivlepta)" in Ohrid and the church "St. Sophia" in Ohrid.

The culmination of his conservation work is certainly the management of the complex process of extensive, radical and somewhat experimental conservation and restoration work carried out on the cathedral church of St. Sophia in Ohrid, one of the largest and most complex projects of this kind on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Systematic conservation work on St. Sophia began in 1950, financed by the Federal Government, and prepared and supervised by a Federal Commission composed of eminent experts from all over Yugoslavia. In 1951, a UNESCO mission with experts from Italy and France joined the project, and under the auspices of UNESCO as a head of the conservation project, Boris Chipan was sent on a several-month scholastic stay in Italy and France, to become acquainted with the methods that would be applied in the conservation. Conservation work on the architecture and frescoes of "St. Sophia" lasted until 1958.

In addition to the work on the conservation of historical monuments, Boris Chipan also worked on the restoration of about twenty houses in the old core of the city of Ohrid.

Architectural Design

His first realized building is the Student ferial resort, built in 1955 in Ohrid. The development of the city of Ohrid and the Ohrid Lake shore according to the first Regulative plan (Vlado Antolich, 1949) is

based on the development of republic tourism by the economic policies of self-managed socialism that encouraged state investments in tourist infrastructure and a wide network of workers' resorts at affordable prices. The building represents one of the earliest examples of modernist architectural creation in the Ohrid region, strongly influenced by the international style and in many elements reminiscent of the iconic architectural figure of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoy. The building establishes a relationship with the surrounding nature and the picturesque natural landscape, ensuring integration of the interior and exterior spaces.



Figure 1: Student ferial resort

His other more notable buildings are the administrative building of the Social Insurance Institute in Ohrid (1955), the court buildings in Veles (1956), Bitola (1958) and Shtip (1960) and the building of the Faculty of Technology in Skopje (1965). As public buildings were mostly ordered by the state, Chipan's work in these buildings reflects the ideological discourse in Yugoslavia and achieves continuity with the architectural expression of high Modernism. The compositions are dominated by regular geometric shapes and facade openings whose rhythm further reinforces the principle of order and impression of discipline. In all the court buildings this pattern is further emphasized by vertically placed concrete ribs acting as brise-soleil, as a kind of abstract, contemporary ornament.



Figure 2: Court buildings in Veles, Bitola and Shtip

Boris Chipan received the highest recognition for his design work for the building of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) in Skopje, winning the first prize at the anonymous Yugoslav competition in 1976. Trying to explain the building, he will say: "It is in vain to look for analogies in content. The Academy is a monument to the contemporary and the future Macedonian science

and art. I think of a fortress and it seems too cold to me. The colorful decoration of the Byzantine church would be demagogy. I reject all concretized analogies and surrender to the urge that has already accumulated many encounters with historical architecture. And when the work is finished, I discover that in the monastery quarters of St. Jovan Bigorski, the old Macedonian master created an impressive monumentality in chestnut wood. I see the 'porch neither in the sky nor on the ground' from the folk tales, and in the interior, instead of the cold emptiness of the feudal palace, the warm intimacy of the patriarchal Macedonian home has been created." The result is a building in which he materialized his long-standing commitment to contemporary architecture that skillfully reads and interprets traditional heritage. For the MANU building, Chipan received the highest Yugoslav award for architecture from the NIP "Borba" in 1977.



Figure 3: Building of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU)

Both individually or in a team, he participated in numerous anonymous republican and international competitions. In his last published book "My Time in the Macedonian Architecture" (2007), he wrote: "Being a teacher of architectural design is like being an operator without operational practice. But, along the large design teams in the construction companies, it was difficult for professors from the faculty to get an order; all that remained was to participate in anonymous architectural competitions, it was a field for real competition with colleagues from the highest Yugoslav category, it was the best practice that tells you your place in the Yugoslav architectural space."

Publicism and education

His publicist work has been present throughout his entire professional life and he is, without a doubt, the most prominent Macedonian architect in this field from this time period. His first book "Old City Architecture in Ohrid" was first published in 1955 and a second time in 1982. In it, Boris Chipan identifies, documents and analyses valuable examples of 19th century residential architecture in Ohrid. This publication is a contemporary, and surely draws inspiration from the works of Dušan Grabrian, Niko Moutsopoulos, Aleksandar Deroko, Sotir Tomovski and others. Chipan's legacy lies in his ability to act as a mediator between two architectural worlds: the global modern movement and local traditions. Thus, modernism, as a way and structure of thinking, represents a generative element in the structure of the publication and an essential instrument for systematization, understanding and

appreciation of the old city architecture. He claims that the approach to architectural heritage through the methods of modern scientific analysis will allow one to enter the essence of the building and to perceive the dependence of form and function, which knowledge will also be useful for contemporary creativity. Also, he attempts to recognize proto-modernist characteristics in domestic traditional/Ottoman architecture and offer guidelines for its contemporary transformation and reinterpretation. Laws, order and harmony are the basic blocks in the rhetoric of Boris Chipan in "Old City Architecture in Ohrid". The covered topics are accompanied by a number of the author's photographs and outstanding technical drawings and sketches, which illustrate his thorough practice of field research and observation.

