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Sommario

DISCOVERING THE ART OF MEDIEVAL CAUCASUS
(1801-1945)
edited by Ivan Foletti and Stefano Riccioni

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Inventing, Transforming and Discovering Southern Caucasus
Some Introductory Observations

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The roots of Caucasus or the whole of northern Georgia with its surrounding territories, known under different names, are immensely important for historians and archaeologists. This importance was perpetuated in many monuments that have unfortunately been deprived of the necessary attention to this day and have not been studied accurately, and for the enlightened audience it is as though they never existed. (Ioseliani 1844)[1]

With these words, in 1844, Platon Ioseliani introduced an essay – one of his earliest written in Russian – dedicated to the churches of Tbilisi and its surroundings. In the reflections of Ioseliani, for centuries historical Georgia (the kingdom of Kartli) were constantly in danger because of its powerful neighbours, and for years its historical and archaeological studies had very little space for development. The premise implied by Ioseliani, who was Georgian but a subject of the tzar, was that the order guaranteed by Georgia's annexation to Russia would finally offer the region the 'peace' necessary for a real history of the country to be written.

More than 170 years have passed since Ioseliani wrote these lines and the world has changed in many ways. The history of studies dedicated to the artistic history of the South Caucasus, however, has not always followed the linear path Ioseliani hoped for. Furthermore, to this today, in some parts of the region, the conditions for the study of history (of art and in general) are problematic. Just over a year ago, Foletti visited the Kars region with his students, the site of

the historical capital of medieval Armenia, Ani (fig. 1), where many monasteries and isolated churches can be found (Kevorkian 2001, cf. in this volume Maranci's essay with the associated bibliography). In a breath-taking landscape, the monuments of medieval Armenia take form, in dialogue with the landscape, creating very picturesque conditions (Maranci 2009). A visitor to Ani, however, will be surprised at the monuments' dilapidated state. Those who are familiar with the city's history – once the capital of the Armenian Kingdom – will be again surprised at an information panel describing a city that reached its peak in the years following the conquest of the Seljuk Turks (Sim 2004), and which is utterly devoid of any mention of the Armenian presence. The monuments in ruin seem to have been compromised mostly by time. This situation changes dramatically, however, for monuments located just a few kilometres away, like Horomos, Khtzkonk, or even Mren (Vardanyan 2015; Sin 1999; Maranci 2013). These marvellous architectural works are literally collapsing under our eyes, vandalised with graffiti and damage hard to attribute to time alone. And if that were not enough, some tomb robbers were caught in Horomos. Today, no authority seems to deal with the safeguarding of these monuments, which is a key to the history not only of the Caucasus, but of all Mediterranean culture.

Looking at photographs from the early twentieth century makes the situation even more alarming: the images show that Horomos and Khtzkonk were still active monasteries, and in an excellent state of conservation, in 1900 (figs.

Figure 1. T*he Cathedral of Ani*. 2017. © Center for Early Medieval Studies Brno

2-3). In the case of the Khtzkonk monastery, from the 1920s to the present, four buildings have literally disappeared, while one bears traces of destruction that cannot have been caused by time. All the evidence seems to confirm that these buildings were intentionally destroyed with modern, probably military means (Fontana 2018). The desecrated tombs, with scattered human bones, only serve to confirm this tragic situation.

The first question is how this can be possible in 2017. The answer is not easy to pinpoint, but the evidence collected in a recent study by Tania Fontana indicates that we are facing a phenomenon that could be defined as "cultural genocide" (Fontana 2018). The roots of this destruction process of Armenian monuments go back to the years of Atatürk. The drive to erase the traces of the Armenian presence in Anatolian lands seems to have gone hand in hand with the official doctrine of the Turkish state. The latter, especially following the Second World War, started to strongly deny the events of 1915, recognised in most studies as the "Armenian genocide" (Lemkin 1944; Yeghiayan 2015). The destruction of art objects then became an explicit instrument to erase the memory and the very traces of reality. And while in recent years, for iconic monuments like Akhtamar and Ani, which in 2015 was included in UNESCO's list

of international heritage, the Turkish state has started to take care of the region's heritage, this does not seem to be happening for monuments outside the attention of international authorities (UNESCO 2015).

This situation is obviously reflected in the history of studies: it was made difficult for Armenian scholars to visit monuments in Turkey, while the Turkish viewpoint was influenced by the country's political situation, where speaking about Armenian culture and the violence of the past was a problem throughout the second half of the twentieth century (Bobelian 2009). Unsurprisingly, it is especially Western scholars (sometimes of Armenian origin) who dedicate themselves to the study of the region, even in recent years (Thierry 2000; Donabédian 2008; Maranci 2013).

What is described here unfortunately demonstrates that to this day the peaceful state Ioseliani hoped for in 1844 has not been achieved for the whole of the South Caucasus. The history of the region, divided by ethnic and religious wars and control from outside forces, still carries traces of violence that make academic work difficult. In this sense, the solutions proposed in recent years (Foletti, Thunø 2016; Skhirtladze 2017), to think of the entire region as a place where extraordinary cultures came together in constant dialogue, could be a partial solution. In order for

Figure 2. A.A., *Khtzkonk Monastery in 1900. 9th-12th*. © Wikimedia Commons

Figure 3. *Ruins of the Khtzkonk Monastery in 2017. 9th-12th*. © Center for Early Medieval Studies Brno

this viewpoint to lead to a solution, though, we should remember that, in addition to common traits, there are in the region unique cultural identities that must not be denied or diminished. One model could be important for the region's future: the concept of "Shared Heritage", developed in recent years in research being performed in Heidelberg and Dortmund (Arendes, Samida, Schüppel 2018). The basic idea, materialised in contemporary multi-ethnic Germany, is to transform the perception of a specific artistic monument into an object whose value is shared as human heritage.

While this could be one of the possibilities to encourage the safeguarding of the region's heritage, as well as its study, the situation is now much more complex. Whether we like it or not, despite many efforts in recent years, the South Caucasus remains a peripheral reality in the study of medieval art history.

The Creation of a Province

This is a long process that cannot be fully examined here, but we want to quickly mention a few of its salient points, which will be discussed in the following pages. This is not the time to retrace the entire history of Christian peoples in the Caucasus in the last century in detail (Rayfield 2012; Mahé, Mahé 2012). However, in a few words, the political situation has severely limited, and unfortunately still partly limits, the development of a solid and independent historiography.

For almost the entire nineteenth century, the region had the status of a vice-royalty, a province of Russia. In this period, the South Caucasus was regularly presented as Byzantine outskirts (Bakradze 1873; Kondakov, Tolstoj 1891; Foletti 2016). The studies advanced by then were of course important, but they were clearly limited by the region's subjection, as demonstrated by the study of Foletti and Rakitin in this volume. A local historiography was still able to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the works of Filipová and Grigorian show. The possibility of more complete and independent studies is evident in Georgia starting with the collapse of the tzardom. On the Armenian side, the events of 1915 and the dramatic situation in the following years did not allow any development of study (Bobelian 2009). In any case, this brief interlude ends with the two countries joining the Soviet bloc. From the end of the 1920s, which coincided with a strong wave of Russification (Martin 1998), to the years after Stalin's death, space given to the region's Christian art was – for reasons of anti-clerical politics and a Russian-centric conception of the empire – reduced to the minimum (see Filipová in this volume). In the case of Georgian art, there was the literal disappearance, for more than 20 years (1921-1945), of what has been called the "Georgian national treasure", a story told by Filipová. In the following years, then, with the earliest general studies, perspectives were influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideology: fundamental attention was dedicated to forms and artistic techniques, while the iconographic content was set aside (Chubinashvili 1959). Furthermore, the almost complete isolation from the West, difficult access to literature, and heavy censorship in the USSR influenced studies, often making them difficult to access for the Western public. It is not surprising that Soviet historiography continues to consider the artistic production of the Caucasus as essentially peripheral (Lazarev [1967] 2014).

After the fall of the USSR and the birth of national states, with initially very limited resources, Armenians and Georgians began to study their national heritage with a new verve and immense effort, which resulted in hundreds of articles and dozens of overviews (Burchuladze 2016; Khostaria, Natsvlishvili, Tumanishvili 2012; Chichinadze 2011; Hacopian 2014 ; Grigoryan 2015). For obvious reasons, however, after centuries in which their cultural identity had been diminished by the Russian and then Soviet empire, their approach was determined by a desire for 'revenge', regarding both content and form. In local production, therefore, we can find partly nationalist arguments, often presenting the local culture as an independent and uninterrupted tradition whose roots can be traced back to antiquity. Also, the strong limitation surrounding which scientific production was allowed to be published in languages other than Russian before the fall of the Soviet Union meant that the extensive scientific publication in Armenian and Georgian was inaccessible to scholars lacking competence in those languages. Furthermore, the economic situation of local universities was, in the 1990s and the early 2000s, far from being positive, a situation that was reflected in the objective difficulties of research. In this regard, libraries that had limited funds for the purchase of up to date scholarship should also be considered.

Figure 4. *Joseph Strzygowski*. 1900 c.
© Wikimedia Commons
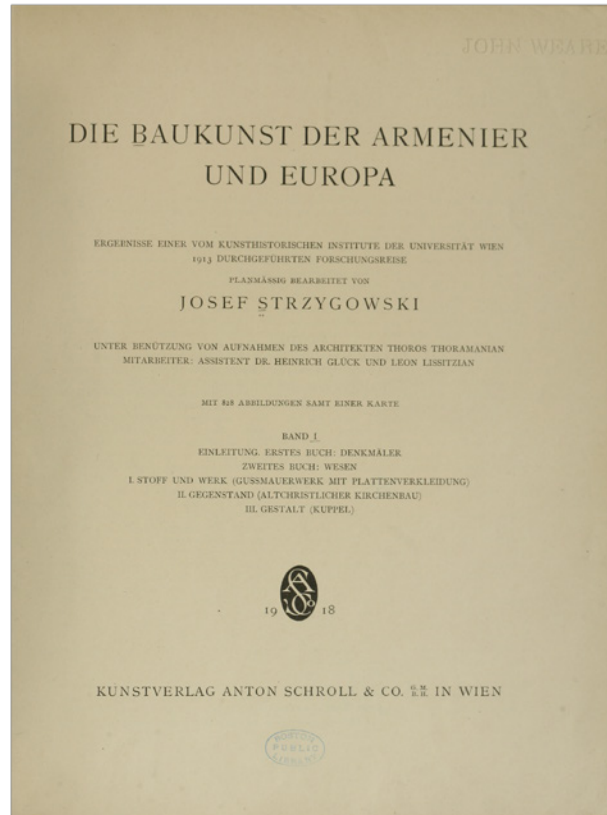
Figure 5. *Title Page of the Book Joseph Strzygowski*.
Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa. 1918

This situation is complemented by studies promoted in the West. Attention to Armenian art can be noted in Mechitarist monasteries already by the end of the eighteenth century (see Contin in this volume). The real turning point in interest came, as indicated in the essays by Grigoryan and Riva, around 1900: the Armenian diaspora then became one of the drivers of international interest in the region's artistic production. One of the most authoritative voices focusing on Armenian art, however, comes from Austria. The fundamental study by Josef Strzygowski was published in 1918 (Strzygowski 1918; Maranci 2002). The figure of Strzygowski (figs. 4-5), to whom a collective volume was very recently dedicated, is highly complex because of his racial arguments, giving rise to his explicit sympathy for the National-Socialist party (Foletti, Lovino 2018). Extremely influential in the interwar period, his legacy fell in disrepute after 1945 (Elsner 2002). It is, however, thanks to Strzygowski that in Fascist Italy a special interest in Armenian art developed, with antithetical positions, which Stefano Riccioni addresses in this volume. And it

is perhaps also in this hidden legacy that a keen interest in the art of the Caucasus would emerge in Italy in the 1970s (Gandolfo 1982; Alpago Novello 1980; Alpago Novello 1990; Fontana 2018), an era that Marco Ruffilli discusses here. Again regarding Armenian art, we should mention the works of the diaspora, spread throughout the West (cf. a summary by Maranci 2015).

As regards studies on medieval Georgia, there are some, for example, coming from scholars in the circles of *Cahiers Archéologiques* and promoted by André Grabar (Palladino 2018). These are works by figures like Nicole Thierry (Thierry 1975), Hans Belting (Belting 1979), and Tania Velmans (Velmans 1980). In these studies, however, what interests the Western scholar the most is Georgia's relationship with Byzantium. The impression seems to be that the stereotypes formulated at the end of the nineteenth century by a figure like Nikodim Kondakov in Russia (Kondakov 1890) survived in the DNA of Western research on Georgia. Unsurprisingly, Georgian art (like Armenian art) is presented at the bottom of summaries of Byzantine art (Cutler,

Spieser 1996). The question remains whether that viewpoint, present with some regularity in Western studies, should be considered in relation to the Cold War. In a world almost impenetrably divided by the Iron Curtain, with the Eastern bloc profoundly isolated and self-referential, one gets the impression that the regions at the margins of the empire 'naturally' became the provincial expression of the Byzantine empire (Foletti 2017).

A New South Caucasus?

On a general level, in spite of a general limited interest, over the years, in the West and in Russia, few scholars have studied the heritage of the Caucasus with consistency and quality: the very important research by the Thierrys (Thierry 1987, 2000) in the second half of the twentieth century and, in more recent years, the work of Antony Eastmond (Eastmond 1998, 2016), with his fundamental study to the art of Georgia, and of Patrick Donabédian, on the Armenian side (Donabédian 1981, 2008, 2010). In Russia, at least the work of Armen Kazarjan must be mentioned (Kazarjan 2000, 2007, 2012).

In recent years, however, there has been a boom in interest in studies on the Caucasus in the 'West'. Especially after the exhibition at the Louvre in 2007 (Durand, Rapti 2007), innovative and in-depth research has been supported in various spaces of art-historical geography. The *Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz*, under the leadership of Gerhard Wolf, dedicated significant resources to a photographic campaign in Georgia. Michele Bacci, professor at the University of Fribourg, has encouraged important studies, linking the reality of the Caucasus with the entire Mediterranean space (Bacci 2016; Bacci, Kaffenberger, Studer-Karen 2018). Between the universities of Brno and Rutgers New Jersey, a synergistic project has yielded a collective volume dedicated to the entire region during the Middle Ages (Foletti, Thunø 2016). Finally, we should also mention the colossal work of Christina Maranci (Maranci 2001, 2002, 2013, 2015, 2017) who, with the patience of a Carthusian and wide-ranging reflection, is bringing one medieval Armenian monument after another back to

the knowledge of the international audience. Finally, in September 2018, an exhibition dedicated to Armenian art (Armenia 2018) was opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. These are very positive signs for the future.

Our impression, however, is that, in this context, where a real dialogue is starting to be established between East and West (Skhirtladze 2017; Kazarjan 2018) a broader theoretical and historiographical reflection is now more necessary than ever. It is only on a historiographical basis – which allows us to understand and deconstruct certain founding myths for studies in the last two centuries – that the fracture between 'domestic' and 'foreign' research can overcome truisms deeply rooted in the history of studies. Furthermore, considering the current state of monument conservation, especially in Turkish Armenia, returning to nineteenth-century studies is essential to understanding the ancient aspect of these works of art, as demonstrated here in a masterful essay by Cristina Maranci.

This issue of *Venezia Arti* is the result of a recent collaboration connecting Masaryk University of Brno and Ca' Foscari University of Venice that, we hope, will be the first in a series of projects and publications: scholars from diverse cultural origins come together here to reflect on the roots of our thinking on the Caucasus. Several points of view will be examined: Russian, Georgian, Armenian, and 'international'; the time frame stops at the Second World War. A conference has already been announced for February 2019, in Venice, dedicated to the period after the Second World War. Our hope is that this volume can open up a series of studies, key to understanding a region with extraordinary culture, which merits an all-around reconsideration.

With this issue we would like to announce the creation of an international research project: *Seminarium Caucasicum. Studies in Art on Medieval Caucasus (and Beyond)*. Led by Michele Bacci (University of Fribourg), Ivan Foletti (Masaryk University) and Stefano Riccioni (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), this project aims to promote regular meetings dedicated to the arts of the region, as well as actions for its preservation.

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From Russia with Love
The First Russian Studies on the Art of Southern Caucasus

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Abstract   The article investigates the perception of the cultural and artistic production of the Southern Caucasus, after the annexation of Georgia in 1801, by three highly educated intellectuals of the time: the Metropolitan Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov, the historian Platon Ioseliani and the artist and architect Grigory Gagarin. Their writings reveal a latent concept of historical pre-eminence of the Caucasian region, and Georgia in particular, as a cultural and sacred outpost of two countries, the Byzantine Empire and the Empire of the Russian Monarchs of the 19th century.

Summary   1 Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov. – 2 A Diamond Cross and Late-Night Tales about Georgia. – 3 Platon Ioseliani. Walking the Borderlines. – 4 Count Gagarin. Empire in Style. –5 Conclusion.

Keywords   Russian Empire. Byzantine Empire. Bolkhovitinov. Ioseliani. Gagarin. Caucasian region as a Bridge.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925), Russia's first 'professional' medieval art historian, published a series of key volumes on the study of medieval art in the Southern Caucasus (Kondakov 1890; Kondakov, Tolstoj 1891; Foletti 2017). His point of view was very clear: Christian art from these regions – modern Armenia, Georgia and Eastern Turkey – was born and developed from interaction with the Byzantine Empire, which intermittently fought, traded and ruled the Armenians, Georgians and Persians at its elusive borders throughout the fifth-eleventh centuries – the time corresponding to the highest moments of artistic production in the Southern Caucasus. This perception presumed the concept that the Caucasus had been artistically dependent on the art of the powerful empire because all those smaller kingdoms and peoples resided in its periphery.

Ivan Foletti recently attempted to explain Kondakov's radical standpoint on the art of the Caucasus by showing that the art historian was writing at the time of Alexander III Romanov (1881-1894) when the region had long since been militarily defeated and deprived of its own cultural diversity by the creation of the Caucasus Viceroyalty (fig. 1). This transformed it, once again in history, into a peripheral province of yet another empire (Foletti 2016). It seems that Kondakov's studies implicitly anchored this state of affairs in history, suggesting that the situation had never been different. With all the echoes of Byzantine presence in the history of Russia, it was all too tempting not to create another link of continuity between two empires, this time perceiving it in the art of several ancient peoples.

In this paper, we'd like to understand the roots of Kondakov's viewpoint by going back in time, concentrating specifically on Georgian medieval art as it was perceived in the nineteenth century by three remarkable intellectuals who entertained genuine interest in the cultural legacy of this ancient country. Two of them were ecclesiastical historians and one was an imperial emissary, architect, artist and proto-art historian.

Their works and reflections on Georgian art and history were completed at different times and it is here that we see the Caucasus whose image would go on to haunt many Russian po-

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Figure 1. *Southern Caucasus*. 1959. Saint Petersburg. © Private collection

ets, writers, geographers and simply amateurs of everything ancient, during the nineteenth century. The three of them tried to cherish and unravel the enigma of the past and see greater events and epochs, including the Byzantine Empire, in the mirror of a small country; something which escaped the practical eyes of the Russian generals and viceroys who were busy fighting Persians or other belligerent groups, or else resolving tensions between the local population, the Georgian nobles and their own troops.

The book *Istoričeskoe izobraženie Gruzii v političeskom, cerkovnom i učebnom ee sostoânii* (A Historical Representation of Georgia in Its Political, Ecclesiastical and Academic State) by Evfimij (Evgeniy) Aleksejevich Bolkhovitinov's

(1767-1837) will be our starting point, as it offers an account of Georgian history written during and right after the events connected with its annexation to Russia. It is particularly interesting because the author had never been to Georgia, but turned to many sources to construct a detailed preconception of what a Russian intellectual might think of an ancient Christian land. This will be followed by an inquiry into the life and opinions of the researcher of Georgian history, Platon Ioseliani (1810-1875). With his ancestry rooted deeply in Georgian soil, he was able to become an open-minded cultural mediator by combining his quest for authentic artefacts of Georgian history with the ability to present them to colonial powers and the audience of Russian

magazines in his perfect Russian language. The paper will conclude with an analysis of texts and works from perhaps the most interesting figure from this period, Count Grigory Gagarin (1810-1893), who presented and understood Georgia as a Byzantine cultural outpost.

1 Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov
A Diamond Cross and Late-Night Tales about Georgia

We look at early nineteenth-century Georgia and its centuries-old art forms at a moment when, according to all historical accounts, it was unsteadily treading a path of hardship and failure. The country, in the early fourth century, had become one of the first Christianized lands, reaching its spiritual and cultural Golden Age by the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, to then gradually decline in an uneven struggle against mightier regional powers (Rayfield 2012, 77, 107, 226). Starting in the sixteenth century, Georgia lived through difficult times, being comprised of various minor Georgian kingdoms and principalities, squeezed between the power of Ottoman Turkey and the Iranians (164). In the late eighteenth century, the territory of modern-day Georgia was still a divided ethno-cultural entity, with the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti to the east and its western rival, the Kingdom of Imereti (245). Three Russian monarchs dealt with Georgia in a generation: Catherine the Great, her son Paul I, and, finally, Alexander I (Gvosdev 2000, xvi). Starting with the infamous Treaty of Georgievsk (1783) the clauses of which the Russian Empire failed to guarantee (exposing Tbilisi to a plundering army of Iranians) and ending in the first decade with the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti's annexation in 1801, and the Kingdom of Imereti, in 1810 (77, 127). The heart-rending accounts of military skirmishes, bloody battles, burning Tbilisi, and the figure of the aging but adamant Erekle II negotiating with Paul I for the right to the Georgian throne for his descendant, before Georgia was annexed and became a Russian province, are iconic for the subject (300)

On 12 September 1801, Czar Alexander I (1801-1825) addressed his people with a manifesto meant for the Georgians. It portrays Georgia under the blows of "infidels and alien peoples," "plundered", "enslaved", "torn in inner strife" and "assaults", "even now edging the abyss"; and

it was only due to Russian military presence and subsequent defeat of Omar Khan that the country did not perish entirely, while its many enemies, those "predators dwelling in the highlands of Caucasus had been threatened." (Manifest 1830, 782-7).

Even though the Manifesto calls the annexed territory "the Kingdom of Georgia", Russia would be unable to support it as a monarchy and gave it a status of *gubernia* (province). To control the country, disturbed by internal conflicts and endangered by surrounding peoples, the new lords took several radical steps. In January 1801, the members of the Bagratuni dynasty were deported in secrecy, including the queen Mariam and the crown prince Davit; some of their relatives showed military resistance. Several peasant rebellions broke out in places because of corruption, mismanagement and cruelty in some members of the new Russian administration and military. The Russian language was imposed as the official language of the law and administration, which at that time proved to be futile, as less than 5% of Georgians understood it in 1801 (Rayfield 2012, 260-1).

While these first steps of russification were underway, Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov (fig. 2), at that time a 34-year-old Russian priest, monk, prefect and teacher of philosophy and higher rhetoric at the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy (Zelenina et al. 2002; *Russkie pisateli-bogoslovy* 2001, 41-2), had been writing the first book on the history of Georgia by a Russian author, entitled *A Historical Representation of Georgia in its Political, Ecclesiastical and Academic State*. Almost all researchers agreed that the historian's chief consultant had been the Georgian priest and monk, Exarch Varlaam (1763-1830), who had moved to Russia in 1794, a year before Tbilisi had been sacked and burnt by the Iranians (Abashidze 2015, 92). He had at one time been a candidate for the position of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Eastern Georgia, but the prince Giorgi, then the Heir Apparent to the Eastern Georgian throne, and later the last king of Georgia, Giorgi XII, preferred to ordain his brother, Anton (Bagrationi), the son of Erekle II (Bubulashvili 2003).

