

Scaling the Avant-Garde: Bruno Taut's Lecture Notes in Turkey

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Keywords

Architectural Education; Peripheral Modernisms; Architectural Knowledge; Character

The 20th century witnessed numerous modernist avant-gardes in exile who present diverse narratives of adoption and adaptation, of fitting and adjustment. Whereas the most renowned cases have been the Bauhaus masters who moved in to the United States, this paper focuses on a lesser cited German architect, who did not move westward but to the East; Bruno Taut. Leaving Germany initially for the Soviet Russia and then passing on to Japan, to land on eventually in the young Republic of Turkey, Taut's story presents a uniquely rich narrative of sustaining a modernist drive through a carefully critical calibration and re-scaling of avant-garde enthusiasm.

Taut is definitely not an obscure or unacknowledged name, nevertheless, the conference call presents a conceptual reframing that makes it plausible to revisit him as a precious case of discussing architectural "relevance, appropriateness" and "fitting", particularly in fragile peripheral contexts where scarcity of not only economic but also social resources apply considerably more than orthodox prescriptions of a modernist progress.

Similar to the European figures practicing in the States, Taut's vastly operative engagement in the Turkey involved both teaching and practicing roles, equally influencing both. The paper will emphasize his role in the educational context, with a focus on his book "Mimari Bilgisi (Architectural Knowledge)", which was a collection of his lecture notes. The book will be projectively re-read in its relation to the current vocabulary highlighted with the renewed call for an evolving mission of architectural education, with keywords such as "character", particularly in comparison to those who performed in similar roles in the Turkish architectural academy, i.e. Ernst Egli before him and Sedat Hakkı Eldem after him, where they all set out to inscribe similarly responsive yet concretely diverse reflections for a pedagogy of change in an(other) age of compelling imperatives.