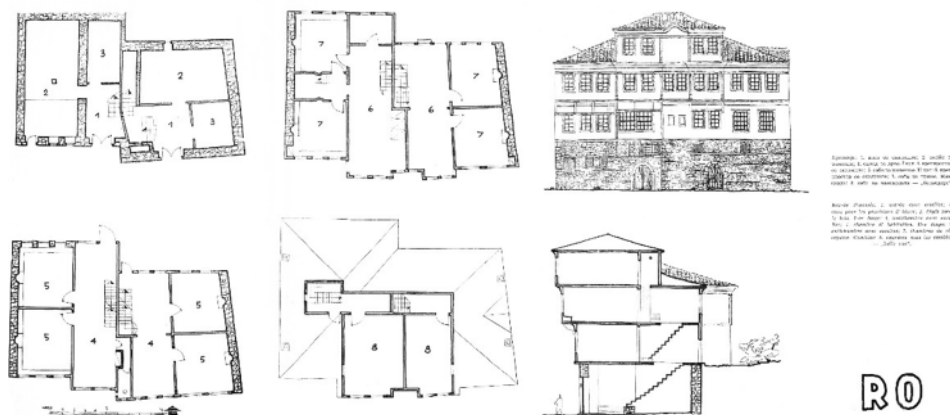


Figure 4: Architectural documentation, House RO, "Old City Architecture in Ohrid", Boris Chipan, 1955

Boris Chipan began working as a professor at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje in 1959 at the Department of Public Buildings, a position he held until his retirement in 1983. During that period, he published a textbook for the design of public buildings and several studies and publications: "Old Town Architecture and Urbanization of Cities" (1964), "The Old Bazaar in Skopje - Program Study" (1965), "Expressive Means of Contemporary Architecture of Cities with Historical Heritage" (1970), "Architecture of Our Time" (1974), "Specifics of Urban Expression in Ohrid and Struga" (1978), "Macedonian Cities in the 19th Century and Their Urban Perspective" (1978) and "The Old Macedonian House - Values of Cultural Tradition" (1980). In these books he presents and describes the conditions of different examples of (mainly dilapidated) architectural heritage in Macedonia with an emphasis to the tension between its preservation and the economic progress. As contemporary architecture has not yet matured enough to provide suitable solutions, the risk of losing valuable historical heritage leads to two extreme solutions that Chipan critiques - allowing heritage to be replaced by inferior new architecture or enforcing strict 'museum' preservation at the expense of practical living needs.

His publicist work continued even after his retirement, with the books: "111 Theses on Architecture" (1986, second edition 2002), "St. Sophia - Cathedral of the Ohrid Archbishopric" (1996), "Texts on Architecture" (1998), "Dolni Saraj - An Episode from the History of Ohrid with Dzheladin-Beg" (2001), "Tradition and Modernity in Architecture" (2005) and "My Time in the Macedonian Architecture" (2008). The subjects of the coexistence of the architectural heritage and contemporary architecture and the challenges of preserving cultural identity while adapting to contemporary needs and globalization persist in his later work as well. Via comparative case studies, his key findings present the juxtaposition of continuity / transformation and symbolism / function. The drastic changes in the social system and in the architectural creations in the last two decades of his life were a subject

of his work as well. Continuously pointing out the long-lasting effects of architecture and planning, his texts steer towards his dilemmas about pluralism in architecture, new tendencies related to new technologies, the occurrence of new movements and the profit-oriented aspirations of the increasingly powerful investors. In his last book he joined the lasting debate on whether “there’s Macedonian architecture, or just architecture in Macedonia” by expressing his thoughts on the idea of “national architecture” and revealing the depth of the architectural crisis and the tension between identity, modernity and context.

CONCLUSIONS

In tracing the evolution of Macedonian architecture through the lens of Boris Chipan’s work, it becomes evident that his role was not merely that of a practitioner but of a pivotal cultural agent shaping a regional architectural identity. Chipan’s projects reveal a deep negotiation between modernist principles and vernacular heritage, reflecting both his sensitivity to local context and his commitment to architectural innovation. His ideological (theoretical and practical) determination is the result of the life-long influence of the physical structure and intellectual content of the country and especially Ohrid, the city he was born in.

Boris Chipan’s involvement in key state educational and cultural institutions allowed him to influence both the architectural discourse and practice during a period of profound political and social transformation. He was instrumental in preserving traditional architectural values but also in reinterpreting them within a contemporary framework, thus contributing to the construction of a modern Macedonian identity. His work serves as a crucial reference point in understanding how architecture can act as a vehicle for cultural continuity and transformation. Boris Chipan’s legacy underscores the enduring importance of contextually grounded contemporary architecture and positions him as a foundational figure in Macedonia’s architectural historiography.

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