Judging from two extracts from Bolkhovitinov's correspondence, dated 31 January and 13 May 1800, respectively, the first work by a Russian writer on the history of Georgia had been written in the months following the actual annexation of Kartli-Kakhetia (18 January). It ap-

Figure 2. A.A., *Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov*. 1850 c. Voronez. © Wikimedia Commons

peared to have been still unwritten in spring and probably unfinished at the time of the Manifesto (12 September). We also know that, three days after the Manifesto to the subjects of Georgia, on 15 September 1801, the author was present at the coronation of Alexander I and awarded a pectoral cross with diamonds. (Bantysh-Kamenskij 1847, 3) It is unknown if the diamond cross had any relation whatsoever to the book, although in his May letter, Bolkhovitinov mentioned two printed sheets (see the quotation below), which may have been shown to the Monarch.

There is no doubt that "Historical Representation of Georgia" was born from an amicable collaboration of highly learned clergymen, either teaching at the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy or being close intellectual and spiritual fellows of the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy. Breaking the news about his book about Georgia to a friend in Voronezh, Bolkhovitinov mentions the names of his advisors and collaborators: Exarch Varlaam, who graduated from Tbilisi Theological seminary in 1784, the prominent historian and bibliographer Dmitry Nikolaevich Bantish-Kamensky and his superior, the Metropolitan Amvrosy of Saint Petersburg, who was the ruling hierarch of the Eparchy of Saint Petersburg of the Church of Russia starting in 1799 and an exceptionally educated intellectual and founder of many educational institutions for young clergymen (Cypin 2001).

Due to the lack of documentation, it is very difficult to answer the question as to whether the book on Georgia had been ordered direct-

ly, had come out of a pure academic interest in collecting stories from Georgian history under one cover, or whether it simply hit momentum because Georgian events had been long in the air. In his letters to Vasiliy Makedonets (1751-1812), who lived in Voronezh, Bolkhovitinov mentions Georgia's annexation and the names of his collaborators without additional explanation, as something that his reader should have been well informed of. The underlying message is that all the events mentioned had been utterly unexpected, especially Varlaam's promotion to a position in the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

> 31 January 1801 [...] [The Georgian eparch] Varlaam has, all of a sudden, fallen into favour; for our archbishop had only been asking to arrange for his posting to his side as an assistant in his service [at the Saint Alexander Nevsky Monastery in Saint-Petersburg], but Monarch, on the occasion of Georgia's annexation, has given him a title of the member [of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church]. And so be it. A true *membrum* he shall be. This accidental and unexpected circumstance produced an overall astonishment. [...] Rooms are now being cleansed for him. (Bolkhovitinov 1870, 789-91)[1]

The second extract shows that the work was already in progress in spring 1801. While the true motives for writing can only be surmised, it seems that Bolkhovitinov wanted to emphasize

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[1] Варлаам ни думанно ни гадано в честь попал, ибо наш владыка цедулою просил к себе в подмогу для службы, а Монарх по случаю присоединения Грузии дал ему и титло члена. Изумились нечаянному и не предполагавшемуся происшествию. Но так и быть. Настоящий будет membrum. Теперь очищаем ему у нас покои.

that the warm reception of his work was unrelated to the current events associated with Georgia.

> 13 May 1801. I live like a hermit at home – paying no calls. Only at times do I spend an odd evening with Georgian most holy Varlaam – and do you know what's become of our pastimes? He would go on telling his stories about Georgia and I would be listening and while listening I'd be making some mental notes and then, once I sat down to write, I saw that a whole book of marginalia had been stored up. I read them to the archbishop Varlaam – he was most amazed and went on adding and correcting some more, aided by the Georgian princes residing here, taking their advice and counsel. I also turned to Bantish-Kamensly. He produced many curiosities from his nest. And ready is the book. I showed it to our Metropolitan. It was approved and ordered to be printed and it is now under the press. Two sheets are all but done. I and the Georgian [Varlaam] are joking that the book has come merely out of fun! (Bolkhovitinov 1870, 813-4)[2]

In spring 1802, the book on the newly-annexed country would be completed and published. By that time, the author could reveal its true purpose on the title page: "This work is dedicated to His Highness and Most Sovereign Grand Duke Alexander I the Emperor of All Russia who laid the foundation and arranged for the well-being of Georgia" (Bolkhovitinov 1802, i).

It is clear that Bolkhovitinov created the book from a strictly Russian perspective, under the impression of annexation. In the opening pages, he criticizes French historians for inaccuracies in their depiction of Georgian history and informs the reader that he employed the counsel of Georgian envoys and diplomats residing in Moscow. However, he did not cite or refer to any Georgian authors of Georgian histories which he could have known by name, for example, the

Collection of chronicles and hagiographical writings the *Life of Georgia*, translated into Russian in 1777 in Saint Petersburg (Orbeli [1777] 1956, 23; 15-39).

For its genre, the book informs and enlightens the reader, rather than discussing historical concepts and points of view. It was written with a certain audience in mind and was meant to satisfy the exquisite tastes of Saint Petersburg intellectuals and the learned clergy as well as to be comprehensible enough for Bolkhovitinov's many friends in the provinces. The quoted letters were addressed to Bolkhovitinov's close friend, but the wider audience was possibly the members of an intellectual club that had been formed in the 1790s in Voronezh, before Bolkhovitinov's ordination to Saint Petersburg and not without his efforts. These were enthusiasts of the Enlightenment, representatives of the fledgling provincial intelligentsia, educated merchants, public school and seminary teachers, state officials and seminary students (Akin'shin 2000, 44-55). In the introduction "To the Readers", Bolkhovitinov says:

> Since the Tatar yoke had been cast down, in slightly more than three hundred years, Russia has welcomed more peoples and tribes in its domain than did Rome in a thousand years of its power and glory. (…) Georgia, as it follows from the text, had been waiting for the opportunity to subject itself under Russian protection for 215 years and, therefore, now we need and are interested in having a detailed understanding of this compatriotic nation (Bolkhovitinov 1802, ii-iii).[3]

The book acknowledges the antiquity of the Georgian people, referring to many Latin and Greek sources, and carefully relates the history of its enlightenment with Christianity. It tells the now famous story of Saint Nino, who, in the early fourth century, came to Georgia "from Rome

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2　Дома я по пустыннечески живу - никуда вон ногою. Проводу только иногда вечера с Грузинским преосвящ. Варлаамом - и значает ли, что из этих вечерних у меня с ним времяпрепровождений вышло? Он мне все рассказывал да рассказывал про Грузию, а я слушал, да слушал, да на ус себе мотал, а там як присел писать, а там смотрю, уже целая книга о Грузии маранья скопилась. Прочел владыка Варалааму - он аж изумился, и ну пополнять, поправлять, с находящимися здесь Грузинскими князьями советываться и спрашивать. Попросил я помощи и от Бантыша-Каменского. Он все любопытное из своего гнезда мне сообщил. Вот и книга. Показал митрополиту. Одобрено, велено напечатать и теперь уже под тисками. Два листа уже напечататны. Мы с Грузинским сами хохочем, что из шуток вышла книга".

3　Со времени свержения с себя ига Татарской власти с немногим чрез три ста лет узрела в предках своих более племен и языков, нежели сколько иных древний Рим покорил в тысячу лет своей силы и славы. [...] Наконец в наши дни и Грузия, еще за 225 лет пред сим предавшаяся в покровительство Российских монархов, вступила в совершенное и непосредственное подданство Всероссийскому престолу. Посему теперь столько же любопытно и нужно для нас иметь обстоятельное понятие о сей соотечественной уже нам нации.

through Jerusalem", carrying a grapevine cross. She asked the then Georgian king to send his envoys to Constantine the Great so that they might invite Christian priests to baptise Georgian people (Bolkhovitinov 1802, 49). In an extended footnote, the author explains how, in the late eighteenth century, the fate of the grapevine cross of Saint Nino, which survived as a relic, was determined by contacts between Georgian and Russian Church leaders, specifically the Georgian bishop Timothy, who brought the cross to Moscow. In September 1801, at about the time of coronation and annexation, the cross was presented to Alexander I by the émigré Georgian prince Bakar. The Bakar royal family, remarks the author, had more right to possess it than the then deceased king Giorgi XII, who had claimed it while alive. To further justify the mutual Christian bonds between Russia and Georgia, Bolkhovitinov points out that the Georgian chronicles consider Saint Nino to be a relative of Saint George, Russia's most venerated Saint (Bolkhovitinov 1802, 46-7).

In this ideology of annexation, Bolkhovitinov premises his historical vision on three fundamental categories: the fate of a Christian nation, the role of a Christian empire with regard to its smaller neighbouring and suffering counterparts, and the spectacular glory of the deep past which penetrates and sanctifies this text. What today's researchers call 'conquest', 'russification' (Rayfield 2012, 250, 284) or 'colonization' (Gvosdev 2000, 101) had been justified by longstanding Christian bonds between two nations and similar circumstances in which both countries had been Christianized – through their interactions with the Byzantine Empire and subsequent intercultural contacts (which the book enumerates). The Czar's Manifesto underlines the religious stake specifically: the oath of allegiance had to be taken by the Georgian clergy first of all. The Manifesto reads, "We [Alexander I] demand that you – in order that the authority established over you be confirmed – take the oath of allegiance in the form herewith enclosed. The clergy, as pastors of souls, have to set the example" (Manifest 1830, 786-7).[4] The document directly associates this emphatic demand

with the nobility's land ownership and future taxation. Ironically, charges concerning the misappropriation of Church lands would be the reason why the then Catholicos Anton II would be dismissed and deported to Russia ten years later, when the new rulers of the country decided that the Georgian Church was to be governed by the Russian Holy Synod. Meanwhile, the Synod would ordain Bolkhovitinov's interlocutor Varlaam to be the first Eparch of Georgia (Rayfield 2012, 260). Bolkhovitinov, however, did not question the authority of the Catholicos, meticulously describing Georgian Church history with its justifiable autocephaly and "Greek Orthodoxy with its Greek rites". Neither did he doubt the validity of liturgies in the "natural [i.e. Georgian] language" administered "according to the cannon and Church books translated of old from Greek" (1802, 52, 60).

Bolkhovitinov's view was naturally oriented from Saint Petersburg, from within its ecclesiastical and academic circles, and seemed to have taken opinions at the Russian court into account. A brief look at the table of contents is enough to understand the style of this work: after a chapter on ancient Georgia come stories of the Christianization of the country, the holy books, the Georgian language, education, the annals, poetry and, finally, overviews of the neighbouring cultures and peoples. Georgia is thus presented as a place of high culture, Christianity and ancient history. In his book, Bolkhovitinov attempts to re-enact the past itself, as was done on 2 April 1802 (his book had already been published) in Tbilisi, when Russian troops entered the city preceded by the grapevine cross of Saint Nino, Equal to the Apostles, the Enlightener of Georgia (Butkov 1869, 510). While Bolkhovitinov's book revived the enigmatic glory of Georgia's past, the Russian troops marching down the streets of long-suffering Tbilisi were re-enacting the pages of his book, down to the footnotes. This way, the occupation was staged as a generous act of protection, which had been declared in Alexander I's manifesto. The Russian Empire returned what both countries had been given from the Byzantine Empire to Georgia: its true faith and identity.

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4 Мы требуем, чтобы вы, для утверждения постановленной над вами власти, дали присягу в верности по форме, при сем приложенной. Духовенство, яко пастыри душевные, первые должны дать пример.

2 Platon Ioseliani
Walking the Borderlines

Just over forty years after the Russian conquest, many things had changed. While Russian was still struggling to establish itself in the countryside, the country's élites were by then perfectly russified. Furthermore, following the 1828 annexation of Armenia, Georgia became part of the Caucasus Viceroyalty in 1840 (Mahé, Mahé 2012, 416-26). It is obvious that the denunciation of the Georgian royal throne, the members of the Bagrationi dynasty being exiled in Russia, the mismanagement of the Russian administration in Georgia and an abortive attempt to organize an anti-Russian plot in 1832 involving Georgian royalty and nobility in order to restore Georgian sovereignty and monarchy must have all disenchanted local Georgian intellectuals (Vatejshvili 2006, 1: 13) In fact, the process of russification had been underway throughout the eighteenth century, with many Georgian students receiving their education in Saint Petersburg and bringing back the fruits of the Enlightenment and many contacts of Georgian clergymen with Russian monasteries and Church intellectuals to their native land (2: 223-4). Due to these cultural contacts, the generation of Georgian intellectuals born in the first decade of the nineteenth century perceived the new geopolitical circumstances in which their country had been thrown with readiness to think and work across the borders drawn between people and territories in the course of military conflicts. Many scholarly books had been translated from Russian into Georgian and some early textbooks on the Russian language were in use at Tbilisi schools by late 1810s. The first newspaper in the Russian language, *Tiflisskie vedomosty*, came out in 1828. Its editor knew and published material about Alexander S. Pushkin and Alexander S. Gribiedov (3: 472). By this time, Russian was already spoken in governmental, commercial and industrial institutions; there was a club, the Tiflis Nobel Assembly, frequented predominantly by military officers, state officials and representatives of the local nobility. Classes at the Tiflis School, for the children of the nobility and statesmen, were given in Russian, although local languages, Georgian, Tatar and Armenian were also part of the curriculum (Zakon 1836, 408). Sixty-five Russian officers, Decembrists, people of noble origin, were then living in Tbilisi

in exile, along with 3,000 Russian soldiers who participated in the Decembrists revolt of 1825 (Vatejshvili 2006, 3: 472).

The russification of Georgia created a new type of intellectual: Georgian in origin, they sought opportunities to speak about their land and its ancient culture. One of these figures was Platon Ioseliani (1810-1875), whose life and works are fundamental to understanding the Russian perception of the region (fig. 3). He was born into a family of Georgian clergymen; his grandfather was a priest at the court of Erekle II, his godmother was a wife of the prince Davit Georgievich (4: 28). The Ioselianis were probably one of the most educated families in Tbilisi in those days, possessing a library of ancient Georgian manuscripts (4: 34-5). A graduate of Tiflis Theological Seminary, Platon Ioseliani taught Russian grammar, the scriptures and arithmetic, and was often employed as a translator, a school inspector and a librarian. The latter occupation stimulated his interests in the ancient history of Georgia. In 1831, he entered the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy, where he was introduced to the academic Teimuraz Bagrationi and the aforementioned Exarch Varlaam Eristavi (Bolkhovitinov's consultant) (4: 36-7).

Platon Ioseliani is the author of several academic works on Georgia, as well as an early description of the monuments of Tbilisi (and surroundings). His position was ironic by all accounts: he was a proud Georgian, but at the same time he was a member of the Russian church, trained in Saint Petersburg, and published in Russian and in Russia. His russophile attitude could be explained by the universal academic interests he had as a polyglot. Acknowledging his many talents, the famous orientalist Marie-Félicité Brosset advised him to write both in Russian and in French: "The Europeans would like to have detailed accounts of your country" (4: 18). His mission was therefore to reconcile some of the spectacular events in the history of Georgia, its kingdoms and the ancient Church with the most recent events, which were about to transform it considerably: annexation, the loss of autocephaly for the Georgian Church and the abolition of two Georgian royal houses.

Similarly to Bolkhovitinov, Ioseliani dedicated his "Short History of the Georgian Church" to a member of the king's house, the Queen of Kartli and Kakheti, Maria Georgievna, the wife of the last Georgian king, Giorgi XII (Ioseliani

Figure 3. Illustration from: Platon Iosselian, *Istoricheskiy vzglyad na sostoyanie Gruzii*. Tiflis', 1849

1841, iii). This gesture leaves historians with a lot to wonder, as to why the Church censors overlooked this somewhat provocative dedication. Back in 1803, the last queen of Georgia killed Major-General Ivan Petrovich Lazarev as he attempted to deport her and her family from the country (Gvosdev 2000, 104). Years later, her vengeful son Okropir Georgievich Gruzinsky (1795-1857), after being enlisted for a while at the Page Corp in Saint Petersburg, fled secretly to Georgia, where he helped found a secret society, and was even among those planning a coup (1832) in order to restore an independent Georgia state under the Bagrationi Dynasty. He was arrested, along with others, and exiled to Kostroma, but was granted a pardon relatively soon (Suny 1994, 71). By 1841, the queen Mariam had been released from her convent confinement and allowed to reside in Moscow, where she died in 1850 (Tankov 1901, 1051).

This story is an illustration of the discrepancies that people with remarkable pursuits need to deal with when their life stories are caught at the intersection of political, historical, religious and deeply personal borders. At the death of Giorgi XII, for the absence of an Heir, the royal banner of the king's house was handed to the priest of the Georgian kings' court, who happened to be Ioseliani's father, Ignatiy Onisimovich Ioseliani (the banner is kept in the family to this day). Moreover, Ioseliani knew some of the conspirators in the 1832 coup and realized how dangerous it was to keep the banner at home after the coup had been discovered (Vatejshvili 2006, 4: 29-30). We also know that, in his many trips to Russia, Ioseliani was supported by the queen Mariam, who then lived in Moscow (Abashidze 2002).

The next page of Ioseliani's *Short History of the Georgian Church* quotes a reflection by Metropolitan Filaret, from his "Conversation between a Seeker and a Believer Concerning the Orthodoxy of the Eastern Greco-Russian Church, Moscow", first published in 1815 (Filaret 1815). History has it that the Metropolitan wrote these Conversations after a series of real conversations with a young man who converted to Catholicism (Smirnov 1900, 54-5). The quote selected by Platon Ioseliani explains that, historically, the Georgian and Greek Churches are true heirs of the genuine ancient Church (with the implication that the Roman Church is not a true heir). This underlines the Georgian church's historical supremacy and its true autochthonous

and independent nature, which allow it to represent the original ancient Church.

> The Georgian Church, founded in the fourth century, since then has remained a special, independent Church. Thanks to its location, it has been removed from controversies which took place between the Greek and the Roman Churches; and till nowadays it is perfectly identical with the Greek Church. How can this likeness be comprehended if not by the fact that such was the ancient Church from which both of them originate? (Ioseliani 1841, IV; Filaret 1843)?[5]

In his introduction, Ioseliani goes further, saying that he wrote a history of such a Church "that clearly proves the genuine antiquity of the Orthodox faith professed by the Greco-Russian Eastern Church" (Ioseliani 1841, IV).[6] While the dedication paid homage to a member of the deposed Bagratuni Dynasty and the quote from Metropolitan Filaret emphasized ancient Christianity as an ultimate authority (both were bold gestures in the Russia of Nicholas I), the introduction elaborated finely-pitched Imperial rhetoric, used to set out the true objectives of the book.

> To inspire the sons of the Georgian Church with awe towards our Orthodox faith, as well as a boundless allegiance to the Monarch. This was desired by the Georgian kings who had long been moaning under the yoke of the Muslims; this was desired by our ancestors even when Russia, chosen by Providence to crush Islamism, was yet to be restored by the hand of the Great one of the mortals; for the sake of this the kings Teimuraz I, Vakhtang IV, Erekle I and Teimuraz II went to Moscow; these were the aspirations of Erekle II and Giorgi XII. (Ioseliani 1841, IV-V)[7]

This rhetoric may appear to be superfluous Imperialistic discourse haunting the mind of a calculating political strategist, but it was more likely a cherished subject of conversation among the highly intelligent clergymen of Saint Petersburg who knew each other. Both Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov and later Filaret (Drozdov) were invited by the Metropolitan Amvrosy to hold academic positions at the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy (Zelenina et al. 2002). Until 1841, Metropolitan Filaret was a member of the Holy Synod (Ivancov-Platonov 1898, 60). Platon Ioseliani graduated from the same Academy in 1831, and in 1842-1844 worked as an officer at the Chancery of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (Abašidze 2002). There could be some deeper yearnings behind the concept of the pre-eminence of an Eastern Greco-Russian church that is so tangible in all these attempts to write in the context of Georgia's annexation. Perhaps, what seems to be Imperialistic discourse today was a more complicated interplay of checks and balances between some leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church and the leader of the Russian Monarchy.

In fact, Metropolitan Filaret cannot be called an extreme right wing conservative in any way, bearing in mind his progressive steps in translating the Bible into vernacular Russian and his defence of the Bible Society (Korsunskij 1894, 38). As a highly authoritative figure in the Orthodox Church, he held a very peculiar opinion of the Monarch's authority in its relation to the Church. A famous researcher of Russian theology, Georges Vasilievich Florovskij, wrote that "Filaret had his own state theory, a theory of the Holy Kingdom, but it did not coincide with the official and officious doctrine of the state's sovereignty" (Florovskij [1937] 2009, 260-1). In his "Address on the [Anniversary] day of Solemn Coronation and Anointment for the Kingdom of our Most Righteous Czar Alexander Pavlovich" (15 September 1821), which was obviously read

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5 Церковь Грузинская, основанная в четвертом веке, остававшаяся с того времени доныне особенной, независимой от других Церковью и своим положением устраненная от несогласий, происходивших между Греческой и Римской, доныне совершенно сходна с Греческой. Как можно изъяснить сие сходство, если не тем, что такова была вся древняя Церковь, в которой обе они имеют общее свое начало?

6 История такой церкви, которая служит ясным доказательством древности православия, исповедуемого Греко-Российскою Восточною церковью.

7 Внушить сынам Грузинской церкви благоговение к Православной вере нашей, и беспредельную преданность к Государю. Этого желали Цари Грузинские издавна стенавшие на троне под игом Мусульман; этого жаждали предки наши еще тогда, когда Россия, избранная Провидением для сокрушения Исламизма, не была еще возрождена мощною рукою Великаго из смертных; для этого Цари Теймураз I, Вахтанг VI, Ираклий I, и Теймураз II ездили в Москву; к этому стремился Царь Ираклий II и устремился Георг XII.

in the very presence of Alexander I, in a highly academic style, Filaret explored the meaning of the Czar's anointment and dwelt on the words of Apostle Paul (*Rom* 13,1) "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God" (Filaret [1821] 2003, 150). In later sermons as well, he would devote long passages on "Christian Teaching of Czar's Authority and the Duties of the Loyal Subjects", interpreting the line from Psalm 145 at length: "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations", pointing out that "the temporal kingdoms of men, on the whole and temporarily, come to be seen in this world in order to serve that spiritual kingdom" (Filaret 1888, 6).[8]

On the face of it, there is nothing unusual in stating the divine origin of the Monarch's power in Nicholas I's Russia, but close scrutiny of Filaret's writings leads to a feeling that he put too strong a stress on the word *divine*, as opposed to *Monarch*. Perhaps this was most alluring for Platon Ioseliani, in his search for reconciliation of the histories of two ethnically, geographically and historically separated Churches, the one which accepted Christianity in the fourth century, and the one which received it five centuries later under totally different circumstances. The most captivating driving force working inside these books, texts and speeches was an enigmatic vision of a Divine Kingdom through the mist of antiquity, military campaigns, demonic hordes of infidels, sacked cities, incomprehensible languages, broken treaties and humiliated monarchs.

This rhetoric would echo once again in another one of Ioseliani's works, dedicated to the monuments in Tbilisi. "The Ancient Monuments of Tiflis [Tbilisi]" was published during his second stay in Russia, in 1844, in the *Journal of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs* (Ioseliani 1844, 88-128). Starting with a sacramental "the antiquity of the Georgian people is beyond any doubt", the Georgian historian follows an archetypically trodden path of city-founders, architects and builders of spiritual geographies, landscapes and skylines of all centuries by transforming locations in a mysterious

sacred focus, an intersection of meanings and cultural codes (Erdeljan 2017, 220).

At the foundation of the city [Tbilisi] Vakhtang I Gorgasali laid four temples: one for the Dormition of the Mother of God by the name of Zion; the other one, Mtskheta, after Gethsemane in Jerusalem; the third one, the temple of the Holy Cross bore the name of Golgotha; and the fourth is the temple of Bethlehem, which was renamed Petkhainsky by the Armenians. The king also built the first Cathedral of St Archangel Michael: a court Church of St George was built on its ruins in the 17th century (Ioseliani 1844, 88, 94)[9]

It's not Rome, but rather the Holy Land that is presented here. In constructing his article, Ioseliani follows places common to Russian literature of the time: in the image of Moscow, Tbilisi is presented as a new Jerusalem, as well as with the classical mention of Rome. Concrete monuments, described very briefly, have a mostly symbolic function in his historical narrative. It is not so much their archaeological analysis that is important, but their topological value, which can only confirm the author's historical arguments: the country is the cradle of Christianity. In this sense, Ioseliani is not so different from medieval tradition, which, as we know, played on the very value of the country's monuments, in the image of Javri, presented as a new Golgotha (Bacci 2016). Tbilisi, like Moscow, is therefore an image of Jerusalem. The Georgian and Russian churches, like the two capitals, are part of one single spiritual space, together with Greece: that of ancient Christianity. And while the West, as Ioseliani observes, betrayed it, Georgians, Greeks and Russians remained faithful to tradition.

In the writings of this russified Georgian intellectual, Georgia is, at a spiritual level, the point of conjunction between Greece and Russia, but it is above all the land where Christian origins emerge.

After the invasion of Georgia by Russian troops, despite the czar's promises, the country underwent a wave of russification. Paradoxically, though, after the conquest, certain studies were

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8   Царство Господа—царство всех веков и владычество Его во всяком роде и роде (Псал. 144, 11). Преходящія царства человеческия совокупно и повременно являются на позорище света для того, чтобы служить тому духовному царству.

9   В основание устроенного города, Вахтанг-Горгаслан создал четыре храма: один во имя Успения Пресвятой Богородицы, с названием Сион; другой Метехский, по подобию Гефсимании в Іерусалиме; третий С. Креста, с названием Голгофского; четвертый Вифлеемский, получивший послѣ в руках Армян имя Петхаинского. Первый Соборный Храм был устроен им во имя С. Архангела Михаила: на разрушенных основаниях его, в XVII веке выстроена придворная церковь Георгиевская.

Figure 4. Joseph Karl Stieler, *Grigory Gagarin*. 1837-39. © Sputnik

promoted and made possible that presented the new *guberniya* as a hub of ancient Christianity. In some ways, Russian and Georgian perspectives came together in emphasizing the importance of Georgian culture and its Christian antiquity. Ioseliani writes in Russian and therefore (mostly) for Russians. This is a important aspect since, by bringing the Greek situation into his reflection, the scholar opens up a new possibility of interpreting Georgian heritage. He tells the story of Georgia in terms of a sacred history, where it has always had a venerable place, even as a province of another Empire.

3 Count Gagarin
Empire in Style

Count Grigory Gagarin was born in 1810, in the same year as Ioseliani but not in Russia or in Georgia (fig. 4). His father was a diplomat who received a position in Rome; Grigory was six at the time, and he would see Russia only twelve years later (Kornilova 2004, 4). He spoke French from childhood and, even in old age, Russian was more of a second language for him (Ch. V. 1900, 43). Very early on, he took to drawing and was fortunate to receive his first lessons from Karl Bryullov; a few other prominent artists were also frequent guests at their home in Rome: F.A. Bruni, A.P. Bryullov, S.F. Shchedrin and others (Kornilova 2004, 4).

His childhood memories of Italy would remain quite vivid: he recollected early Italian Art, such as the Basilica of San Vitale, and his later albums of architectural drawings contain depictions of early Italian churches (Gagarin 1887, 28, 32, 88). He spent two years studying at the Collegium Tolomei in Siena (Kornilova 2004, 4), then the Gagarins moved to Paris, where Grigory was enlisted to the Page Corp and listened to lectures on architecture, construction, mathematics and philosophy. In 1830, he took a two-year journey across Europe, drawing albums in hand, where he took down his impressions. In 1832, the Gagarins returned to Russia, where Grigory was soon hailed as a skilful graphic artist with famous men of letters among his acquaintances: the poets Vasily A. Zhukovsky, Alexander S. Pushkin and the writer Vladimir F. Odoyevsky. At the request of Pushkin, he made several drawings to accompany his poems, including *Ruslan and Ludmila* and *The Queen of Spades* (8-9, 10-13).

In 1832, he accepted a position in the Asiatic Department; opened in 1819 as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the department that dealt with the affairs of Asiatic people in the Russian Empire (Kulikova 1994, 234). In 1834, he was appointed to a position in the Russian ambassadorial mission to Constantinople. Some sketches were made on the way, showing his interest to the people and types of the East (Leonov 1954, 502, 534). In 1837, he would accompany Nicholas I on his voyage on the ship *Minerva* and later, in 1840, would meet the poet Mikhail Y. Lermontov (Kornilova 2004, 8-9; 40-41).

Gagarin's art from the period prior to his first trip to the Caucasus in 1840 had a distinct quality: it featured the everyday life of Russia. Obviously, he was not a native, for whom much would be too familiar or unworthy of attention. Quite to the contrary, his eye was fascinated with Russia's everyday life in its mundane beauty. His albums of 1839-1840 were filled with drawings done on a trip to Kazan, which the artist made together with his friend, the writer Vladimir A. Sologub. The drawings were turned into art for a collection of Sologub stories, under the title of *Tarantas*, adding *couleur locale* to the text (Nemzer 2007, 723).

His fascination with scenes of everyday life continued during his first trip to the Caucasus in 1840-1841, but something else arose. He was still very much interested in capturing people in their everyday ways and habits, but the backgrounds of these drawings were decorated with local landscapes and samples of local architecture. Some of the works were merely drawings of ancient churches, like one depicting the Church in Old Manglis (built in 1020) (Bertash 2011, 75). This brought a spectacular album of drawings to life: *Le Caucase pittoresque*, first published in his native French (Gagarin 1847). Being ethnographically accurate, each drawing renders a dramatic, almost theatrical energy, capturing the life of Caucasian peoples in the scenic decoration of their ancient architectural masterpieces and romantic natural landscapes (figs. 5-9).

On his second stay in Georgia, 1848-1855, (this time vested by the government with official capacities in Fine Arts affairs in the Caucasus) Gagarin undertook a titanic task of restoring the frescoes in the Sion and Mztheta Cathedrals in Tiflis. He reinforced the old frescoes with paints he had brought specifically from Europe and made new ones in Russian-Byzantine style (Dolgova 1980, 213). The commander-in-chief and

Figure 5. *Decorations in Mscheta*. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. LXXVII

Figure 6. *Decorations in Nekresi*. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. XLVII

Figure 7. *Monastery of Caben*. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. XXII

Figure 8. *Decorations in Gelati*. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. VIII
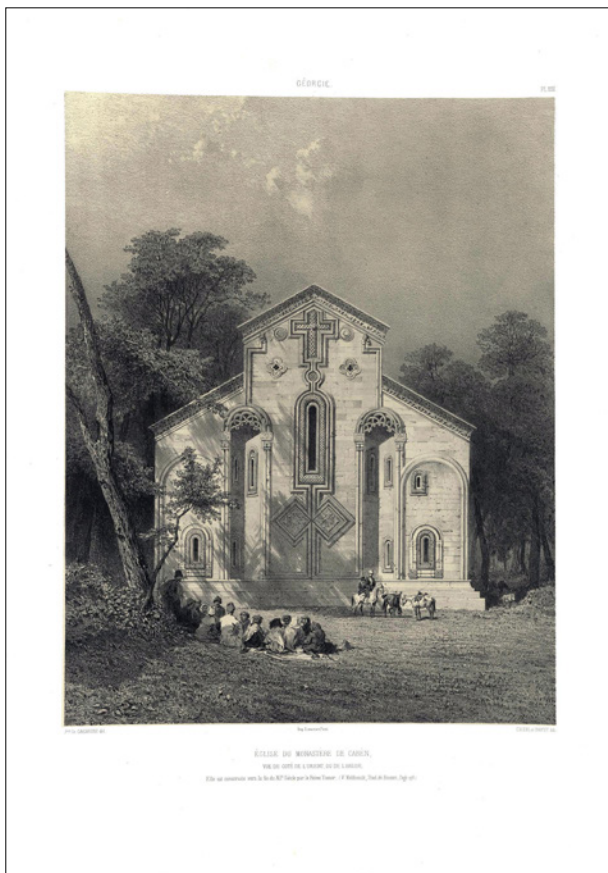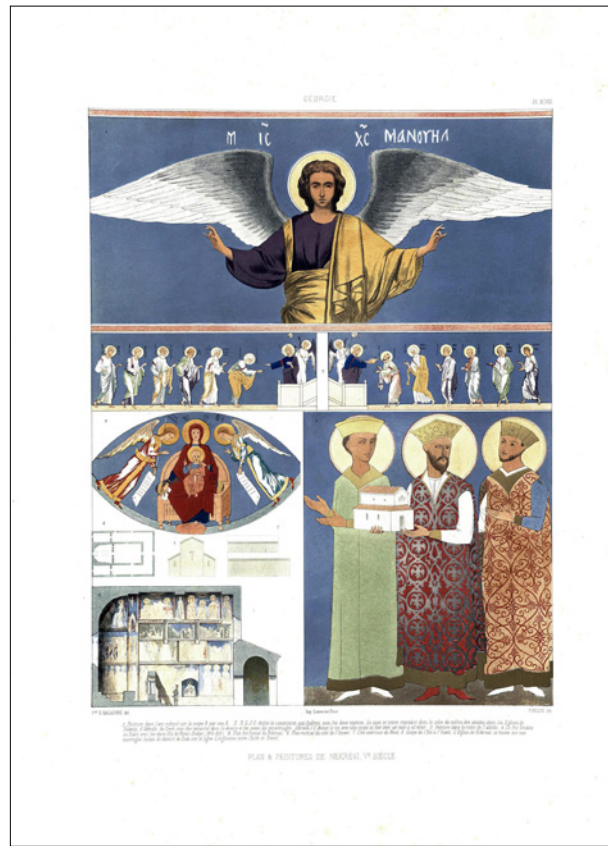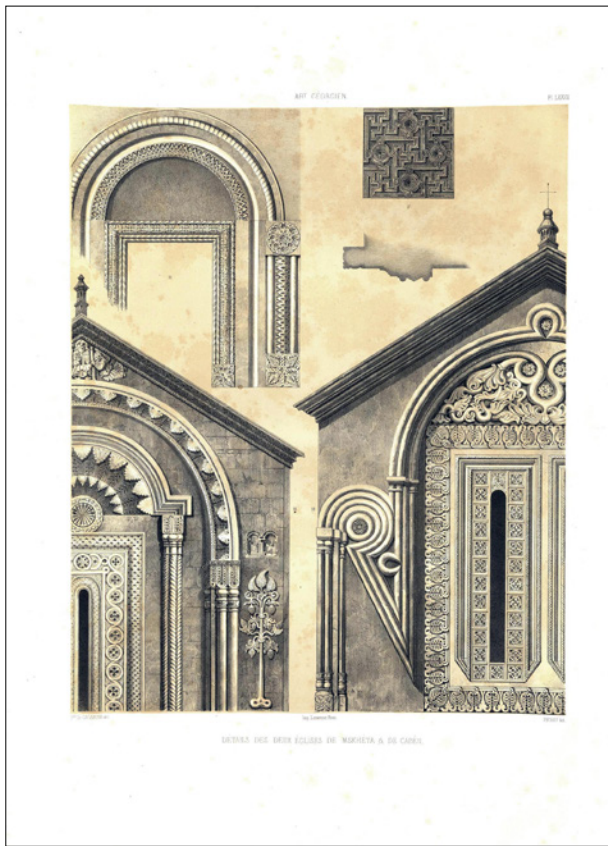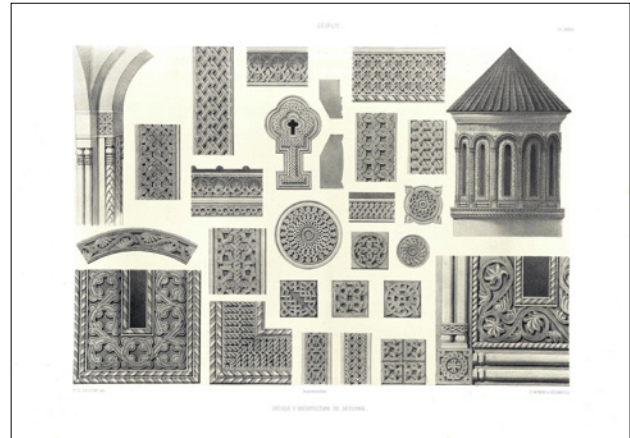

Figure 9. *Decorations in Bethanie*. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. XXXVII

viceroy of the Caucasus, Mikhail S. Vorontsov, gave Gagarin a right to design and build churches for Russian soldiers spread throughout the region, which were built in several locations: Kutaisi, Šuša, Jekateringrad, Aladir, Derbente, etc. (Bertash 2011, 75).

Perhaps already in the late 1830s, Gagarin understood the importance of Byzantine art for the development of Russian art. Unlike his contemporaries, who had little immediate contact with Byzantine art, he knew Ravenna, Rome and especially Constantinople perfectly. His experience in the Caucasus and in Georgia, in particular, rounded out his outlook. After years of work and research, by 1856, he collected enough sights and artefacts of Caucasian art to summarize them in a book called *Short Chronological Table: A Guide for the History of Byzantine Art* (Gagarin 1856). In it, he explains the ways of Byzantine art with regard to Russian history, as it came to Russia in the tenth century, mingled with the art of the Arabs, penetrated into Persia, then India and then back to Russia with the Mongols in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in order to give a new physiognomy to Russian

art. In the sixteenth century, Italians added new features. Gagarin concludes his apology to Byzantine art in this way:

Therefore, Russian art goes through *three*, very different, epochs even before Peter the Great, who completely interrupts the succession in the development of Byzantine tradition in our art. It is obvious that, in order to obtain an accurate and exhaustive understanding about Russian art, it is not sufficient to examine only the three aforementioned stages. […] It is especially necessary to inquire into those monuments which caused the emergence of our art. It is only studying the originals that one can understand and correct the copies. (Gagarin 1856, IV)[10]

Gagarin was 15 years old when Nicholas I came to the throne in Russia (1825-1855). This czar, a few years later, decreed that the style – conceived, in 1839, by Konstantin Thon for the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow and defined as Russian-Byzantine style (fig. 10) – should become the official lexicon for the churches of the empire

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10   Византийское искусство проникаете в Россию вместе с Христианством в X веке; но в тоже время оно сливается с первенствующею в ту пору арабскою цивилизацию и в ней получает обширнейшее развитие. Через арабов оно проникает в Персию, из Персии переходит в Индию, оттуда опять возвращается к нам вместе с господством монголов в 13-14 веках, и таким образом придает новую физиономию русскому искусству. В 16 веке итальянские художники вводят в русскую архитектуру свои детали того времени, не касаясь впрочем, общих планов, усвоенных обычаем. Таким образом русское искусство проходит через три, весьма отличительные, эпохи ещё до Петра Великого, который совершенно прерывает последовательность в развитии византийского предания в нашем искусстве. Очевидно, что для получения полного и точного понятия о русском искусстве, недостаточное изучать упомянутые три эпохи по памятникам, сохранившимся собственно в России; необходимо в особенности заняться исследованием этих памятников, которые содействовали к образованию наших. Только изучив оригиналы, можно понять и исправить копии.

Figure 10. Konstantin Thon, *Cathedral of Christ Saviour*. 1860. Moscow. © Private collection

(Vzdornov 1986, 116-7). Gagarin adhered to the vision promoted by the Monarch:

> The 18th century had crashed ideas about art, just like many other ideas, all over Europe. Having destroyed tradition in religion and in the noblest beliefs of man, the 18th century had ruined the tradition in arts, replacing it everywhere with gaudy imitations of Roman art, the passion for which brewed in French republicans for the same reason they dressed themselves up like Catilines and Brutes. (Gagarin 1856, I-II)[11]

Observing these developments in Russian art, Gagarin points out that they had little in common with Russia's true national art:

> The national style cannot be invented; it is being created by the tradition and habits of people. The style which we have clung to for a century and a half, just like the one which has been brought to us very recently, is not our national style; but it is this style that has encouraged Russia for eight centuries that can be fairly enough called the people's style. The stronger the powers of people grow, the sooner they return to their natural aptitudes,

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[11]   Идея в искусстве, как и все другие идеи, были во всей Европе ниспровергнуты XVIII веком. Разрушив предание в религиях и благороднейший верованиях человека, XVIII век в тоже время разрушил предание и в искусстве, повсеместно заменив его нелепым подражанием искусству римскому, к которому пристрастие развелось во французских республиканцах вследствие тех же самых причин, какие побуждали их рядится Кателин и Брутов....

despite any efforts to evoke any other in them. (Gagarin 1856, II-III)[12]

His conclusion is absolutely univocal in this regard: "Our art is nothing but the art of the East, which took its roots in Greek art" (Gagarin 1856, III). As mentioned above, unlike Thon and most architects and scholars of the time, Gagarin had a very precise idea of what this actually meant. For him, there was no doubt about not only the continuity between Byzantium and Russia, but also the fact that Georgia was an integral part of the same artistic milieu. For Gagarin, Georgian monuments were visible bonds between the Byzantine Empire, the Paleo-Christian East and Russia. While the concept of Byzantinism in Russia was still very vague in the 1830s-50s, Gagarin resorted to the same historical framework as Platon Ioseliani: the late antique tradition came to Russia through the Eastern Empire, with Georgia being a cradle of Christianity. In the same text from 1856, we read:

> Regrettably enough, there has not been a single work on Georgian monuments of art, as each year leaves new signs of damage in them. In Christianity, Georgia was ahead of Greece, and hence Russia; the [Christian] faith was preserved in Georgia in its original strength and purity, despite persecutions, and therefore its land is literary thick-sown with numerous magnificent churches of all epochs. Among them are purely Greek ones, *Akhtala* and *Nekresi*, which are exceptionally adorned with iconographical samples; there are many others to number which are just as remarkable with their architecture as well as splendid and curious remnants of painting. (Gagarin 1856, II-III)[13]

Gagarin was so passionate about Byzantine legacy as a universal aesthetic solution that he went so far as to propose it as a mainstream artistic program at the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts

(where he was then a vice president). The artist and academic Nikolay Petrov recollected this episode:

> In 1856, the president of the Russian Academy of Arts [the Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna of Russia (1819-1876)] submitted a document to the Academy's Council in which he [Grigory Gagarin] suggested bringing the ideals of icon-painting back to their "historical truth and proper delicacy". In order to put an end to "the arbitrariness" of numerous icon-painters, he purposed to organize a workshop for icon-painters in the Academy and provide funds for "acquisition of the original and best samples of Byzantine painting and Ancient Greece sculpture. [...] These samples were to be sought for in ancient temples in such cities as Novgorod, Moscow, Susdal, Vladimir, Kiev; in the Caucasus, in Georgia specifically, as well as among Slavs and Greeks who preserved Orthodoxy; on Mount Athos, and finally, in Venice and other Italian cities." (Petrov 1866, 258-9)

As the Academy's vice conference secretary, F.F. Lvov wrote later, "All professors of the Academy rose against this innovation, arguing that such replication of Byzantine painting leads to a decline of painting in Russia... The protest of famous artists belittled the significance of the new icon-painting school, against Prince Gagarin's expectations" (Kirichenko 2011, 19; L'vov, 1880, 385).

Gagarin's initiative was rejected, just as Thon's attempt to receive a doctorate for his project on the cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow had been. Byzantine art was considered to be decadent by most artists and intellectuals (Kondakov 1927). Fifty years later, however, it would be exactly with the same tools that a school for the painting of icons, which were then considered true national heritage, was founded by Kondakov, with the support of Nicholas II himself (Kondakov 1901; Foletti 2017). Gagarin

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12 Национальный стиль не изобретают; его созидает предание, привычка; он есть последствие истории народа. Стиль, которого мы держимся в последние полтора века, ровно как и занесеный к нам в новейшее время, это не наш национальный стиль; но тот, который одушевлял Россию в продолжении восьми веков, - вполне заслуживает название народного. Чем более растут силы народа, тем скорее возвращается он к своим природным наклонностям, несмотря ни на какие усилия возбудить в нём другие, ему не свойственные стремления.

13 Весьма жаль, что до сих пор нет еще ни одного сочинения о художественных памятниках Грузии, потому что каждый год оставляет на них новые разрушительные следы. Грузия в Христианстве опередила Грецию, а следовательно и Россию; вера в Грузии сохранялась во всей своей первоначальной силе и чистоте, несмотря на преследования, и оттого земля ее буквально усеяна бесчисленными и великолепными церквями, принадлежащими ко всем эпохам. Из числа их, чисто греческие Ахтала и Некреси весьма богата образцами иконографии; можно насчитать множество и других, не менее замечательных своею архитектурою и прекрасными или любопытными остатками живописи.

had therefore, in some sense, been ahead of his time. The reception of his ideas was very problematic in Russia, but deep down, it preceded by far what would become one of the dominant traits of self-perception for the country, not only for the Russia of the last Romanovs, but also for the Stalinian years and even for the Russia of Putin.

4 Conclusion

In 1801, Alexander I promised – while incorporating Georgia into the Russian empire – true liberty for the country, while presenting it as a cultural stronghold. The reality was quite different: a strong force of russification pushed to include the country in the Russian world. In the 1840s, Ioseliani and Gagarin – a Georgian cleric and a Russian count – present us with how, after two generations, the country had really integrated into the empire. Orthodoxy – which became one of the three key words for autarchic power under Nicholas I: Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nation – is perceived as a place of cohesion from both points of view. The Georgian intellectual justified the union with a theological situation: Georgians, true ancient Christians, agreed with the Greeks on everything, so it is logical that they were in perfect communion with the Greco-Russian church. There is little doubt that Metropolitan Bolkhovitinov, the historian Ioseliani, Metropolitan Filaret and the artist and Count Grigory Gagarin truly believed in a sacred authority of the past glories of the Empires. The cosmopolitan and Russian count, on the other hand, sees Georgian antiquities as proof of it being a Byzantine outpost in Russia. Actually, for him, the Caucasus is the place where Byzantium and Russia overlap in some way. In his monumental album of illustrations, he puts forward a series of monuments that show a clear continuity going from Constantinople and Ravenna, through Georgia to Moscow. Notably, this idea, certainly in sync with the 1856 imperial decree, was not favoured by most of the Russian elite in the 1850s, still too attached to a perspective that was determined by at least neoclassical, if not Westernist, tastes. When Kondakov claimed the pre-eminence of Byzantine art in the history of Russian art towards the of the nineteenth century, he continued to elaborate on the same strategy, without which the annexation of Georgia would look like occupation or colonization, but with which this small country can be perceived as a crossroads of two mighty powers, or as a double province, squeezed between the all-powerful and real Russia and the elusive but nonetheless as present and powerful ghost of Constantine's realm.

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For Beauty, Nation and God
The Creation of the Georgian National Treasure

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Abstract   The following paper traces the origins and increased interest in the cultural heritage of Georgia on behalf of the local intelligentsia in the 19th century. After describing the circumstances that may have led the new generation of Georgian scholars to a systematic exploration of ancient remains in the Caucasus and medieval ecclesiastical monuments and treasuries, the paper will focus on the main archaeologists of Christian antiquity in Georgia, Dimitri Bakradze and Ekvtime Taqaishvili. Finally, the study outlines the creation of what has been called the Georgian National Treasure. The treasure items, collected from monasteries and settlements all over Georgia and protected from robberies and impetuous art collectors, were sent into exile in 1921, shortly before the short-lived Georgian Democratic Republic's annexation to the Soviet Union. The thirty-nine boxes, containing manuscripts, icons, precious liturgical vessels and other priceless items, were sent from Batumi to Marseille, via Istanbul, and stored in France until 1945, when Ekvtime Taqaishvili, who had taken care of and protected them over those 24 years, accompanied them back to Tbilisi.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Discovering the Southern Caucasus. – 3 Russian Collectors of Georgian Medieval Artefacts . – 4 Georgian Archaeology: Dimitri Bakradze and Ekvtime Taqaishvili. – 5 Georgian National Treasure. – 6 Conclusion.

Keywords   Georgian National Treasure. Collections of Byzantine Art. Archaeology in Georgia. Dimitri Bakradze. Ekvtime Taqaishvili. Historiography of Art History.

1   Introduction

The numerous priceless items that now compose the so-called Georgian National Treasure were collected from places all over Georgia and assembled around the turn of the twentieth century. The dramatic exile of the Treasure following the Red Army's invasion of the First Georgian Democratic Republic in 1921 is an important part of history, almost unknown outside of Georgia. There, on the other hand, the event is considered evidence of the heroism of illustrious men in this small Caucasian country, constantly menaced by its big and powerful neighbours.

The composition of the Treasure is a result of a generally growing interest the Georgian intellectual elite had for the tangible past of their country in the last third of the nineteenth century. This is, of course, not an isolated phenomenon, but rather is typical of the nineteenth-century flourishing of national histories in the period of proliferation of nationalism all over Europe.[1] It should nevertheless also be understood as part of the establishment of the scientific discipline of archaeology in Europe and Russia, and thus the systematic exploration of the past, reflecting different aims and claims in the present (cf. Schnirelmann 2001; Olin 1994). The Southern Caucasian lands, inhabited since the dawn of humanity, marked by constantly shifting borders and dominations, became a battlefield of interpretation in terms of their cultural heritage. As Eric Hobsbawm rightly pointed out in his now classic work *The Invention of Tradition*, "the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement, is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so" (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983, 13). Starting in 1801, the numerous Georgian monarchies, divided since the

1   Cf. for instance Suny 2001, Geary 2002, Díaz Andreu 2007, Passini 2012.

early thirteenth century, were progressively incorporated into the Russian Empire. The preservation and interpretation of Georgia's Antique, Medieval and Modern past has thus been in perpetual dialogue with Russia, in tension between integration into and emancipation from the historical discourse of the powerful empire.

In order to grasp the growing desire the Georgian intelligentsia had to protect the historical and cultural wealth of their country, we must outline its roots and the main factors favourable to putting this interest into action. First of all, we will briefly explain the nature of scientific discovery of the Southern Caucasus by travellers and scholars from the West, as well as from Russia, which preceded local endeavours during the nineteenth century. We will focus more specifically on archaeological research, starting from the exploration of the country's Classical past and later also taking into account the remains of medieval times, perceived as a Golden Age in Georgian history. During the reign of King David the Builder (1089–1125) and especially of his great granddaughter Queen Tamar (1184–1213) of the Bagratid dynasty, the previously parcelled kingdoms and principalities in present-day Georgia were centred around the kingdom of Kartli and dominated a large part of the Southern Caucasus.[2] During this period, when the Georgian kingdom maintained its closest political and cultural ties with Byzantium, the culture flourished and the most iconic and valuable ecclesiastical artefacts were created. That is why the focus of Russian as well as Georgian archaeologists soon turned to this period. Finally, we will outline the efforts for systematic preservation of these objects and their musealization in the Tbilisi Church Museum, founded in 1889 and open until 1921, when the most precious artefacts from the Museum and other collections were expatriated to France. An overview of the dramatic destiny of this collection will then conclude this short study on an important part of the Georgian quest for national identity.

2 Discovering the Southern Caucasus

The earliest modern accounts of travel to the Caucasus, starting in the seventeenth century, were mainly focused on describing the unfamiliar dramatic mountainous landscapes and the exotic appearances and habits of local peoples, revealing what was perceived as Persian and Ottoman influences (cf. for instance Hewitt 2003). During the nineteenth century, more specialized approaches towards Caucasian culture arose and were mainly in search of the classical antiquities of the distant mythic lands of the kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia, described by ancient authors such as Pliny, Strabo and Tacitus (cf. the ancient history of Georgia Braund 1994). But as Alain Schnapp and Lori Khatchadourian point out, the purpose of travellers such as Frédéric Dubois de Montperreux from Switzerland and the Englishman Robert Ken Porter was not to construct a science of Classical antiquity in the South Caucasus, but rather to reveal a Southern Caucasian past interpretable through the ancient history in which these *savants* were reared (Schnapp 1993; Khatchadourian, 2008, 250). For instance, Ken Porter himself describes the aim of his travels as to "explore the celebrated scenes of antiquity amongst the mountains" (Ken Porter 1822, 623; cf. Barnett 1972).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the interest for Caucasian antiquities received a new stimulus with the development of Classical archaeology in Imperial Russia, henceforth anchored institutionally in the Imperial Archaeological Commission in Saint Petersburg (est. 1859), and the Archaeological Society in Moscow (est. 1864). New territorial gains in the Caucasian region in the 1860s and the consolidation of Russian power there led to efforts to improve the region's infrastructure, most importantly the Georgian Military Road, linking Russia to the South Caucasus, running from Vladikavkaz through the Darial Gorge to Tbilisi. The construction works hastened the archaeological discoveries, which were soon followed by scientific interest and supervised excavations (Khatchadourian 2008, 254). After the first organized archaeological finds in Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Iberia and Kartli and the most important excavation site in Georgia, interest in the Caucasus grew. As a result, the Caucasus Archaeological Committee was founded in Tbilisi in 1872 and soon merged with the Society of the Amateurs of Caucasian Archaeology, established in Tbilisi in 1873 (Gamqrelidze 2012, 10).

The city of Tbilisi, at that time, was a real multicultural hub, with three dominant social and ethnic communities: the Armenian mercan-

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2 A good recent synthesis of Georgian history in English was written by Donald Rayfield (2012).

tile bourgeoisie, Georgian nobility and Russian governors. It was the centre of the imperial administration of Transcaucasia, was also the centre of trade and, what is more important, the cultural centre of the whole Caucasus (cf. Suny 1994, 113-43). Various scientific societies and institutions were founded during the second half of the nineteenth century, and a number of periodicals in different languages (Russian, Georgian, Armenian and French) started to be published. According to Gia Gamqrelidze, 'archaeology' became a very fashionable word in the press, applied to the description and study of all kinds of antiquities (books, churches, monasteries, icons, epigraphic monuments etc.), often placed alongside reports on natural history, ethnography and folklore (Gamqrelidze 2012, 8). This mirrored the general situation of the science of archaeology because, by that time, history, philology, epigraphy and history of art were considered to be sub-disciplines of Classical archaeology, strongly influenced by German classicism (Khatchadourian 2008, 254; cf. Frolov 2006). In September 1881, the Society of Amateurs of Caucasian Archaeology organized the Fifth Archaeological Congress of the Imperial Archaeological Commission in Tbilisi. The congress welcomed some 850 participants, including leading European scholars in history, archaeology, ethnography, folklore and languages (cf. Sagona 2018, 5-6). The congress spurred further research into the archaeology of the Caucasus, financed by the Russian Empire.

Nevertheless, in the 1880s especially, Western archaeologists enriched European collections with numerous objects found in the Caucasus. One of the most striking cases is that of Ernest Chantre, then deputy director of the Lyon Museum, who wanted to bring together as many objects as possible from important excavation sites like Koban, Samtavro, Redkin-Lager and Stepantsminda. In fact, the French scholar, attempting to draw parallels with central European Hallstatt culture, gathered together items excavated in Koban, expanding the holdings of the French museum to 1,150 objects form this area (Chantre 1886; cf. Bediashvili, Bodet 2010, 279; Sagona 2018, 7). As a consequence, the Russian government, which realized the preciousness of the objects relatively late, passed a law in the 1890s, prohibiting archaeological excavations by any foreign archaeologists in the Caucasus (Cheishvili 2013, 13). Among the 'victims' of this law was, for instance, the famous and renowned

French archaeologist baron Joseph Berthelot de Baye (1853-1931), who was faced with an interdiction during his first voyage to the Caucasus in 1897. Because it was impossible to carry out archaeological research, he changed his interest to the ethnography of the Caucasus, and became one the most important specialists in this field (cf. Cheishvili 2013).

3 Russian Collectors of Georgian Medieval Artefacts

However, the problem of vanishing precious ancient objects did not stop with the banning of excavations by foreign archaeologists, since the greatest interest in the material testimonies of a glorious Caucasian past came from Russia. Since at least the 1870s, we have to consider the proliferation of Byzantine studies and of studies on Medieval Art, stemming from the discipline of Classical Archaeology (cf. Foletti 2017). But even before the institutionalization of such interest, private collectors from the highest ranks of Russian society in Moscow and Saint Petersburg were already accumulating medieval manuscripts, icons and precious liturgical vessels. To name just a few that were strongly interested in medieval artefacts early on, we should mention Sergei Grigorevich Stroganov (President of the Society of History and Antiquities of Russia, and one of the founders of the Imperial Archaeological Commission), Dimitri Nikolaevich Sheremetev (also one of the co-founders of the Imperial Archaeological Commission), or Fedor Andreevich Tolstoj (cf. Tonini 2009). The number of collectors of medieval antiquities in Russia grew so fast that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, there were more than one hundred private collections in Russia (Khrushkova 2011, 242-3; Moretti 2009). During the second half of the century, this number grew even more.

The inclusion of Georgian medieval artefacts in Russian collections is intrinsically linked to the annexation of the kingdoms of Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti to the Russian empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As Ronald Suny argues, "by the end of the first fifty years of Russian rule, the once rebellious, semi-independent dynasts of Georgia had been transformed into a service gentry loyal to their new monarch" (1994, 63). Nevertheless, hand in hand with political dominance, it is the subjugation of

the previously autocephalous Georgian Orthodox Church to the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church that caused the pillage of numerous ecclesiastical treasuries and their subsequent sale to private collectors. Even though the high-ranked Georgian clergy was initially welcoming to the Russians – the annexation was actually perceived as an act of protection from the Muslim Turkish and Persian threat from the South – the church soon felt the Russian hierarchy. The metropolitan bishop, called 'exarch', who reported directly to the Holy Synod of Russia, replaced the highest ecclesiastical figure, the catholicos-patriarch of Georgia. Moreover, beginning with Teophilact Rusanov from Saint Petersburg (1817-1821) and lasting until the restoration of autocephaly in 1917, all the exarchs in Georgia were ethnic Russians, with very little or no knowledge of Georgian language and culture (Grdzelidze, George, Vischer 2006, 128).

While the eradication of the Georgian language from the church was dominant only in the big cities in the first half of the nineteenth century, by the second half of the century, the tendency to legitimize the Slav *typikon* in Church services and to eschew the old Georgian hymns spread to the countryside as well (Grdzelidze, George, Vischer 2006, 135). A letter from the Russian imperial court, written in 1867 and addressed to the viceroy of Georgia, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolayevich, states: "We should conquer the Caucasus again, but this time by different means. Physical conquest will not endure without a spiritual victory. Such victory is indeed religious in form" (Paliashvili 1995, 33, translation from Grdzelidze, George, Vischer 2006, 135). Finally, in order to obtain total subjection of the Georgian clergy, a decision was made to confiscate all church land. In Eastern Georgia, the state seizure of church lands was permitted by a directive dated 13 November 1869, from tsar Alexander II, and similar measures followed in the provinces of Imereti, Guria and Samegrelo in the 1870s (Grdzelidze, George, Vischer 2006, 136). All movable and immovable property of the Georgian church entered into the possession of the Imperial Treasury.

This fact does not come as a surprise since the Russian Church itself, from the times of the Emperor Peter I, was governed not by a Patriarch, but by the Synod's over-Prokurator, being an ordinary serviceman of state (cf. for instance Cracraft 2003, 60-5; 120-30). As a result, the Exarchy confiscated all property of the Geor-

gian church. Clergymen were provided with a salary, but only a limited number of designated figures, appearing in a special list, signed by the governing body of the Church, were actually paid (cf. Bubulashvili 2006). In this situation, having control over the church's immovable and movable properties, the exarchs began to enrich themselves with church treasures.

For instance, Russian historian Nikoloz Durnovo described exarch Ebsebius Ilyinsky (1858-1877) as being typical of the exarchs who were in Georgia to rob the congregation of the Church of Ancient Iberia, entrusted to them, by wasting its property, suppressing the language and then returning to Russia with stolen goods and money (Durnovo 1907, 20). Probably the most well-known robbery happened in 1869, when this exarch acted as an accomplice to governor-general Levashov of Kutaisi, who stole the tenth-century icon of the Mother of God with its gilded *oklad*, the central part of the so-called Khakhuli triptych from the Gelati monastery, probably the most iconic piece of Georgian medieval art (fig. 1). In collaboration with the exarch, the governor commissioned a Russian artist, a certain Vasilyev, to design a new triptych, while another artist, the goldsmith Pavel Sazikov, was appointed to execute the metal chasing in imitation of the original. Levashov then sold the original Kahkuli icon to the famous Russian collector of Byzantine art, Mikhail Botkin, and installed the commissioned copy in the monastery of Gelati (Amiranashvili 1978, 4; Amiranashvili 1972, 17).

This was not the only instance of fraud that occurred under the auspices of exarch Ilyinsky. During his incumbency, icons from the Sioni cathedral and the monasteries of Mtskheta, Alaverdi, Bodbe, Jumati and others were robbed of their precious stones (Bubulashvili 2006, 143). But the most ingenious swindle was the appropriation of an eleventh-century Gospel book with a golden cover, embellished with cloisonné enamels, by governor-general Levashov. Feigning a desire to restore the old cover, he had it removed, fixed a cheap silver reproduction by Sazikov in its place, and never returned the original (Durnovo 1907, 22; Bubulashvili 2006, 142-3).

This kind of trickery was repeated and further developed during the exarchate of Palladi Rayev (1887-1892). With the approval of the exarch, a photographer from Saint Petersburg, Stepan Iurevich Sabin-Gus, a mastermind in robbing, forging and selling medieval golden and

Figure 1. *Khakhuli Triptych*, 10th-12th century. Treasury of Georgian Museum of Arts. Wikimedia Commons

silver icons with cloisonné enamels to Russian collectors (cf. Buckton 2001), removed medieval icons from churches and monasteries in Western Georgia (Jumati, Khobi, Martvili and Shemok-medi) again under the pretext of wanting to restore them, and had them replaced with cheap silver copies (Amiranashvili 1978, 4; Lazarev 1925, 13; Pokrovskij 1911, 5). The icons obviously never returned to the monasteries, and ended up in various private collections. For instance, an icon of the Archangel Michael from Jumati, from the twelfth century, made its way into the collection of Alexej Bobrinskoy (fig. 2). The count was very happy with his acquisition but, not knowing the origin of the icon, he boasted about it to the prominent Russian art historian and Byzantinist Nikodim Kondakov (Foletti 2017, 44-5). The latter immediately recognized it as a precious Georgian revetment, and even identified it with one of his photographs from when the icon was still in the monastery of Jumati. As Viktor Lazarev states, just a few hours after this discovery, Bobrinskoy and Kondakov came before the Minister of Imperial Properties, Ilarion Vorontsov-Dashkov, and shortly afterwards, the tsar himself. During this encounter with the tsar, Kondakov would have suggested compiling a catalogue of precious objects still surviving in

Georgia, so that it would be distributed to all the local monasteries in order to prevent further thefts and losses (Lazarev 1925, 14). The project was carried out by Kondakov himself, with the assistance of the late Georgian historian and archaeologist Dimitri Bakradze, without any doubt the leading figure in Georgian archaeological scholarship in the 1860s-1880s. The volume, named *The Description of the Ancient Artifacts in some Sanctuaries of Georgia*, was published a year after the discovery, in 1890, in Saint Petersburg (Kondakov 1890). As the title suggests, this short text of about 170 pages, without introduction or conclusion, provides the basic information about the precious items (gold, silver and enamel) preserved in the churches and monastic treasuries in various Georgian regions. Starting with Gelati, the richest monastery, which was founded in 1106 by King Davit the Builder, the publication then takes the structure of presenting lists of all the valuable objects from the chosen monasteries and churches.

As Ivan Foletti convincingly argues, the book, as well as other publications by Kondakov from this period, must be understood within the complex political situation of the Russo-Turkish wars, when the discourse on Russia as heir or even integral part of the Byzantine world had

Figure 2. Icon of Archangel Michael, twelfth century.
Monastery of Jumati. Wikimedia Commons

become increasingly widespread in intellectual and political circles.[3] Moreover, during the reign of tsar Alexander III (1881-1894), imperial policy was marked by a greater centralization, russification of the Empire, of which the Southern Caucasus was now an integral part. Moreover, under the new tsar, the region was no longer governed by a viceroy, but by generals answering directly to the Imperial Minister of the Interior, and Georgians were excluded from any official posts (Rayfield 2012, 306-7). In many instances, Kondakov qualifies Georgian medieval art as artistically subordinate to Byzantine production, even stating that the ideas for the best art produced in Georgia came from Constantinople.[4] He is not even afraid to write: "The work is rough and therefore clearly local" (Kondakov 1890, 28). It is thus possible to say that, in Kondakov's eyes, in the same way that the South Caucasus was then a periphery of the Russian Empire, it had previously been a periphery of the Byzantine Empire, to which Russia was legitimate heir, and medieval art clearly reflects this subordination and dependence. Finally, it is significant that the main author of the volume was the Russian 'court art historian' and Byzantinist Kondakov, with Bakradze being acknowledged only as an interpreter of the Georgian inscriptions on the objects. Kondakov's mission can thus be understood as a statement that Georgian art is Russian national heritage, equal to Russian art or even a subgroup of it (Foletti 2016, 25).

4 Georgian Archaeology: Dimitri Bakradze and Ekvtime Taqaishvili

This inevitably leads us to wonder whether the point of view of Georgian scholars was different from the Russian. In the initial part of this paper, we mentioned that, during the last third of the nineteenth century, archaeology – in the broadest sense of the word – was thriving in Georgia. However, the list of Georgian speaking archaeologists leading excavations and collecting materials is rather limited in comparison with Russian and even Western scholars involved in the research of Caucasian antiquities. Never-

theless, the name Dimitri Bakradze (1826-1890) emerges from the shadows (fig. 3). His life and activities illustrate the general situation of the nascent Georgian intelligentsia of that period in a remarkable way.

He was born in the village of Khashmi, in the Kakheti region, as the son of a local priest. Destined to follow in the steps of his father, he received his higher education first at the Theological Seminary of Tbilisi and then continued his training in Russia, where, in 1850, he graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy (for Bakradze's biography see Dumbadze 1950). The seminary in Tbilisi, at that time, was the highest educational institution in Georgia until the opening, in 1918, of the first university in the whole Caucasus region, Tbilisi State University. Before that, many sons from impoverished noble Georgian families, as well as from the poorer priests' families, had to travel to the universities and academies of Moscow and Saint Petersburg in order to receive higher education.[5] The generation of Georgians educated in Russia is known by the Georgian name 'Tergdaleulebi', which can be translated as 'those who drank water from the river Terek', a river that separated Georgia from Russia geographically and culturally, in the Caucasus range. During their studies abroad, these young intellectuals became aware of the profound differences between the prevailing traditionalism among the Georgian nobility and the more effectively organized Tsarist state. As a consequence, a return to the traditional way of life was no longer possible for them (Reisner 2009, 40-1; cf. more in detail Reisner 2004). After coming home, they engaged in a movement for national enlightenment, as well as in an attempt to modernize their fatherland, where a simple rural life was predominant and where, except for a few nobles and clerics, people had little or no sense of their own nationhood (cf. Suny 1994, 113-5; cf. also Breyfogle 2005). As Oliver Reisner affirms, "The Tergdaleulebi aimed at a culturally based renovation of the former noble identity, known as 'kartveloba'. As a modern national culture, this was to integrate the different regions and social classes into a standardized culture to provide a basis for a united Georgian nation"

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3   Foletti 2016. Cf. the 'Byzantine question' and perception of Moscow as the 'Third Rome'; see Rakitin 2013.

4   Kondakov explicitly writes: "The work is Georgian, but of Byzantine style, which dominated in the best period of Georgian art, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries" (1890, 7).

5   The Tsarist state even awarded scholarships to these noble Georgians in order to recruit and educate loyal state servants. Cf. Reisner 2015.

Figure 3. Dimitri Bakradze (1826-1890), date unknown.
© National Parliamentary Library of Georgia

(2015, 96). This was done with a flourishing literary production in the Georgian language, which was first restricted and then totally excluded from state school curricula, and also by founding numerous cultural societies, starting in the 1860s. The most important of these, a real key organization for the national movement, the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians[6] was founded in 1879 and organized mainly by Ilia Chavchavadze, Dimitri Kipiani and Iakob Gogebashvili (Gabisonia 2012, 73). Although the Georgian language continued to be repressed, the Society, entirely dependent on membership fees, was successful in opening numerous elementary schools and libraries on the Georgian mainland, and in places with a considerable presence of ethnic Georgians (Vladikavkaz or Baku) (Reisner 2004, 160-74).

After his return to Georgia in 1851, Dimitri Bakradze held several teaching and official positions across the country. In 1861, he permanently settled in Tbilisi, where he energetically engaged in public and scholarly activities, mainly in the domain of archaeology and history. He was present for the foundation of the previously mentioned Society of Amateurs of Caucasian Archaeology, which helped organize the large 1881 archaeological congress in Tbilisi.[7] In a programmatic article explaining the Society's general goals, published in the aristocratic journal *Tsiskari* in 1873, in Georgian language, Bakradze stated that "the society needed to comprehend fully the significance of the ancient remains, to preserve them and not to allow anyone to damage them further; to take photographs of buildings, and their wall paintings; to copy the inscriptions; to purchase old coins, manuscripts, and all those items which comprised such a gift from antiquity".[8] Bakradze evidently insisted on field research and gathering of historical materials *in situ*. For that purpose, he organized many archaeological excursions in various regions of Georgia, such as Svaneti, Ajara, Guria, Mingrelia and Meskheti-Javakheti, all of them

[6] In Georgian: *kartvelta shoris tsera-kitkhvis gamavrtslebeli sazogadoeba*.

[7] The Society of Amateurs of Caucasian Archaeology was unfortunately disbanded in 1881 for lack of funds, but in the same year its former members came together in a newly founded Society of Caucasian History and Archaeology, with even broader objectives and activities, which Bakradze presided over until 1886. Cf. Gamqrelidze 2012, 18.

[8] Translation from Georgian in English from Gamqrelidze 2012, 11-12.

with an abundant presence of medieval monuments. He also pioneered excursions to regions with a 'Georgian past', such as the historical region Tao-Klarjeti in present-day north-eastern Turkey, which was ceded to the Russian Empire following the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, and where numerous medieval monuments from the seventh to eleventh centuries survived.[9] According to Gela Gamqrelidze, these historical and archaeological surveys were only one part of the scholar's ultimate objective: the study of Georgian antiquities as a whole, a project obviously beyond the powers of one single scholar, which is why the idea of a society of amateurs of archaeology was received with delight and enthusiasm in scholarly circles.[10] In the current situation of nationalized historiographies in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey,[11] we must not forget that the Society was not preoccupied only with antique and medieval monuments in Georgia, but the whole Caucasus region, as was Bakradze himself.

In 1875, Bakradze published his work *The Caucasus in Ancient Monuments of Christianity* (Bakradze 1875)*.* This extensive study of some 320 Christian monuments in the Southern Caucasus does not follow a chronological, regional or thematic approach; the different Armenian and Georgian monuments are placed in strict alphabetical order and the book is written in Russian. This could be understood as an implicit way of projecting the contemporary political unity of this region onto the unity of the artistic production of the Middle Ages. As indicated, Bakradze did not have a specifically art historical or archaeological education, he was mainly a theologian and historian. In 1879, he joined Dimitri Kipiani and Ilia Chavchavadze in the establishment of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians and actively participated in its activities (cf. Dumbadze 1950). In 1889, he published, in Georgian, the *History of Georgia from Ancient Times until the End of the Tenth Century* (Bakradze 1889). Nevertheless, despite his enormous efforts to organize scientific and cultural life in Georgia, despite his publication of an extensive work on Georgian history in the Georgian language, and in spite of the fact that the Georgian national liberation movement was in a full swing, Bakradze's major archaeological publications (including his assistance to Kondakov) reflect Russian colonial policy to a certain extent, because they were sponsored by the state, under the auspices of the Imperial Archeological Commission, in a period of thorough russification.

Bakradze's successor, as the most active authority in the broad sense of archaeology, was without a doubt Ekvtime Taqaishvili (1863-1953) (fig. 4), who was appointed by Bakradze, one year before his death in 1889, as the head of one of the most important excavations in the Caucasus, in Mtskheta (fig. 5) (Gamqrelidze 2012, 19). Born in the Kutaisi region to a noble family in 1863, he graduated from Saint Petersburg University in 1887, in history and Classical philology. From 1887 to 1917, he lectured in history, geography, Latin and Greek at various prestigious schools in Tbilisi, including the Tbilisi Gymnasium for Nobility.[12] During these years, he was actively involved in extensive scholarly activities and was a member of or directly chaired various scientific societies, conformingly to the *air du temps* of a flourishing cultural and scientific involvement of the Georgian élite. He was a member of the Saint Petersburg and Moscow archaeological societies, as well as a member of Société Asiatique, the Georgian Dramatic Society and, naturally, the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians. From 1907 to 1921, he chaired the Society of History and Ethnography of Georgia, which he founded together with a circle of scholars and amateurs in Georgian history, literature and folklore. It was the first purely Georgian scientific society established after the First State Duma legalized the establishment of national scientific societies (Reisner 2004, 243). But, most importantly, he was a member of the organizational committee for the foundation of the University in Tbilisi. After its solemn opening in February 1918, he became one of its first professors.

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[9] Cf. Bakradze's publication *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie po Gruzii i Adchare* (1878).

[10] Gamqrelidze 2012, 12; 11-14 for further information of the Society's goals and activities.

[11] Cf. Schnirelmann 2001; for Armenian historiography od medieval architecture see Maranci 2001.

[12] For a biography of Taqaishvili in Russian, see Megrelidze 1960. More recent books and articles about the scholar are almost exclusively in the Georgian language. Cf. the bibliography about Taqaishvili in Metreveli 2010, 86-142.

Figure 4. Ekvtime Taqaishvili (1863-1953), date unknown. © National Parliamentary Library of Georgia

Figure 5. Group photo of Dimitri Bakradze, Ekvtime Taqaishvili, Ilia Chavchavadze and others in Mtskheta, date unknown. © National Parliamentary Library of Georgia

Between 1888 and 1920, Taqaishvili conducted archaeological excavations in 21 locations,[13] and studied and documented more than 300 above-ground buildings (fig. 6) (Kharatashvili 2014, 109). He followed in the steps of Bakradze and travelled the whole 'country', including Tao-Klarjeti, where he led a series of archaeological expeditions between 1907 and 1917, and even extended his excursions to include previously unknown archaeological sites. Particularly interesting are his travels in (and subsequent studies on) 'Muslim Georgia', that is to say, the medieval Erusheti fiefdom in the Ardahan Province in north-eastern Turkey, which, according to medieval historical tradition, was one of the earliest centres of Christianity in Georgia.[14] There, he identified several Christian monuments, including a three-nave basilica in the village of Oğuzyolu, near Hanak, and the domed tetraconch church

of Saint George of Gogubani at Binbaşak.[15] From all these excursions came the five-volume *Archeological Excursions and Travels; Research and Notes*, published in Russian, in Tbilisi, between 1905 and 1915,[16] as well as separate reports of the excursions, some of them published later in exile.[17] Besides that, Taqaishvili was the author of more than two hundred scientific papers, written more or less equally in Russian and in Georgian, on the archaeology, history, history of art and ethnography of Georgia.[18]

In contrast to Dimitri Bakradze's Pan-Caucasian archaeological research, Taqaishvili's focus remained exclusively on Georgian ancient and medieval heritage. Even though some of his major works were published in Russian, the goals of his excursions beyond the boundaries of the contemporary Georgian territory – in Tao-Klarjeti, Kola-Oltisi and also in Armenia (cf. Megrelidze

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13   Taqaishvili led, for instance, the archaeological excavations in Vani, Sajavakho, Sachkhere or Khutsubani. Cf. Gamqrelidze 2012, 20-1.

14   For Georgian Medieval historiography see in particular Rapp 2003 and Thomson 1996.

15   The account of the excursion is published in Taqaishvili 1991. Cf. Baumgartner 2009, 186-7.

16   Taqaishvili 1905-1915. The volumes have been integrated in a recent project led by Roin Metreveli, publishing the most important works of Taqaishvili in the Georgian language in a twelve-volume collection. The first four volumes have already been published. Cf. Taqaishvili 2016-2017.

17   For instance, Taqaishvili 1937; Taqaishvili 1938 ; Taqaishvili 1952.

18   Cf. the bibliography compiled by Roin Metreveli (2010, 51-85).

Figure 6. Group photo of Ekvtime Taqaishvili (in the middle) and his colleagues at Jvari, date unknown. © National Parliamentary Library of Georgia

1960, 9) – were merely churches presenting Georgian inscriptions and thus attesting a Georgian past. In this way, the newly-described Georgian medieval monuments confirmed a much vaster territory of the medieval Georgian kingdom than the contemporary boundaries of what was soon to become the first Georgian nation-state, the Democratic Republic of Georgia, established in May 1918. But years before that, the borders of an autonomous and independent Georgia were discussed among the members of various Georgian political parties in the State Duma and by Georgian separatists living abroad (cf. Rayfield 2012, 320-4). Nevertheless, no historical arguments could overcome Turkish forces and their will to regain the strategically valuable provinces lost to Russia some decades earlier. Finally, in the fragile context of the ending World War and of negotiations for the new division of power, on 4 June 1918, the new Georgian government signed almost all Southwest Georgia away to Turkey, in exchange for recognition of their independent statehood (cf. Rayfield 2012, 325-7).

Unlike Bakradze, whose generation was not allowed to hold any official position in the State's affairs, Taqaishvili himself was deeply involved in politics: he actually took part in the establishment of the National Democratic Party of Georgia in 1917. Between 1919 and 1921, he was even elected to the post of Deputy Chairman in the Constituent Assembly of the new republic. Within one generation of scholars, the political situation in the Caucasus changed radically: while archaeology was still in the hands of the tsarist autocracy during Bakradze's time, Taqaishvili made it an instrument of the national question, for which he is remembered even today.[19]

5 Georgian National Treasure

What was nevertheless common to both of these big names in Georgian archaeology was the desire not only to describe and study the ancient monuments of Georgia, but above all, to protect them from perishing. Publications on the most valuable Church artefacts, starting with Kondak-

[19] On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the archaeologist, the Georgian National Museum organized the exhibit *Georgian Archaeology from 8th Millennium BC till 4th Century AD*. In the official description of the exhibition on the web page of the museum, it is stated for instance that "all the exhibits present continuous line of development of Georgian culture from the Neolithic era up to the Late Antique epoch. Georgian Archaeology of modern days aims to continue old traditions of scientific approaches introduced by Ekvtime Takaishvili and demonstrate national culture as inseparable part of world civilization". Cf. `http://museum.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=69&info_id=12731` (2018-04-16).

ov's volume mentioned above, were only one side of the coin. In order to save old Georgian manuscripts, icons, reliquaries and liturgical vessels left in abandoned churches and monasteries, there had been a proposal, as early as the 1870s, to establish a Church Museum for this purpose. The initiator of the project was none other than Dimitri Bakradze. In 1873, he appealed for support from the Imperial Academy of Sciences. Although he gained the support of the Academy, the museum saw the light of day only over ten years later, in 1889, because, according to Eldar Bubulashvili, the Russian exarchs opposed its establishment (Bubulashvili 2006, 159). However, since the date of the Church Museum's foundation corresponds with the preparation and publication of Kondakov's '*Description*' (Kondakov 1890), as well as with the Imperial prohibition of excavations by foreign archaeologists, we can also think that the alarming situation required a stronger voice, and more tangible proof of the endangerment of what was then Russia's sacred wealth, to convince the authorities to support such an initiative.

The Church Museum at the Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi was preceded by the establishment, as early as 1852, of the Museum of the Caucasian Department of the Russian Imperial Geographic Society, the very first museum in the whole Caucasus region, located in Tbilisi. On the initiative of the German explorer Gustav Radde, this museum converted into a more broadly focused Caucasus Museum in 1865.[20] Like its predecessor, the museum had a bias towards ethnography and natural history, but it enriched its collections with objects from the past, as archaeological research progressed throughout the Caucasus (Gamqrelidze 2012, 9 and 21). It mainly preserved numismatic materials, weapons, armour, jewellery and other archaeological items discovered during the numerous excavations. But officially-led excavations were not the only way to discover treasures from the past. Many casual finds occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century, during heavy rains and earth removals for house constructions, like for example the famous Akhalgori Treasure, as-

cribed to the fifth century BC (fig. **7**) (Gamqrelidze 2012, 21). One of the aims of the Society of Amateurs of Caucasian Archaeology was thus not only to collect, but also to purchase valuable antiquities all over the Caucasus.

Finally, the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians also engaged in collecting old documents, manuscripts and valuable books from all over Georgia, though it did not have an appropriate space for the growing collection. It was stored at the offices of the Society before being moved, in August 1912, to three rooms in the newly built Gymnasium for Nobility, a building that became the first corpus of Tbilisi State University six years later. It will not come as a surprise that the person responsible for the collection of old books and manuscripts for the Society's library was, starting in 1898, Ekvtime Taqaishvili.[21] In the revolutionary year 1905, when the Society had to close down several schools and libraries and even limit its purchasing and protecting ancient books due to lack of finances (cf. Reisner 2004, 171-2), Taqaishvili felt obliged to remind the board of its responsibilities:

> This is a treasure that you can not buy for any price and once it is lost, it can not be restored; with the loss of this treasure, the history, literature, science, and culture of the Georgian nation have been lost, so the Georgian nation must preserve this treasure. The board is obliged to leave no stone unturned so that the relics mentioned are not lost to our people.[22]

This quote may seem like a premonitory feeling of what was to happen, sixteen years later, to the most precious objects that had been collected and cared for since half a century. Although a lot of antique and medieval precious objects were transferred and kept safe in the Church Museum of the Sioni Cathedral, in the Caucasus Museum and in the collection of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy, the real establishment of what is now understood as the Georgian National Treasure took place in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation of the First Democratic

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20   Hubertus Jahn from Cambridge University is currently working on the subject and preparing an extensive study about the Caucasus Museum. For the basic information see Gamqrelidze 2012, 9-10.

21   Cf. the question of efforts of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy to establish a Public library with its own book museum Reisner 2004, 169-73 and 243-4.

22   Sakartvelos centraluri sakhelmcipo saistorio arkivi (National Historical Archives of Georgia), f. 481 *Obshchestvo rasprostranenija gramotnosti sredi gruzin (1879-1922)*, d. 967, l. 1. Cf. Chkhitunidze 1980, 52; Reisner 2004, 171.

Figure 7. Golden plate from the Akhalgori Treasure,
5th century BC. Archaeological Treasury of the Georgian
National Museum. Wikimedia Commons. © Juliana Lees

Republic of Georgia. With the Red Army's approach toward Tbilisi, at the beginning of 1921, the Menshevik government of the Republic, with Noe Zhordania at its head, fled into exile to France, on 24 February of the same year (cf. Hille 2010, 98-100). The government was justifiably afraid that the Russians would steal or destroy most of the valuable items then collected together, because, under a committee led by Stalin and Trotsky, the Bolsheviks were indeed pillaging Russia's church and art treasures (cf. recently Semyonova, Iljine 2013). And that is why the government decided that the collections of the most precious historic, archaeological, artistic and ecclesiastical objects had to be exiled as well. The treasure had a tremendous value. In addition to the chosen, most valuable objects, including the Akhalgori's archaeological treasure, old illuminated manuscripts and printed books, icons, enamels, crosses and liturgical vessels from Gelati, Martvili, Khobi, Shemokhmedi and other monasteries, it also contained more than hundred paintings from the National Gallery (for instance, paintings by Rembrandt van Rijn and Lucas Cranach), treasure from the Dadiani Palace in Zugdidi, treasure from Tbilisi Palace, property from Russian churches, property from the Borjomi Palace (with its rich libraries), etc.[23]

All the several hundreds of objects were wrapped up into 39 big wooden boxes, sealed with a state signature and first carried to Batumi, then shipped via Istanbul to Marseille and there placed in a bank depository. Although the treasure was officially the property of the Georgian government-in-exile, it was actually Ekvtime Taqaishvili who was appointed to accompany and supervise this huge collection. Despite numerous attempts by various European and American museums to purchase some of its most valuable items, and the extreme economic hardship of the government as well as of Taqaishvili himself, the scholar never sold a single piece of the priceless collection. What is more, Taqaishvili even consistently denied scholars access to the items of the collection, did not allow them take any photographs, and simply did not want to open the boxes before the treasure's rightful

owner – the Georgian state – got it back.[24] The famous Byzantinist Gabriel Millet, for instance, asked on several occasions for access to the medieval artefacts – he even proposed to organize an exhibition at the Louvre on Georgian medieval art – but he was refused, again and again (Amiranashvili 1978, 13).

However, in 1933, the League of Nations recognized the Soviet Union and, as a consequence, the Georgian government-in-exile lost its legitimacy and the Georgian embassy in Paris was abolished (Lang 1962, 258). The treasure passed into the possession of the French state and Pierre Jaudon was appointed as its curator. Subsequently, this precious cargo was transferred from Marseille to a bank depository in Paris, and Taqaishvili lost access to it. In his letter to Vakhtang Beridze, written in 1935, Taqaishvili complained:

Nowadays these boxes are without any attention and I do not have access to them. They have no owner. Even if I had access to them physically I would not be able to work, I got old, my leg hurts and I can hardly walk. I am very worried about the future of this treasure because who else but you know how much energy I had put in collecting these items and working on them. (cit. in Amiranashvili 1978, 1)

Despite his deteriorating health, the elderly scholar did not give up. He urged the French government to hand the collections back to Georgia, especially after he learned that, as early as in 1923, the Soviet government had started to return many precious objects that had been stolen during imperial rule, back to Georgia.[25] However, it was not until the Second World War's turning point in favour of the Soviet Union in 1944 that it became possible to negotiate the treasure's repatriation to Georgia. In November 1944, Taqaishvili met with the Ambassador of the Soviet Union in France, Alexander Bogomolov, and asked for his assistance in this undertaking. He gave him a long report about the fate of the treasure, addressed to General De Gaulle (cf. for example Laloy 1982). By that time, De Gaulle was

23 The complete list of the items is documented in Amiranashvili 1978.

24 Ekvtime Taqaishvili's letter to the head of the scientific department of the Georgian educational commissariat Vakhtang Beridze, from April 9, 1935, transcribed in Amiranashvili 1978, 11.

25 The process of negotiation and selecting the items to be returned is described in Amiranashvili 1978, 3-10. Among the returned artifacts, there were also the gilded and enameled icons from Khakhuli, Jumati and Shemokhmedi from Mikhail Botkin's collection, appropriated by the state after the October Revolution.
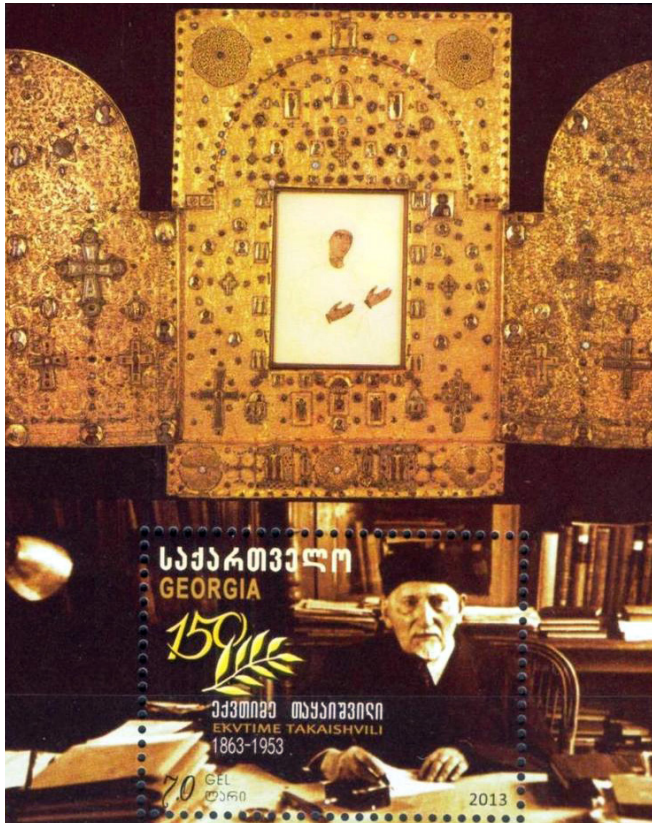
Figure 8. Collection stamp issued at the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Ekvtime Taqaishvili, 2013
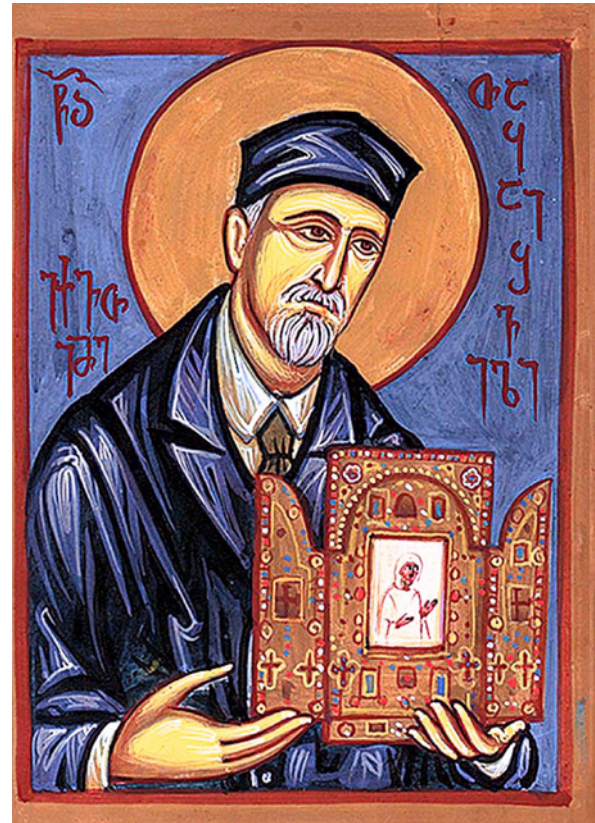
Figure 9. Contemporary icon of Saint Euthymius (Taqaishvili), the Man of God. URL https://www. holytrinityorthodox.com/calendar/los/January/03-04.jpg

getting ready to leave for Moscow to meet with Stalin to negotiate a military alliance. During his visit, held between 2 and 10 December 1944, an agreement on the question of the treasure was reached between the two statesmen, and the repatriation was subsequently organized. A delegation from Tbilisi arrived in Paris on 21 January but had to wait there for several weeks, because the war was still on and it was not safe to fly over Europe. The same 39 boxes that had left Georgia twenty-four years earlier finally returned to Tbilisi – through Rome, Cairo and Tehran – together with Ekvtime Taqaishvili, on 12 April 1945 (Amiranashvili 1978, 17; Metreveli 2010, 31). After its arrival, the treasure was examined by local scholars for 2 months, before being redistributed to the Academy of Sciences and its manuscript department, the Georgian Museum and the Georgian National Art Museum (Amiranashvili 1978, 17).

6 Conclusion

Today, the items from the treasure remain redistributed between the heirs of the above-mentioned institutions, in different collections of the Georgian National Museum and the Georgian National Center of Manuscripts. This situation persists in spite of the fact that ever since the declaration of independence of Georgia in 1990, all ecclesiastic property, movable and immovable, was given back to the Orthodox Church of Georgia (cf. Papulasvhili 2003, Serrano 2010, 283). The status of the items thus, especially the ecclesiastic artefacts that now compose the 'Treasury of the Georgian Museum of Arts', remains confusing. It is the investigation of the historiography of these precious objects that helps us to understand the complicated relationship between national and religious identity in contemporary Georgia. Speaking about the second half of the nineteenth century, Silvia

Serrano has accurately argued that "links with Russia, Westernization as well as the development of national-liberation movement against Russian colonialism facilitated the development of national consciousness and secularization of the society and religion, which in turn helped to transform religious relics into secular cultural symbols of the nation" (Serrano 2010, 282). On the contrary, hand in hand with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Georgian Orthodox Church progressively gained a very strong position within Georgian society, to such an extent that the modern-day Georgian nationalism has been remodelled around religious categories (cf. Zedania 2011). As a proof of it may serve that The Holy Synod of the Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church canonized Ekvtime Taqaishvili on October 17, 2002, and proclaimed him a 'Man of God'.[26] To conclude, no case could illustrate better the process of the secularisation and nationalisation of religious heritage and, at the same time, the sanctification of national heroes than the history of the Georgian National Treasure (figs. 8, 9).

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26 A biographical sketch of Ekvtime Taqaishvili, written in 2010 by Roin Metreveli, historian at the Georgian Academy of Sciences, ends with this sentence: "Today, Georgia knows about the greatness and significance of its dedicated and devoted son Ekvtime Takaishvili. He was declared as a martyr by the Georgian church and since then he has been called 'the Martyr Ekvtime God's Servant'". Cf. Metreveli 2010, 32. The scholar is depicted as a national hero and a saint also in the recent Georgian movie *Ekvtime: Man of God*, released in 2018, written by Lasha Kankava and directed by Nikoloz Khomasuridze.

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La description archéologique et éthnographique de la Grande Arménie par les Pères mékhitaristes de Venise entre hellénophile et arménophilie

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Abstract   This study is a preliminary attempt to reassess and redefine the aims that inspired the philological work of the Mekhitarist Fathers of Venice, particularly their volumes devoted to archaeology and historiographic geography, in the light of the so-called Orientalist and Post-colonial studies. The Author aims to show the 'ideological' relation between the historiographic works of some renowned Mekhitarist fathers, namely Ghukas Inchichian, Ghewond Alishan and Sukʿias Efrikian, and the Father of the Armenian historiography, Movsēs Khorenatsʿi, particularly concerning the methodological approach to the historiographic description and discourse. The concept of ethnic 'nation' elaborated by Movsēs Khorenatsʿi, as well as the theory of dialectical relation between centre and periphery, is one of the most entrenched and productive values of the Armenian identity. In this light, the author tries to reconsider also the intellectual and spiritual motivations behind the monumental work of the three Mekhitarist figures that should not be encompassed by a (post-) Foucaldian lecture of the 'nationalistic' philological movements, as recently proposed by some scholars.

Sommaire   1 L'essor des études arméniennes modernes à l'aube du XVIIIe siècle. – 2 L'Orientalisme, la théorie postcoloniale et les études arméniennes. – 3 Les ouvrages archéologiques et géographiques des Pères mékhitaristes. – 4 Le père Ghewond Alishan et la cartographie moderne. Conclusions.

Keywords   Mekhitarist Fathers. Orientalism. Philhellenism. Philarmenism. Azg and nation. Armenian cartography and historiographical geography.

1 L'essor des études arméniennes modernes à l'aube du XVIIIe siècle

La renaissance culturelle arménienne est indéniablement liée à l'Abbé Mékhitar de Sébaste et à sa Congrégation monastique, fondée l'8 septembre 1700 dans le quartier arménien de Pera à Constantinople. Le 8 septembre 2018 on a célébré le tricentenaire de la fondation de l'Abbaye mékhitariste de Saint Lazare qui s'installa dans le petit lazaret de la Lagune de Venise grâce à la persévérance providentielle de son fondateur, l'Abbé Mékhitar, ainsi qu'au soutien inconditionné de la Sérénissime, qui était depuis longtemps une porte d'entrée privilégiée des marchands orientaux en Europe.[1] Le rôle de la Congrégation mékhitariste fut déterminant dans la Renaissance arménienne des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles

grâce à l'inspiration qui lui avait été imprimée par son Fondateur qui déploya tous ses efforts pour revitaliser la culture arménienne à travers une démarche pragmatique qui prévoyait la redécouverte des anciens trésors littéraires de l'Arménie, l'ouverture à la littérature philosophique, théologique et spirituelle occidentale, ainsi que la publication de manuels pour l'éducation des nouvelles générations des Arméniens, en particulier de ceux qui vivaient dans l'Empire Ottoman, mais en embrassant pourtant toute l'Arménité jusqu'aux coins les plus reculés où se trouvaient des communautés arméniennes, de l'Empire russe à la Perse jusqu'à l'Inde. Un des plus importants savants et poètes arméniens du vingtième siècle, Arshag Tchobanian [Arshak Chʿobanian], affirmait que la réalité arménienne n'avait jamais connu quelque chose de pareil à l'œuvre de Mékhitar en termes d'une structure

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1   La méthode de translittération suivie est celle de la *Library of Congress' Cataloging Service*, empruntée sur la valeur phonétique de l'arménien classique et de l'arménien oriental moderne. Cela dit, j'ai préféré, parfois, d'adopter la translittération communément accepté dans la *vulgata* en lettres latines, en ajoutant la translittération scientifique entre parenthèses, comme par exemple pour le cas du poète et journaliste Arshag Tchobanian. Sur les rapports entre la Sérénissime et les Arméniens, voir : Zekiyan, Ferrari 2004 ; Zekiyan 2013, 75-102 ; Korsch 2015, 363-78.

et d'une activité organisées, d'une ouverture à l'Occident de si amples dimensions qui devient en même temps une ouverture vers l'universalité humaine et chrétienne dans un élan qui anticipe les démarches œcuméniques du XXe siècle.[2]

L'œuvre de l'Abbé Mékhitar et de sa Congrégation – inspirée par une dialectique entre tradition et innovation, identité et universalité – a été, en premier lieu, une œuvre de synthèse entre Orient et Occident, de médiation dans la rencontre et affrontement des cultures, des religions et des civilisations englobées dans le dilemme infini, ambigu et compliqué 'Occident-Orient'. Il faut ici rappeler le discours du père de l'historiographie arménienne, Moïse de Khorène (Movsēs Khorenats'i, Ve siècle), qui nous dévoile une *Weltanschauung* très originelle, laquelle devient aussi un paradigme dialectique très productif dans l'histoire culturelle et littéraire arménienne. Le Khorenats'i, en fait, tout en reconnaissant la culture grecque et classique comme la mère et la nourrice de tout savoir, déclare-t-il la dignité de son but qui atteint à conter les gestes des ancêtres de son peuple pour combler le silence des historiens anciens qui ont néanmoins rapportés les gestes de plusieurs peuples voisins.[3] Il faut noter qu'une tension dialectique entre Occident et Orient est pourtant nuancée chez le Khorenats'i dans la mesure où l'auteur déploie une conception pénétrante de sa propre identité ethnique, linguistique et culturelle, laquelle s'appuie, finalement, sur la culture grecque et hellénistique, reconnue comme mère et nourrice de la sagesse, mais s'en détache aussi avec un élan créatif et originel propre au génie de chaque nation.[4] L'accès à la sagesse des Grecs et à l'idée de civilisation ou *politeia* que les Grecs ont élaboré si magistralement et transmis aux générations futures, ne comporte pas nécessairement l'avortement de l'identité linguistique maternelle ou de la conscience 'nationale' chez le Khorenats'i. Le concept de nation, dans le sens de communauté partageant une conscience de valeurs communes, est l'idéal axial sur lequel pivota la démarche culturelle et idéologique de Mesrop Mashtots' et Sahak Partew, dont l'entreprise d'alphabétisation de l'Arménie joua un rôle fondamental dans la création d'une conscience sacrée de la communauté ethnique, voire 'nationale'.[5] En fait, le Khore-

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2 Zekiyan 2004, 177-200. Plus récemment, Marc Nichanian a souligné le rôle fondamental des Pères mékhitaristes, en particulier de Minas Bzhshkian et de Ghukas Inchichian, dans l'introduction du mouvement néo-archéologique parmi les Arméniens, ainsi que dans la création de la nation par moyen de l'adoption de la langue vernaculaire moderne comme langue littéraire : voir, Nichanian 2010, 27-8. Je discuterai plus avant les thèses du savant sur le rapport entre procès 'national' ou 'nationaliste' et politique linguistique 'nationale'.

3 Movsēs Khorenats'i, I. 3-4 ; Mahé 1993, 106 : « En effet, quoique nous ne soyons qu'une petite nation, d'un nombre limité, d'une force restreinte et, bien des fois, soumise à une royauté étrangère, il se trouve que beaucoup d'actes de vaillance ont été accompli dans notre pays, dignes d'être rappelés par écrit, mais que pas un seul de ces princes n'a pas jugé nécessaire d'enregistrer dans des livres ». Il est très fascinant ici de noter que presque la même pensée est partagée par un des fondateurs de la philologie moderne, Wilhem von Humboldt. En fait, ceci affirme que l'étude de la langue et culture grecques n'est pas un divertissement culturel, mais qu'elle offre le modèle auquel s'inspirer et sur lequel créer des nouveautés : voir Gourgouris 1996, 123 (citation de Gourgouris tirée par le volume de von Humboldt, *Werke in fünf Bänden, Schriften zum Altertumskunde und Äesthetik*, 87).

4 Ici, le terme 'nation', qui traduit l'arménien *azg*, indique l'ensemble d'une communauté partageant la même conscience ethnique, confessionnelle et culturelle. Ce terme n'implique pas l'idéologie État-Nation, modelée sur la pensée politique élaborée par la Révolution française et adoptée par l'Occident, mais se rattache plutôt au concept d'identité ethnique partagé par les Arméniens. Sur cette question, voir : Zekiyan 1996, 267-86 ; Zekiyan 1987, 471-85 ; Arutjunova-Fidanjan 1988-1989, 345-63 ; Der-Karabetian 1981, 25-31. Voir aussi, Barth (1969), pour ses théories sur les relations entre les groupes ethniques et les frontières, et le focus sur les stratégies adoptées par les groupes ethniques minoritaires dans leur relation avec des systèmes sociaux plus grands. À mon avis, même si l'anthropologue se réfère aux dynamiques interethniques dans les sociétés industrielles, les Arméniens, dans d'époques différentes de leur histoire (par exemple, les Arméniens Byzantins, les Arméniens à l'époque de l'Islam, les Arméniens Fatimides, les Arméniens de la Nouvelle Djoulfa et les Safavides, les marchands arméniens en Italie, etc.), ont adopté la deuxième stratégie et la troisième. La deuxième stratégie consiste dans l'acceptation de sa propre condition de la part du groupe minoritaire et le déploiement d'une double stratégie d'intégration consistant dans l'assimilation des différences culturelles positives du groupe majoritaire, lesquelles sont tout à fait défectueuses dans le groupe minoritaire, d'un côté, et la participation active dans le système économique du groupe majoritaire, de l'autre côté. Par contre, la troisième stratégie de la théorie barthienne consiste dans l'importance donnée au facteur identitaire sur la base duquel les acteurs d'un groupe ethnique minoritaire développe de nouveaux modèles d'activités dans des secteurs pas encore monopolisés par les acteurs du groupe majoritaire. L'adoption de la deuxième stratégie, mais surtout de la troisième stratégie, par les acteurs d'un groupe ethnique dans le cadre des relations 'groupe minoritaire-groupe majoritaire', accroît les chances de succès du groupe minoritaire et décroît les probabilités d'une éventuelle assimilation du groupe ethnique minoritaire. Pour une réflexion sur le cas de la Diaspora arménienne contemporaine, cf. Dadoyan 2015, 113-38.

5 Pour une analyse du modèle interprétatif sous-jacent au procès d'alphabétisation et d'évangélisation inauguré par Mesrop Mashtots' et ses disciples, voir : Calzolari 2014, 369-95 ; Zekiyan 2002, 189-98 ; Zekiyan 2004, 161-81.

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nats'i développa son idée de nation à partir de la conception juive de nation comme communauté dont l'existence n'est pas forcément définie sur la base territoriale, mais plutôt par le fait de partager des valeurs communes d'ordre essentiellement religieux, tout en se détachant de l'idéologie juive selon laquelle la conscience ethnique s'établissait sur la croyance religieuse. Le Khorenats'i considérait donc la conscience nationale comme la conscience d'une communauté découlant d'une unité d'ordre généalogique, linguistique et culturel. C'est à l'appui de cette idée de nation que le 'Père' de l'historiographie arménienne nous donne une théorisation de la démarche culturelle et éducative inaugurée par la création de l'alphabet mesropien et l'entreprise étonnante de traduction entamée par Mesrop Mashtots', Sahak Partew et leurs disciples. Les chemins de la sagesse grecque sont ouverts au-delà des préventions ethniques cachées sous le concept grec de 'barbare', puisque dans la conception du Khorents'i, la conscience nationale, tout en étant fondée sur l'unité des valeurs transmises par les ancêtres, doit s'ouvrir à la rencontre avec les autres civilisations, et en particulier la grecque – en fait, les Grecs avait abouti à une synthèse magistrale de toute la sagesse ancienne – sans pourtant renoncer à son bagage identitaire soit-il linguistique ou généalogique.[6] Chez le Khorenats'i, à partir de la deuxième moitié du Ve siècle, nous avons déjà une théorisation équilibrée du rapport 'Orient-Occident/Sujet-Autreté' et d'un philhellénisme qui ne cache pas aucun rapport du dominant-dominé dans une ainsi-dite hégémonie culturelle, mais révèle plutôt la valeur d'une dialectique de la rencontrée dans une perspective très moderne et actuelle aussi à nos jours (Zekiyan 1998, 37-82). À ce propos, il est intéressant, de remarquer les observations d'une des figures les plus puissantes de la pensée philosophique et politique du dernier siècle ; observations qui réfléchissent les racines hébraïques de l'autrice réélaborées d'une façon originale – ainsi que très éloquente pour la vision 'idéologique' arménienne théorisée si magistralement par le père de l'historiographie Movsēs Khorenats'i – en particulier par rapport au concept de *politeia*. En fait, la réflexion de Hannah Arendt sur le rapport entre la langue maternelle et l'identité ou l'auto-conscience de la 'nation' (dans le sens précédemment expliqué) nous aident à comprendre le modèle sous-jacent à l'auto-conscience de l'Arménien, ainsi que la théorie politique du Khorenats'i que l'on trouve aussi chez le philosophe par excellence des Arméniens, David l'Invincible (Contin, Pontani 2014, 37-42). En particulier, Arendt met en évidence la dichotomie entre l'identité nationale dans le sens de citoyenneté – c'est-à-dire dans le sens commun qui a obtenu le terme 'nation' en Occident à la suite de la Révolution française et, en général, sur la base de l'idéologie 'État-nation' – et la langue maternelle. Pour elle la langue maternelle est quelque chose qui est déracinée de la nationalité, voire citoyenneté, même si la langue maternelle ne définit pas du tout la conscience ethnique. D'autre part, la conscience ethnique ne dépend ni de la nationalité ni de la religion, comme c'est évident par le témoignage de la famille de la Penseuse juive chez laquelle, bien que la langue maternelle ne soit pas forcément l'hébreu et la religion de l'*ethnos* d'appartenance soit mésestimée ou ignorée, le fait d'être juive et d'appartenir à une communauté bien définie 'ethniquement' est le *sine qua non* de l'existence elle-même ou de la subjectivité. D'autre part, l'individu n'est composé pas seulement de sa subjectivité, mais aussi de différentes dimensions – affective, esthétique, pratique – qui déterminent son être dans le monde, c'est-à-dire ses relations politiques et sociales (Arendt 1993, 34-5, 40-1). Et la dimension politique ou *politeia* de chaque individu consiste dans le dialogue ou le discours continu avec la pluralité des individus et avec ce qui est autre de soi. Il me semble que la même tension dialectique théorisée par le Khorenats'i, en particulier pour ce qui concerne le rapport 'périphérie-centre'/*polis-oikumenê* sur un plan objectif, c'est-à-dire celui du rapport entre civilisations et cultures littéraires, d'un côté, et sur un plan subjectif, c'est-à-dire du rapport entre le sujet dans ses dimensions polyvalentes et la pluralité des sujets dans leurs dimensions polyvalentes, constitue aussi pour Arendt une donnée constitutive de sa théorisation politique (1987, 99).

La vision du Khorenats'i est ainsi embrassée par les Pères Mékhitaristes qui, inspirés par la

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6 Même si la culture grecque, surtout à partir de l'époque hellénistique, était ouverte à toutes les cultures et personnalités étrangères, il faut cependant noter que le procès d'assimilation de la culture grecque impliquait un certain degré d'assimilation linguistique et culturelle. Voir, Pohlenz 1947, ch. VIIe. En tout cas, il faut noter que le concept du *kałak'akan karg* (correspondant au grec *politikê taxis*) adopté par le Khorenats'i implique l'interaction des différentes *politeiai* avec l'*oikoumenê* qui représente l'ordre politique et militaire supérieur, sans pourtant impliquer un procès d'hellénisation au détriment de l'identité ethno-linguistique propre à chacune *politeia*, voir : Zekiyan 1987 ; Traina 1991. En particulier, pour une analyse du rapport '*polis-oikumenê*' chez le Khorenats'i, voir : Zekiyan 2000, 193-204.

figure géniale de leur fondateur et animés par le désir de réédifier le bâtiment de la culture de leur peuple, ainsi que du sentiment 'national', entamèrent le travail de découverte et de dévoilement du patrimoine littéraire, historique et archéologique de la 'nation' arménienne.[7] L'activité éditoriale, incluant soit la littérature de traduction que la littérature originelle, est monumentale et presque exhaustive, s'étalant de la philologie aux mathématiques, de l'archéologie à la botanique, de la métaphysique à l'apiculture, d'une façon que aucun secteur des sciences humaines et scientifiques n'échappa pas à leur souci philologique, pédagogique et apostolique. D'un point de vue de l'histoire des idées et de la philologie, ce qu'il faut marquer est l'élément natif du travail philologique et historique des Pères mékhitaristes. En fait, il s'agit de natifs engagés dans le repérage et la production d'une mémoire et d'une réflexion historiques dont le but est de conduire les autres natifs à un travail d'auto-conscience et de construire une archive de la mémoire nationale en défense de la langue arménienne et des anciens mœurs religieuses.[8] Sur ce point-ci, les Pères mékhitaristes représentent un cas exceptionnel dans le panorama philologique européen et occidental, en particulier du XIXe siècle qui a été le siècle de l'épanouissement des études philologiques entamées par des savants européens, ainsi que de l'essor de l'activité littéraire et scientifique dans l'École mékhitariste de Venise. En fait, si dans le XIXe et la première moitié du XXe siècles, les producteurs principaux de la philologie et de l'archéologie moderne sur le Proche (Moyen-)Orient ont été des voyageurs, des savants, des archéologues ou des aventuriers européens et occidentaux, les études arméniennes ont été monopolisées et épanouies par des savants et moines arméniens provenant généralement de l'Empire Ottoman ou des régions périphériques de l'Empire qui s'étaient installés au cœur même de l'Europe, la lagune de Venise. Il faut cependant noter que les premières traces d'intérêt envers la culture arménienne en Europe se relient à l'histoire des relations inter-ecclésiastiques entre l'Église arménienne deux parmi les Églises de la Pentarchie chrétienne, celle de Byzance et celle de Rome. En fait, c'était le souci d'une nouvelle évangélisation et de la prédication de l'ecclésiologie de Rome qui animait les missionnaires dominicains et jésuites à partir de la deuxième moitié du treizième siècle. En particulier, les Dominicaines fondèrent les premiers centres d'activité en Arménie, et entamèrent ainsi une fertile activité de traduction des ouvrages théologiques et philosophiques de l'Occident latin. Pendant les siècles successifs, l'intérêt principal de l'Occident européen pour l'Arménie fut déterminé des exigences doctrinales, puisque la plupart des savants intéressés à l'étude de la langue et de la grammaire étaient de missionnaires,[9] tandis que c'est au cours de la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle que l'intérêt pour les études arméniennes se déplaça légèrement du domaine des études bibliques et grammaticales à d'autres domaines de la littérature arménienne comme par exemple l'historiographie et la géographie.[10] Toutefois, c'est un fait que les études arméniennes eurent un développement stupéfiant avec la Congrégation mékhitariste et son activité culturelle de caractère scientifique.

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[7] L'œuvre plus emblématique de Movsês Khorenats'i, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, fut publiée par les Pères Mékhitaristes dans la collection appelée « Écrivains de l'Arménie » en 1827. Même si le Fondateur de la Congrégation n'avait pas publié aucune édition des ouvrages attribués au Khorenats'i, et en général des ouvrages historiques, il avait été interpellé par un élève de l'abbé Villefroy, le compilateur du catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi (plus tard Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris), afin de fournir des argumentations convaincantes sur la valeur historique de l'*Histoire* du Khorenats'i pour la défendre contre ceux qui en réfutaient la validité historique : cf. Djanachian 1969, 384-5. Dans cet article, le père Djanachian offre d'autres exemples de relations 'déséquilibrés' entre représentants de l'académie européenne et représentants mékhiatristes qui révèlent, très souvent, les préjugés – souvent très bien cachés – d'une supposée supériorité des Européens sur les non-Européens, surtout quand ces derniers s'occupent de disciplines dont les outils sont considérés de compétence 'exclusive' du monde occidental.

[8] Selon Saïd, le natif est une invention de l'Orientalisme et du philologue orientaliste. Par contre, j'utilise le terme sans aucune acception idéologique, mais pour indiquer simplement l'autochtone. Cf. Nichanian 2010, 7-41.

[9] Il y a cependant une exception dans la figure et la production littéraire de l'humaniste Teseo Ambrogio degli Albonesi (1469-1540), voir : Strohmeyer 1998.

[10] Il faut cependant noter que la plupart de la littérature arménienne publiée avant les démarches éditoriales des Pères mékhitaristes étaient sortie de l'activité laborieuse de quelques Arméniens qui s'étaient déplacés de l'Orient en Europe, s'installant en particulier dans les foyers de l'imprimerie européenne : Venise, Rome, Amsterdam et Livourne.

2 L'Orientalisme, la théorie postcoloniale et les études arméniennes

La théorie de l'orientalisme – en tant que discipline scientifique issue de l'Occident afin de connaître, définir, classer l'Orient et y installer ainsi une hégémonie culturelle et politique – a été élaborée par le savant Edwar Saïd dans son best-seller *Orientalism*, sorti en 1978. Sur la base d'analyses bien argumentées, Saïd constate que l'orientalisme, issu de la philologie et de l'archéologie, est le discours que l'Occident a élaboré de la fin du XVIIIe siècle sur l'Orient, et c'est à travers les arts et la littérature que l'Occident a prétendu de connaître l'Orient, sur lequel cependant il a produit des narrations assez stéréotypées, qui manifestent par conséquent une approche impérialiste et colonialiste à l'Autre.[11] Après plusieurs lustres de la parution du livre de Saïd, et des débats prolifiques sortis au sein des études post-colonialistes, les provocations soulevées par les théories et observations de Saïd sur

l'herméneutique sous-jacente au travail philologique, géographique et archéologique emmené par l'Occident sur l'Orient, restent encore de grande actualité dans le panorama des relations socio-politiques, civiles et académiques de nos jours entre l'Occident et le Moyen-Orient.[12] En fait, les provocations saïdiennes, ainsi que les théories élaborées par le post-colonialisme (en particulier les concepts de représentation culturelle, migration, hybridité, autreté, mimétisme et traduction culturelle, qui ont été théorisés par le fondateur de ces études, Homi Bhabha) ouvrent des chemins herméneutiques très intéressants et pas encore assez explorés par les savants qui se dédient aux études arméniennes, mais aussi par les spécialistes des disciplines voisines, comme les études byzantines, la littérature et l'histoire médiévales européennes et de la Méditerranée, les études islamiques.[13] À ce propos, il vaut la peine de mentionner la lecture originelle de Marc Nichanian sur le début des études de philologie arménienne et leur rapport avec la philologie orientaliste européenne, ainsi que sur

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11 Edward Saïd ne fait pas de mention de l'expérience arménienne comme paradigme d'une altérité orientale chrétienne qui a développé des stratégies originelles de dialogue et d'intégration – mais en avouant pourtant le risque d'assimilation – avec des acteurs politiques et militaires plus puissants qu'elle, comme les Sassanides, les Byzantines, les Arabes et les Ottomanes. D'un point de vue historique et interculturel, le paradigme arménien, défini comme le paradigme de l'intégration différenciée par Zekiyan, pourrait fournir un modèle alternatif d'analyse des relations culturelles et littéraires, idéologiques, historiques et économiques qui se sont déplacées entre Orient et Occident. En fait, l'être frontalier des Arméniens leur permet de déployer des stratégies d'acculturation et de cohabitation très efficaces dans des contextes polymorphiques et diverses sur le plan culturel, religieux, politique et économique. Fernand Braudel souligne que les négociants arméniens furent les successeurs de la riche bourgeoisie des marchands italiens, un temps maîtres de la Méditerranée entière et qui, présents quasiment dans tout l'univers marchand, se sont rayonnés sur le capital d'autrefois à partir de la Nouvelle Djoulfa : Braudel, F. (1979), II, 70, 111, 131. Les Arméniens qui, sur le cheval entre le XVIe et le XIXe siècles, édifièrent un de plus grand empire économique et commercial entre l'Orient, la Perse, l'Europe et la Russie, se distinguèrent de l'Occident et de ses compagnies pour le commerce des Indes orientales pour leur attitude envers l'Orient. En fait, l'activité mercantile et commerciale des Arméniens ne cachait pas une intention d'hégémonie raciale, culturelle et politique, mais essayait de créer une dialectique de l'intégration. À ce propos, il serait intéressant de relire les théories de Saïd sur l'orientalisme et celles du débat successif entamé par les études historiques appelées 'Postcolonial Studies' à la lumière des paradigmes d'interaction déployés par les Arméniens pendant leur histoire de coexistence avec d'autres communautés. Pour l'analyse des paradigmes de coexistence entre les Arméniens et d'autres communautés : voir, Dadoyan 2011 ; La Porta 2013, 251-72 ; van Lint 2005, 335-78.

12 Je me permets aussi de faire référence à le mémoire de Monia Ayachi *L'Orientalisme : théorie de l'invention de l'Occident et stratagèmes de l'éclipse de l'Orient*, discuté à l'Université du Québec à Montréal le juin 2015, qui offre une relecture intéressante et nouvelle des théories saïdiennes d'une perspective de sociologie historique.

13 Certaines parmi les méthodes issues de l'herméneutique des études postcoloniales sont, à mon avis, très intéressantes pour les études arméniennes *extenso sensu*, comme la lecture critique et attentive des phénomènes littéraires et culturels dans des sociétés hybrides où le multiculturalisme se révèle dans des formes linguistiques hybrides, qui émergent dans la littérature 'secondaire' comme l'hagiographie ou les contes épiques, ainsi que dans la multiplicité des *scriptae* (ce dernier terme a été utilisé dans les études de littérature médiévale de la France du Sud, mais pourrait être bien appliqué à plusieurs cas d'écritures hybrides chez des Arméniens chalcédoniens ou 'ibérianisés', comme relevé par la savante Vaida Arutjunova-Fidanjan dans plusieurs articles), ou encore, l'évidence qu'il faut « déstabiliser l'hégémonie qui règne sur les identités et décentrer l'Europe » (Cohen 2000, 7). Il faut cependant remarquer que, tout récemment, l'application des théories postcoloniales aux études médiévales a été critiquée à plusieurs reprises. Par contre, c'est évident que l'herméneutique historiographique des études postcoloniales et la successive réflexion sur l'application de cette dernière aux études médiévales ont donné une contribution indéniable à la théorisation de nouveaux méthodes interpretatifs de la production littéraire et matérielle des cultures médiévales. Pour une analyse très précise et savante du *status quaestionis* de la critique actuelle en médiévistique, voir Uhlig 2014. Pour l'application des théories des études postcoloniales et interculturelles aux études de littérature comparative avec un regard attentif à la littérature arménienne médiévale, voir Mildonian 2017, 5-17.

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la naissance d'un orientalisme natif, voire auto-ethnographie, par l'activité des Pères mékhitaristes. Dans le deuxième volume de l'ouvrage *Entre l'art et le témoignage*, intitulé *Le deuil de la philologie*, le savant souligne que, même si le philo-hellénisme se développe en Europe surtout à partir de la moitié du XVIIIe siècle avec la philologie allemande, d'un côté, le mouvement arménophile (*Philarmenism*) prend vigueur, de l'autre côté, au sein de la Congrégation mékhitariste près d'un siècle plus tard, surtout à la suite de la visite et du séjour de lord Byron chez les moines de Saint Lazare, au moins selon l'opinion de Sthathis Gourgouris, cité plusieurs fois par Nichanian lui-même. Le pilier scientifique sur lequel se bâtit le discours héllenophile et arménophile est la philologie laquelle essaie de construire le discours sur le passé à travers la généalogie, l'ethnographie et l'archéologie, afin de connaître l'objet du discours, c'est-à-dire le natif. Celui-ci devient, par conséquent, le produit fictif de la philologie et de tout l'imaginaire exotique et mythifiant à la fois dont la philologie européenne a entouré l'Orient. Le travail du philologue dévoile l'histoire du natif au natif lui-même qui, par contre, n'est pas considéré capable d'un travail d'auto-conscience. L'Orientalisme considère que le natif, même si témoin et dépôt vivant du passé de son peuple, n'a pas les outils théoriques suffisants pour en entamer une analyse historique (Saïd 1978, 109-14 ; Nichanian 2010, 40-1). Dans le cas arménien, le discours philologique fut amorcé par les Pères mékhitaristes, qui s'emparèrent des outils théoriques de la nouvelle discipline philologique et les mirent au service de l'histoire de la 'nation', en bouleversant la relation ambiguë et 'hégémonique philologue-natif' dans la mesure où l'intermédiaire entre le passé et le natif n'était pas plus un agent étranger, c'est-à-dire le philologue occidental, mais le natif lui-même. Il y a donc une altération de perspective, puisque l'objet du discours devient ainsi le sujet du discours, avec toutes les conséquences épistémiques qui en découlent. Le regard philologique et 'ethnographique' des Pères mékhitaristes et, en particulier, de trois géants de l'encyclopédisme mékhitariste, Mikhayēl Tchamtchian [Chʿamchʿian] (1736-1823), Ghukas Inchichian (1758-1833) et Ghewond Alishan (1820-1901), est le regard de témoins et de sujets qui ne sont pas plus des objets passifs du discours, mais en deviennent des éléments actifs et productifs. Le projet culturel inauguré par l'Abbé Mékhitar et poursuivie par ses continuateurs, joua une importance fondamentale dans le procès de recouvrement et revitalisation, ainsi que de diffusion de modèles culturels et pragmatiques incarnés dans l'auto-conscience collective du peuple arménien dans son histoire millénaire, surtout à partir du Ve siècle qui marque une césure indéniable d'un point de vue de la construction de la conscience 'nationale' (toujours dans le sens de communauté ethnique). Les Pères mékhitaristes, donc, tout en ayant le souci de préserver le témoignage historique et sociale de leur peuple, adoptèrent les méthodes scientifiques qui s'étaient développées en Europe grâce à la philologie allemande, ainsi que tous les instruments gnoséologiques de nouvelles disciplines comme la géographie ou la botanique.

3 Les ouvrages archéologiques et géographiques des Pères mékhitaristes

Le désir de tout décrire afin qu'aucune chose ne tombe pas dans l'oubli et le détriment est le trait qui marque la deuxième phase de la démarche intellectuelle du père Alishan. C'est finalement l'obsession de recueillir et de transposer sur le papier les traces visibles et matérielles de la présence du peuple arménien en Anatolie, ainsi que d'essayer de donner la mémoire de la géographie du territoire, qui avait exercé une influence sur les mœurs et forgé à la fois les *modus vivendi* des Arméniens. Tout ce travail s'appuie sur une recherche philologique et archéologique impressionnante qui est déjà évidente dans la préface des ouvrages monumentaux du père Alishan. Le travail d'Alishan a bénéficié néanmoins du travail de ses prédécesseurs et confrères mékhitaristes, parmi lesquels le père Ghukas Inchichian. Ce dernier est l'auteur de deux ouvrages monumentaux : *Description des Arméniens des temps anciens* (Ստորագրութիւն հին Հայաստանեայց) et *Histoire géographique des régions des Arméniens* en trois volumes (Հնախոսութիւն աշխարհագրական Հայաստանեայց աշխարհի), respectivement

sortis en 1822 et 1835.[14] La première ouvrage consiste dans la description systématique des quinze régions de la Grande Arménie (Bardzr Hayk', Armenia Quarta ou Ts'op'k'/Sophène, Aghdznik', Turuberan, Mokk', Korch'ēk', Parskahayk', Vaspurakan, Siwnik'/Sisakan, Arts'akh, P'aytakaran, Owti, Gugark', Tayk', Ayrarat). Dans le prologue de cet ouvrage, l'Auteur déclare le but de son travail géographique et historique, en utilisant un vocabulaire qui relève de l'*Histoire de l'Arménie* de Movsēs Khoreants'i, ainsi bien que de son oncle, l'auteur de l'*Histoire de l'Arménie du début jusqu'au 1784*, le père Mik'ayēl Tchamtchian. Le père Inchichian s'exprime ainsi au tout début de son *Description* :

> Puisque nous sommes poussés par l'impératif des ceux qui aiment la patrie à narrer les traditions anciennes du monde` arménien, et par conséquent de notre nation et terre paternelle, avec beaucoup plus de paroles que celles que l'on pourrait utiliser pour d'autres terres, nous avons donc entamé avec l'enthousiasme d'une folie belle le travail de recueillir tout entier notre conte descriptif par les discours prolifiques des ancêtres, afin de le ranger ainsi selon la description de chaque région. En fait, je considère que la narration de traditions anciennes est agréable, quand, dans le développement du discours lui-même, elle montre les sources bibliographiques qui l'inspirent. Mais, après que nous avons tout rangé en ramassant les documents pour en avoir une première impression approximative,

nous sommes tombés en deux problèmes embêtants. En fait, puisque, au début du travail, nous nous sommes proposés de ne pas repérer et rassembler ce qui nous vient de l'ancienne tradition géographique (ce n'est pas cependant notre propos et intention de juger cela), mais plutôt de prendre en considération ce qu'il faut parmi les discours [formulés par] la nouvelle géographie, en le rapprochant, d'une façon concise et intégrale, aux traditions anciennes concernant les lieux, nous avons donc omis de rassembler les contes des ancêtres autour de beaucoup de choses, pour nous concentrer exclusivement sur ce qui est important. En deuxième lieu, jugeant le travail plus facile, nous avons commencé à décrire l'ancien et à mélanger cela avec le nouveau. Toutefois, bien que nous ayons voulu achever cette tâche avec beaucoup de zèle, nous connûmes tout de suite que l'économie du travail n'aurait pas permis de connaître et de vérifier exactement si les toponymes présents correspondaient aux toponymes d'autrefois, ainsi que de choisir aisément avec une concordance approximative ce qu'il aurait fallu utiliser [pour l'achèvement de notre propos].[15]

Les mots arméniens, choisis par le père Inchichian dans ce prologue, dévoilent la volonté de placer la *Description* dans le courant millénaire de la grande historiographie arménienne, ainsi que de se rattacher au père de l'historiographie arménienne, le Khorenats'i.[16] L'autorité à laquelle le père Inchichian s'appelle et rattache

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14 Pour une contextualisation de la figure et des ouvrages du père Inchichian dans le cadre de la nouvelle discipline philologique et archéologique, voir : Nichanian 2010, 33-41. Sur l'importance de l'œuvre d'Inchichian, plutôt oubliée même par la littérature spécialiste, voir : Zekìyan 2015, 541-5.

15 Չհայաստանեայց աշխարհիի վինագրութեամբ, որպէս արդարեւ մերում հայրենոյ ազգի եւ աշխարհիի` ընդարձակագոյն անցանել բանիւ քան զայլող աշխարհիոց` հարկ ի վերայ առեալ ըստ օրինին հայրենասիրաց, զեղեցիք իմն մոլութեամբ ձեռն ի գործ արկանք ի յանձախապատում բանից նախնեաց` զմերս միայն քան աշխարհիսատում տեղագրութեան հատընտիր ծայղաբադեալ, առ իւրաքանշիւր ստորագրութեամբ տեղեացն կարգել։ Չի այն ինձ ցանկալի հնախոսութիւն, որ իւրով հնախոսելոյն` ընդ նմին եւ ցուցանեցէ զիւրոց առաջնորդապետեն մատենագրաց գաղբիրսն։ Բայց ի սկզբան անդ հարեւանցիկ իմն ժողովածիցէ ի սոյն յայս թեր տնօրինեալ, յերկուս անկպա տարապարտ աշխատութիւն։ Եւ այնպէս նախ առաջին ի մտի եղեալ որոշեալ, հանել հաւաքել ո'չ որչափ բերիլր կատարեալ հնագիր աշխարհագրի արտաբոյ մերդ առաջարկութեան մնաց զայն դատեալ, այլ որչափ ինչ պէտս են ասել նոր աշխարհագրի բովանդակաբար հանատութիւք զինագրութեամբ տեղեաց թեւակոխելով, յայնմանէ զլոդվագունիք զանց արարաք զնախնեաց ասացուածմք ի ժողովել, զկարեւորոքն միայն պատատաղելով։ Երկրորդ` դիւրագունի կարծեալ գործ աշխատութեանն բուռն հարաք զինին խառն ընդ նորոյ ստորագրել։ Այլ դեռ մտասանէ աշխատութեանք ի նույ մտաբերելոյ, վայրապար ուսաք լեալ տնտեսութիւն գործոյ եւ անհնարին, զղեղեցաց նոյնութիւն նորոցն ընդ հնոց յամենայնի ամենայնիք տեղեկանալ, ստուգել, հեշտ եւ ընտրել համաձայնութեամբ առընթեր պաշտել։ Cf. Nichanian 2010, 35-6. Le savant propose une traduction des premiers paragraphes de l'Introduction de l'œuvre du père Inchichian qui n'est pas très fidèle au texte original. Malheureusement, les analyses avancées par Nichanian s'appuient sur une interprétation textuelle issue d'une traduction très approximative, qui ne peut pas faire apprécier l'épaisseur des mots du Père mékhitariste.

16 Comme par exemple le mot arménien *hnagrut'iwn* qui est utilisé très rarement dans la littérature ancienne comme témoigné par le *Thesaurus de la Langue Arménienne* qui rapporte une citation de Movsēs Khorenats'i (PH, I.18), dans laquelle le Père de l'historiographie nationale utilise le mot *hnagrut'iwn*.

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son projet géographique et historiographique, ou encore mieux de géographie historiographique, est l'*Histoire* du Khorenats'i, ainsi que la *Géographie* – attribuée faussement au Khorenats'i par la tradition arménienne ancienne – comme le Père atteste explicitement dans la préface du premier volume de son dernier travail, l'*Histoire géographique*. Il vaut la peine ici de s'arrêter sur des mots très significatifs qui ouvrent l'avant-propos de la *Description des Arméniens des temps anciens* : հնագրութիւն, օրէնք հայրենասիրաց, գեղեցիկ իմն մոլութիւն.**17** L'importance du premier terme dans l'économie du discours d'Inchichian est soulignée par Marc Nichanian, qui part de l'analyse de ce mot pour entamer une discussion sur la valeur historiographique et socio-anthropologique du travail emmené par les pères Bzhshkian et Inchichian, et pour souligner, en particulier, la nouveauté du projet de géographie historiographique d'Inchichian. Nichanian soutient que Inchichian

> also uses the neologism *hnagrel* in the paragraphs quoted above [i.e. l'extrait tirée par l'introduction de la *Description*, traduit et mentionné plus haut]. It is a question of writing about the past. The fact that the author has to employ a neologism, however, indicates that he is clearly aware of the novelty of his project. (Nichanian 2010, 37)

En plus, le savant argumente que le père mèkhitariste utilise le 'nouveau' terme pour préciser le sens de *hnakhôsel*, qui, par contre, aurait une valeur plus générique (« In the classical langue, the noun *hnakhôsuthiwn* is used to designate any discourse about the past » : Nichanian 2010, 37), au moins dans l'usage de la langue ancienne.

L'analyse linguistique de Nichanian, même si fascinante et fonctionnelle au développement de son discours sur la naissance du néo-Armé-nisme, voire philo-Arménisme, ne semble pas tenir en compte tous les éléments qui entrent en jeu dans la poiétique inchichianienne. Certes, on pourrait supposer que c'est par hasard que, tout au début de son avant-propos à la *Description*, notre Auteur utilise des mots et des périphrases qui jouent un rôle fondamental dans l'économie de l'*Histoire* du Khorenats'i, et que l'on retrouve aussi dans le Պատմութիւն Աղուանից աշխարհի [*Histoire de la terre des Albaniens caucasiens*] par Movsēs Kaghankatuats'i (env. VIIe-VIIIe s., mais Xe siècle pour la rédaction finale). Les plusieurs correspondances pas seulement lexicales, mais aussi structurales entre notre Auteur et le Khorenats'i nous emmène à croire que le propos du père Inchichian s'inscrit dans le grand projet de l'Abbé Mékhitar de repérer et redécouvrir les traces matérielles et immatérielles du peuple arménien pour les consacrer à l'immortalité du témoignage écrit, les soustraire du détriment des évents temporels et, enfin, les mettre à disposition des Arméniens. Chez le Khoreants'i on trouve l'usage du terme *hnagruthiwn* pour indiquer ce qui a été transmis par les anciens (Movsēs Khorenats 'i, PH, I.19 ; Mahé 1993, 136), tandis que le Kaghankatuats'i mentionne les « livres des historiens de traditions anciennes » (Movsēs Kaghankantuats'i, II.1 ; Aṙakhelyan 1983, 106.7). Tous les deux suivent la même méthode qui consiste dans le repérage des anciennes traditions, *hnagruthiwnk'*, leur rassemblement et criblage, d'en retenir celle qui semble être la plus digne, la plus importante et la plus véridique, selon la sensibilité de chaque auteur. À ce propos, Movsēs Kaghankatuatsi donne une métaphore très significative : « Tant lumineux est le ciel par les étoiles et la terre par les plantes, ainsi est-il pour le travail de l'historien géographe qui est entouré de beaucoup d'autres objets » ; c'est à lui donc de passer au crible ce qui est digne (պատշաճ) d'être consacré à la mémoire collective.**18** Il faut constater

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17 Movsēs Khorenats'i, *PH*, I.1: Զի եթէ վասն բանին մեք, որպէս ասի, պատկեր Աստուծոյ եմք. եւ դարձեալ՝ առաջինութիւն բանականին՝ [Է] խոհականութիւն, եւ քո յայսոսիկ անհատ ցանկութիւն. ապա ուրեմն գեղեցիկ մոածութեամբ զխոհականութեանդ քո վաս եւ բոբոքը պաքելով զկայծական, զարդարես զբանն, որով մնաս առ ի լինելն պատկեր. ի ձեռն որոյ եւ զայսորիկ զսկզբնատիպն ասիս ուրախացուցանել. գեղեցիկ եւ չափաւոր մոլութեամբ յայսոսիկ մոլեալ եւ զսկատեալ. Cf. Mahé 1993, 103.

18 Je suis d'accord avec l'opinion de Nichanian pour ce qui concerne le projet du père Inchichian de composer une géographique historiographique, en rassemblant les sources anciennes et nouvelles afin de trouver des correspondances exactes entre les lieux mentionnés par les anciens et les lieux du présent. Pourtant, je ne suis pas d'accord avec l'affirmation selon laquelle le travail du père Inchichian constituerait un des premiers jalons dans la création de la figure du natif et du concept de nation ethnographique ('ethnographical nation') parmi les Arméniens, selon une interprétation foucalidenne de l'historiographie moderne. Et encore, le savant affirme que le travail d'Inchichian aurait donné une contribution décisive à la naissance du Néo-arménisme à la suite du Néo-hellénisme et du Philhellénisme. À mon avis, il n'est pas pertinent de soumettre à la même lecture le travail historiographique des Pères mékhitaristes et celui philologique conduit par certains des nomes les plus importants dans

que pas seulement le terme *hnagruthiwn*, mais aussi le concept de *patmagir ashkharhagir*, c'est-à-dire d'historien géographe, sont tous les deux déjà attestés dans l'historiographie arménienne à laquelle le père Inchichian semble, en toute vraisemblance, remonter.

Tous les achèvements des pères Inchichian et Alishan furent recueillis et réélaborés d'une façon extraordinaire et originelle par le père Suk'ias Efrikian (Ēp'rikian 1873-1952) qui entre le 1903 et le 1907 publia deux volumes de son ouvrage monumental (plus de 1300 pages en deux volumes) : le *Dictionnaire illustré de la biosphère [arménienne]* (Պատկերազարդ Բնաշխարիկ Բառարան)[19] qui contient beaucoup d'informations analytiques sur les monuments, les inscriptions, les coutumes traditionnelles et la démographie des presque toutes les villes, de la plus petite à la plus grande, où il y avait des communautés arméniennes. Le travail du père Efrikian aboutit à la synthèse – même si, hélas, inachevée – du projet ethnographique surgi au sein de la Congrégation mékhitariste à partir de la première moitié du XIXe siècle, puisqu'il rassemble l'historiographie ou les traditions anciennes (*hnagrut'iwn*) à la géographie physique et humaine (sociale et culturelle) avec le but de créer une cadre intégrale et homogène de l'être-au-monde arménien, en anticipant ainsi l'ethnographie et l'anthropologie de la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle. Par comparaison au travail de ses prédécesseurs, le père Efrikian traita la matière d'une façon différente qui se rapproche de plus près aux guides géographiques modernes qu'aux ouvrages géographiques du père Alishan qui ne dévoilent pas seulement un goût romantique dans le rangement de la matière et le choix linguistique (l'inspiration poétique est toujours l'élément dominant aussi dans la prose et les travaux scientifiques du père Alishan), mais aussi une approche méthodologique plus historique que celle adoptée par le père Efrikian. En fait, dans le *Dictionnaire*, les sources bibliographiques ne sont pas ouvertement mentionnées au début de l'ouvrage comme le fait le père Alishan, même s'il est évident que le père Efrikian se rattache aux œuvres de son vénéré prédécesseur. L'auteur du *Dictionnaire* a évidemment un but différent que celui de ses prédécesseurs, à partir du choix de la langue de composition de l'ouvrage qui est l'arménien moderne occidentale, c'est-à-dire la langue vernaculaire ; choix qui visait à rejoindre le plus grand nombre de lecteurs. Cela était devenue langue littéraire à la suite du mouvement culturel appelé *Zart'ōnk'* (Réveil) apparu dans la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle à Constantinople et à Tiflis. Par conséquent, le premier volume du *Dictionnaire* fut épuisé si rapidement que l'Imprimerie mékhitariste de Saint-Lazare imprima tout de suite une deuxième édition. Dans le *Dictionnaire*, les villes sont classées en ordre alphabétique, jusqu'à la lettre *ken* (la dernière ville est la capitale ottomane, Constantinople), restant le travail inachevé à cause de l'abandon de l'habit religieux de l'auteur lui-même.[20] Le minutieux travail du père Efrikian ajoute beaucoup d'informations et d'images à ce qu'on trouve dans les ouvrages titanesques du père Alishan et, en plus, il systématise les anciennes et les nouvelles données selon un ordre alpha-

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l'histoire de la Congrégation, comme par exemple les pères Awgerian et Zōhrabian, mentionnés par Nichanian lui-même (Nichanian 2010, 18-25) en relation à leur découverte et publication de l'ancienne version arménienne de la Chronique d'Eusèbe et des ouvrages de Philon l'Alexandrin. En fait, le but de la publication des anciennes versions arméniennes d'auteurs grecs, dont les versions originelles étaient perdues, était tout à fait différent du but qui animait le travail de géographie historiographique et ethnographique des pères Inchichian et Alishan (mais aussi de l'historiographie tchamtchienne), puisque, si dans le premier cas on peut convenir avec Nichanian que un certain travail d'Awgerian et de Zōhrabian était inspiré par un esprit de souci et d'obsession philologique qui remontait au mouvement philo-hellénisante – selon lequel le monde hellénique était le modèle ou archétype de civilisation (avec toutes les conséquences herméneutiques déjà bien expliquées par Nichanian) –, le travail d'Inchichian et d'Alishan trouvait son inspiration primaire dans l'idéologie et la philosophie de l'histoire du peuple arménien, ébauchées par Koriwn, théorisées par Movsēs Khorenats'i et renouvelées par Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i (վասն ի լուսաւորութեան ազգիս Հայոց).

19 L'adjectif arménien *bnashkharik* est généralement traduit, dans les langues européennes, par le mot 'géographique' qui n'est pas du tout fidèle à l'étymologie du mot arménien. *Bnashkharik* signifie, en fait, 'tout ce qui est propre à quelque terre ou région [habitée]' que j'ai traduit par la périphrase 'biosphère [arménienne]', en ajoutant l'attribut 'arménienne' pour expliciter aux lecteurs actuels que le Dictionnaire est autour des régions habitées par les communautés arméniennes. Le terme est utilisé très souvent par l'auteur dans la description territoriale des villages et villes inclues dans son *Dictionnaire*.

20 L'entrée dédiée à la ville d'Akhalts'kha, terre natale de l'auteur, est particulièrement intéressante pour la quantité d'informations et de belles images de lieux et de personnes : Efrikian 1907, I.56-64.

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bétique qui révèle un goût encyclopédique plus moderne.[21] D'un point de vue historique, le *Dictionnaire* constitue un témoignage exceptionnel dans la reconstruction de la présence des communautés arméniennes (aussi grâce à l'usage de tableaux de recensement de la population arménienne et turque des villages anatoliens) dans toute la région sub-caucasienne,[22] surtout après le déracinement des Arméniens de l'Anatolie en 1915-18 et la destruction de plusieurs monuments et vestiges de l'art et de l'architecture arméniennes surtout pendant la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle, afin d'effacer la mémoire de la présence millénaire des Arméniens en Anatolie (Kouymjian 1984, 295-310).

4 Le père Ghewond Alishan et la cartographie moderne. Conclusions

Les œuvres historiques et géographiques du père Alishan furent écrites principalement en arménien classique sauf pour un de ses derniers travaux, le Sissouan ou l'Arméno-Cilicie (Venise 1899), publié aussi en français.[23] Au-delà de la quantité grandiose et précise d'informations historiques, géographiques, scientifiques (botaniques, faunistique), épigraphiques et artistiques, qui ne peuvent que provoquer un sentiment d'étonnement dans quelconque lecteur, c'est cependant le soin esthétique et typographique qui donne aux ouvrages monumentaux du père Alishan une élégance unique. En particulier, les cartes géographiques sont des œuvres d'art, d'un point de vue non seulement esthétique, mais aussi scientifique, puisqu'elles nous donnent une représentation topographique très détaillée et minutieuse de presque toutes les villes, les villages, les ruines, les reliefs montagneux, les fleuves, les lacs, et même les rues qui traversaient les villes principales de l'Arménie

Ottomane (ainsi nommée par le père Alishan lui-même dans la *Description de la Grande Arménie*, qui inclue aussi les territoires de la Perse-Arménie et de l'Arménie Russe). Le lecteur a l'impression que les cartes minutieusement dessinées aient été un moyen de protéger les richesses culturelles de son peuple (en veillant jalousement afin que personne d'autre ne s'en empare) et que les cartes soient, en premier lieu, le produit scientifique et concret des données rassemblées par l'auteur qui fait revivre la mémoire de sa patrie et nourrit son esprit poétique, tout avide des images, des couleurs et des odeurs de la terre ancestrale. Dans l'avant-propos du volume Այրարատ Բնաշխարհ Հայաստանեայց, l'auteur déclare

> mon propos, comme je l'ai déjà fait connaître dans d'autres lieux, n'est pas de faire des discours géographiques par moyen de descriptions physiques, mais plutôt de tracer un discours historiographique sur la base du témoignage concret et réel, prêtant attention non tant aux lieu habités, mais à l'homme et à la croyance chez l'Arménien, à ce qui a été, a opéré et s'est enfin passé ou qui existe encore dans le lieu de son pays autochtone, dont le don nom, comme n'est pas possible d'effacer des pensées et des écrits, par moyen de n'importe qui de nouveau-né et d'étranger pèlerin. (Alishan 1890, VI)

Les sources bibliographiques utilisées par l'auteur puisent de la littérature européenne et de l'historiographie arménienne, en particulier des sources modernes ou contemporaines avec une connaissance savante de la littérature de voyage moderne produite en Europe et dans les centres culturels et spirituels arméniens (cf. Alishan 1890, VI-VII).

À propos du pouvoir exceptionnel, soit imaginatif que concret, de la cartographie, il vaut

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21 Pour les images des monuments et, en particulier, des églises l'auteur du *Dictionnaire* utilise l'archive du père Alishan et, généralement, les lithographies sont sorties par les artisans italiens Boschini et Colombo. Les reproductions photographiques sont, pour la plupart, d'un tel Nahabed.

22 Pour l'usage du terme « Sub-Caucase », voir Zekiyan, 1996, 427-82, mais aussi les observations intéressantes de Igor Lazarev-Dorfmann sur les géographies mentales changeant selon la position spatiale de l'observateur : Dorfmann-Lazarev 2016, 217-30.

23 Parmi les ouvrages historiques et géographiques du père Alishan on énumère les suivants : *Teghagir Hayots' Metsats'* [Description de la Grande Arménie] (Venise, 1855) ; *Shirak. Teghagrut'iwn Patkerats'oyts'* [Shirak. Description illustrée] (Venise, 1881) ; *Sisouan. Hamagrut'iwn Haykakan Kilikioy ew Lewon Metsagorts* [Sisouan. Quadre de l'Arméno-Cilicie et de Léon le Magnifique] (Venise, 1885) ; *Ayrarat* (Venise, 1890) ; *Sisakan. Teghagrut'iwn Siwneats' ashkharhi* [Sisakan. Description de la terre de Siwnik'] (Venise, 1893) ; *Sissouan ou l'Arméno-Cilicie* (Venise, 1899). Le père Alishan avait envisagé de dédier un volume à chacune de quinze régions habitées par le peuple arménien, mais le projet resta – hélas – inachevé.

Figure 1. Alishan, Ghewond, Sissouan. *Kilikia Hin ew Nor Haykakan Gawaṙōkʿ ZhB-ZhD Darutsʿ*, 1885. Venetik-S. Ghazar. Je remercie très vivement les Pères mékhitaristes de Venise pour la reproduction de cette carte

la peine de mentionner un article apparu sur le *Monde Diplomatique* (Février 2013, 15) par le spécialiste Philippe Rekacewicz. Ceci trace une analyse très lucide de ce qui représente la cartographie et du rôle que cette forme de représentation spatiale a eu (et a-t-elle encore) dans les enjeux politiques et diplomatiques. Toutes les cartes, en fait, font l'objet d'une pensée et d'une construction minutieuse où tous les éléments sont soigneusement choisis : certains y sont renforcés, d'autres effacés ou déplacés. Dessiner les frontières, surtout dans des régions qui représentent des mosaïques ethniques très embrouillés, comme dans le cas des territoires qui appartenaient à l'Empire Ottomane, signifie de s'assumer le risque de « agresser ou blesser des peuples, en traçant sur la carte des vilaines cicatrices ». Évidemment, il s'agit d'un travail se plaçant entre la science et l'art, qui possède néanmoins un très fort sens politique et civil dans la mesure où l'information géographique représente l'espace, lui en donne une systématisation et révèle les modes d'organisation so-

ciale et économique des peuples qui habitent les territoires devenus, finalement, les objets des cartes. Dans ce contexte, la géographie revêt par conséquent un rôle fondamental dans le monde politique et diplomatique, puisqu'elle est l'instrument gnoséologique et épistémologique plus important pour connaître, ranger, classer et définir l'Autre, ce qui est inconnu (Saïd 2010, 213-15). Il faut noter que la cartographie des années sur le cheval entre le dix-huitième et le dix-neuvième siècle avait fait l'objet d'améliorations méthodologiques innombrables surtout grâce aux repères géodésiques de Cassini (XVIIIe s.) et à la création des instituts géographiques nationaux à partir de la deuxième moitié du dix-neuvième siècle (le Service géographique de l'Armée en France, devenu après Institut géographique national, et l'Institut topographique militaire de Rome en 1872, devenu Institut géographique militaire d'Italie en 1882). Toutes ces nouveautés sont captées par le père Alishan, qui était aussi très souvent invité à parler en occasion des colloques de la Société de Géographie de France,

et reproduites dans ses cartes placées au début de ses œuvres, après l'avant-propos, et dûment pliées à cause de leur mesure qui excède les dimensions des autres feuilles.

Tout en étant à petite échelle, les planches cartographiques dessinées par le père Alishan et imprimées par l'Institut Cartographique d'Italie sont très détaillées – la planche de la région de Sisouan, c'est-à-dire la Cilicie, est au 1/1.000.000, tandis que celle de la région d'Ayrarat est au 1/500.000 – et d'une valeur esthétique remarquable qui les rend des témoins précieux pour la reconstruction de la géographie humaine et spatiale des terres habitées par les Arméniens juste à l'aube de la Grande Catastrophe du 1915.

Cette sensibilité envers les innovations scientifiques européennes est une marque distinctive de l'esprit de la Congrégation, ainsi que la consécration au travail de repérer, recueillir et rendre accessibles au public arménien toutes les innovations qui se passaient en Occident dans les champs de la science, de l'art et de la littérature. Certes, la plupart des ouvrages historiques, philologiques et ethnographiques de l'École mékhitariste était inspirés par un souci encyclopédiste de tout nommer, ainsi que de définir et classer tout ce qui appartenait au patrimoine matériel et immatériel de la nation, afin d'en préserver la mémoire. Mémoire scellée dans la carte, qui

devient un don de dévouement envers les ancêtres et leur génie (*pietas*), comme le père Inchichian affirme d'une façon très limpide dans l'avant-propos de son *Description* (« l'impératif de ceux qui aiment la terre des ancêtres », où 'impératif' est une traduction imparfaite de l'arménien *ōrēn[kh]*, c'est-à-dire 'mesure, loi' et 'mœurs, *habitus*'), ainsi qu'une trace pour les générations futures, comme souligné par le père Alishan dans la préface de son *Shirak*. En conclusion, le travail du père Alishan qui est un paradigme intégral et innovant du volet encyclopédique des Pères mékhitaristes en réponse à l'activité intellectuelle européenne, était enraciné dans le mouvement de renouveau de la culture arménienne et profondément inspiré par des modèles de 'nation' ethnique remontant au tout début de la parabole littéraire arménienne, qui ne reflétaient encore les vagues nationalistes éclatées en époque moderne, surtout dans le court vingtième siècle. Cette attitude génuine est particulièrement évidente dans les cartes élaborées par Alishan qui, tout en étant des représentations de ce que le cartographe veut montrer, nous donne un regard pas encore 'nationaliste' – dans le sens que ce terme prend après la chute de deux derniers grands Empires multiethniques et la naissance des États nationaux modernes – sur l'Arménie Ottomane.

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Krikor (Grigor) Balakian's *Ruins of Ani*
A Surprising Source for Armenian Architecture

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Abstract   Krikor (Grigor) Balakian's 1910 work, *The Ruins of Ani* (Ngarakrutʻiwn Anii Aweragnerun Badgerazart), documents the visit of the Armenian Catholicos Mattʻēos Izmirlean (1845-1910) to Ani in 1909. Largely neglected by historians of architecture, *The Ruins of Ani* nevertheless offers an extraordinary account of the city and its monuments. After considering Balakian's sources and scholarly perspectives, this paper explores his report on the buildings and the archaeological museum of Ani, highlighting discrepancies from the known record. Balakian's often surprising remarks require careful scrutiny and cross-checking; at the same time, they highlight the value of any eyewitness source on Ani composed during the period of Russian control.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Balakian's Sources and Historiographical Context. – 3 Balakian versus the Known Archaeological Record of Ani. – 4 Conclusion.

Keywords   Ani. Krikor (Grigor) Balakian. Armenian. Historiography. Archaeology.

For Osman Kavala
Ցաղագս Եղբաւր մերոյ՝ որ ի գերութեան եւ ի չար ծառայութեան՝ զՏէր աղաչեսցուք

1   Introduction

Situated on the modern closed border between the Turkish and Armenian Republics, in the Akhurean (Turk. Arpaçay) river valley, Ani is a place of astonishing natural and architectural beauty. While access to the site was restricted for much of the twentieth century, Ani has long been known as a rare intact, uninhabited medieval city. In 2016, UNESCO entered Ani onto its World Heritage List, but that was just a few weeks before the attempted coup d'état of July 15. As of this writing, future plans for the preservation of Ani are unclear.

With its rich array of medieval monuments, many dating from the tenth to thirteenth centuries, Ani forms a central subject in the history and historiography of Armenian architecture. Two recent bibliographies on the city include thousands of titles devoted to the site, including travel accounts, critical studies of architecture

and history, corpora of epigraphy, archaeological reports, and exhibition catalogues (cf. Gechyan 2006 and Yazıcı 2017b). Many conferences and workshops have focused on Ani; the *virtualani. org* website, moreover, offers a comprehensive sense of the city and posts periodic condition reports on its monuments.[1] Recent scholarship on Ani has explored issues of cultural heritage, as well as the period of Russian control of the city (1878-1918), when the site was excavated (cf. Watenpaugh 2014, Pravilova 2016).

Such close and sustained attention to Ani makes the relative neglect of Krikor Balakian's 1910 work, *The Ruins of Ani,* all the more surprising. Originally published in Western Armenian in Constantinople by the Y. Mattʻēosean Press as *Ngarakrutʻiwn Anii Aweragnerun Badgerazart* (Description of the Ruins of Ani, Illustrated), it is a 90-page account of the two-day visit of the Armenian Catholicos Mattʻēos Izmirlean (1845-1910) to Ani in 1909. Balakian (1875-1934) was

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[1]   For example, Cowe 2001; *Symposium, Monuments and Memory: Reconsidering the Meaning of Material Culture, Constructed Pasts and Aftermaths of Histories of Mass Violence* (Columbia University, 20 February 2015) organized by Peter Balakian and Rachel Goshgarian.

at the time a 34-year-old priest; he later became known as a church leader and author of *Armenian Golgotha*, a memoir of the Armenian Genocide. He is the granduncle of the poet Peter Balakian, whose forthcoming translation of *Ruins of Ani* is eagerly awaited.[2]

Ruins of Ani was not, to my knowledge, re-issued after its initial publication, and judging from the scarcity of copies available, its print-run was modest. Nevertheless, it has earned increasing attention in recent years. It has appeared in Turkish translation (Usta, Hazaryan 2015) and was featured in a major essay in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (Watenpaugh 2014). Tracing the history of Ani from the Middle Ages through the periods of Ottoman, Russian, Armenian, and modern Turkish rule, Watenpaugh situated Balakian's work, and the pilgrimage of the Catholicos, within the period of the city's rediscovery at the turn of the nineteenth century. Along with the European travellers who went to Ani, Watenpaugh notes, so too did Armenians from the Ottoman Empire, for whom Ani was a painful sign of prior (and lost) glory. These travellers, and the excavations of Nikolai Marr (1865-1934), brought the dead city to life again, as processions wound their way through the city, open-air cauldrons bubbled for communal feasts, and museum visitors feasted their eyes on unearthed antiquities. As Ekaterina Pravilova has shown, this narrative offers only one view of the Russian period of Ani, which also characterized by conflicts between Marr and the Armenian institutions that supported him (Pravilova 2016). Nevertheless, it is wrenching to contemplate in light of the Genocide of the Ottoman Armenians only a few years later, and the annexation of the Kars region by the Republic of Turkey.

Other than Watenpaugh's essay, Balakian's *Ruins of Ani* is virtually unstudied among specialists of Ani. Yet *Ruins* should be studied both for what it reveals about the early historiography of Armenian art and architecture, and, equally important, for what it adds to, and challenges in, the known archaeological record of Ani. The specialist will be surprised, for example, to learn of Latin inscriptions in the Ani museum, masons' marks at the church of Tigran Honentsʻ, and the existence of an undamaged, complete model of the church of Gagkashēn. Whether or not we are able to refute or confirm these remarks, they highlight the importance of pursuing every known source on Ani from before the destructive events of the twentieth century. They also suggest that even after centuries of interest in Ani, surprises still await the researcher.[3]

2 Balakian's Sources and Historiographical Context

Balakian's text provides the reader with a general account of Ani, first considering its history, then its topography and urban plan followed by his own eyewitness observations of the site, concluding with an account of the scholarship on Armenian architecture (and on Ani's monuments in particular). For his historical account of Ani, Balakian drew from the three-volume *History of Armenia* by Mikʻayēl Chʻamchʻeantsʻ, first published in 1784 but republished multiple times in the nineteenth century (Chʻamchʻeantsʻ 1784-86). For the inscriptions of Ani, Balakian used the work of the bishop Sargis Jalaleantsʻ (1842), with some omissions and spelling mistakes.[4]

For the architecture and topography of Ani, Balakian drew from a range of European sources, above all Henry F.B. Lynch (1901), but also Charles Texier (1842-52), Marie-Felicité Brosset (1860), Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1717), Eugène Boré (1843), and William Hamilton (1842). Among Armenian writers, he consulted the works of Ghevond Alishan (1881) and Hovhannēs Shahkhatʻunyantsʻ (1842), as well as the pictorial albums of Garabed Basmadjian (1904) and Arshag Fetvajian (1866-1947). Balakian presented his account of Ani as an update to these works in light of the discoveries made during the exca-

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2 For Peter Balakian's own engagement with Ani, see for example Balakian 2013.

3 Obviously, any claim of 'surprising' information depends on the knowledge level of the writer. I have sought out as many sources as possible – textual, visual, and oral – in order to verify Balakian's claims, from early travel accounts, to the archaeological reports and catalogues, to the most recent explorations of the city by Sezai Yazıcı and Vedat Akçayöz. The main sources used are listed in the bibliography.

4 For transcriptions of Ani's epigraphy see Orbeli 1966.

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vations by Marr and the architectural analyses of T'oros T'oramanyan.[5]

Balakian's commentary on the monuments of Ani, and on art more generally, follows contemporary scholarly trends in the European literature. For Balakian, the monuments of Ani are works of Armenian genius հանճար, thus reflecting the perceptions of monuments as expressions of nation (Balakian 1910) (ԺԱ). Along with Lynch and Texier, Balakian viewed Armenian architecture as originative and creative, departing from Karl Schaase's view that it derived from Byzantine, European, or Persian tradition (Schnaase 1844, 248-76; see also Maranci 2001 and Azatyan 2012).

Like many of his contemporaries, Balakian was also interested in the relationship between medieval Armenian and Gothic architecture, drawing heavily on the available literature. He grouped Ani Cathedral among the great expressions of Gothic architecture: San Marco in Venice; Notre Dame in Paris; and Westminster Abbey in London. Indeed, for Balakian, Ani Cathedral (c. 989-1001) bore a "preliminary imprint" (նախնական դրոշմը) of Gothic architecture, exhibiting the Gothic style as a kind of primordial impulse, rather than a historically conditioned product (Balakian 1910, 75).[6] Balakian's work thus demonstrates the engagement of Ottoman Armenian writers with European and Anglophone scholarship, challenging any illusion of neat borders between an 'Armenian' and 'European' history of Armenian architecture.[7] His Armenian translation of Lynch, moreover, actively reworks and edits the original English text, a project that deserves historiographical study in its own right.[8]

Noteworthy, too, is Balakian's repeated reference to the role of human figures in Armenian art. Armenian artists, he writes, "were always cautious about the representation of human beings" (Balakian 1910, 78).[9] Their presence in Armenian art, for Balakian, arose alongside cultural contact with Byzantium and Europe; when Persian and Arabic contacts were stronger, on the other hand, ornamental and vegetal forms become dominant (75, 78). Balakian regarded the lavish fresco program of the Tigran Honents' church at Ani, and the freestanding, larger-than-life statue of the Bagratid King Gagik (discussed below) as exceptional: the former the result of Byzantine and European influence, and the latter lacking refinement (78).[10]

As is well known, however, figural representation is commonplace in medieval Armenian architecture, whether in two or three dimensions. Within Ani itself, there is almost no church standing which does not preserve some kind of interior figural painting – with more 'discovered' every year. At Hoṙomos (his Ghōshavank') wall paintings survive in the church interiors, while the central vault of the *gavit'* of the upper monastery features a striking figural representation of Christ with church patriarchs (Vardanyan 2015). That Balakian mentions the dark interiors of the churches suggests that rather than overlooking these images, he simply could not see them.[11] Nevertheless, his perception of Armenian aniconism also reflects the complex historiography of the role of images in Armenian art, also expressed for example in the works of Josef Strzygowski (1891, 77-9; 1918). The subject of Armenian aniconism, including its possible prehistory in medieval Armenian treatises and church councils, and its relations to the historiography of Islamic art, awaits closer scrutiny (cf. Der Nersessian 1973; Eastmond 2017, 77-122; Rapti 2009, 72-4).

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5   A complete bibliography of either Marr or T'oramanyan exceeds the limitations of space; nevertheless for the former, see principally Marr 1934; for the latter, T'oramanyan 1942-47.

6   As I have discussed elsewhere, this perception would take an explicitly anti-Semitic and pan-German turn eight years later with Josef Strzygowski's vision of an Aryan 'North' as the common explanation for Armenian and Gothic. See Strzygowski 1918 and Maranci 2001.

7   On the dynamic relations between German- and Armenian-speaking academic circles with regard to the study of Armenian medieval art, see Azatyan 2012.

8   See Balakian 1910, 76 compared to Lynch 1901, 1: 371-3.

9   միշտ զգոյշ մնացած է մարդկային էակի ընդօրինակումէ... See also his comments in relation to the monastery of Hoṙomos, when he writes that figural carvings were "something which our ancestors always avoided" (...որոնցմէ միշտ խոյս տուɱած են մեր նախնիք. Balakian 1910, 86).

10   Although later in this text, he praises this statue's quality; see below.

11   See for example Balakian 1910, 25, 38.

Figure 1. The Church of Gregory from north (Abughamrents'). Photo by the Author

3 Balakian versus the Known Archaeological Record of Ani

If the Balakian's general perceptions of Armenian architecture as expressed in *Ruins of Ani* find echoes in contemporary scholarship, his specific remarks regarding Ani sometimes challenge the archaeological record. *Ruins of Ani* will thus surprise the specialist on Ani, who might wonder about Balakian's viewing and recording habits.

It is important to note that Balakian's trip was very brief – really one afternoon and one morning – and it was made difficult by the "scorching summer sun" (ամառնային բոցավէդ արեւը) of late June (Balakian 1910, 92). Balakian also mentions the difficulty of sleeping during the night, due both to the merry-making of pilgrims which continued into the early morning, and his own excitement and "haste" (անապարանք) to see Ani (94, 99-100).

One might therefore regard the anomalies in Balakian's report as a casualty of the rushed and fraught conditions of the trip, and simply discard it as an archaeological document. Yet entirely to disregard Balakian would be unwise, both in light of contemporary and subsequent looting of the site (which Balakian himself records), and of course the almost total disappearance of the contents of the Ani museums. Further, Balakian was a trained engineer and architect; he was later involved in the construction of Armenian churches in Marseilles and Nice (a subject, once more, deserving of separate study). Balakian and his group, moreover, were offered expert guidance on site by the archaeologist and architectural specialist T'oros T'oramanyan (84-9 and 99).

Further reason to take seriously Balakian's account is the amount of verifiable documentation within it. Part Three of *Ruins of Ani* collates the author's detailed historical and epigraphical knowledge with eyewitness observations at the site (21-71). This section contains descriptions of the fortifications, the Cathedral, the church of Tigran Honents', the church of the Holy Apostles, the church of Abughamrents', Gagkashēn, the 'Georgian' church, the Palace, the so-called Mosque of Minuchir (therein referred to as the Residence of the Catholicos), the monuments of the citadel, the Monastery of the Virgins (Բելենց Վանք), the Virgin's Castle (Kiz Kalesi, Աղջկայ Բերդ), the bath, and the nearby Monastery of Hoṙomos.

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Maranci. Krikor (Grigor) Balakian's Ruins of Ani

Figure 2. Ani Cathedral, interior towards East.
Photo by the Author

Balakian's comments on individual monuments demonstrate informed and close observation. For example, he knows the early eleventh-century account of Step'anos Tarōnets'i, which mentions that the church of Gagkashēn was based on the seventh-century church of Zvart'nots' (79). Balakian also notes that the crenellations of the fortifications have largely lost their "comb-toothed points" (սամնրագլուխ ցցունածքներ), also barely visible today (22). Regarding Ani Cathedral, Balakian rightfully notes the many cavities in the vaults and arches of the structure, invisible to the naked eye, but verifiable by intrepid climbers (29-30). Finally, he pays attention to interior decoration: at the church of Tigran Honents', he writes, the depictions of the martyr Hṙip'simē and her companions are depicted with "such vivid postures

that the hair on the body of an eyewitness will stand on end" (36).[12]

Alongside this close and verifiable reporting, however, are several remarks which are either incorrect or cannot be verified. For example, Balakian reports that the eleventh-century church of Abughamrents' (fig. 1) is entered by three doors, and that it could hold "40 and 60 people" – a surprise to anyone who knows this petite monument of roughly twelve meters' diameter, entered by a single door at the southwest (46). It may be that Balakian confused in his notes this church with the much larger Gagkashēn, also dedicated Saint Gregory, which measures around 37 meters in diameter and is entered by three doors. The mistake, further, could also be a printer's error, because 40 to 60 appear as numerals rather than words in the

12 այնքան կենդանի դիրքերով, որ ականատեսին մարմինը կը փշաքաղուի.

Figure 3. The Church of Tigran Honentsʿ from south.
Photo by the Author

published text, and because the sentence reads "This *small* church, which can *only* hold 40 to 60 people, has three beautiful doors" (emphasis added).[13]

Another passage in *Ruins* is not so easily attributable to accident. In describing the interior of the Cathedral, Balakian counts twelve niches within the curvature of the apse, likening them to the apostles (31). In fact, there are only ten (fig. 2). Balakian's miscount may the result of hastiness and a perhaps an enthusiasm for number symbolism, rather than a printer's error.[14]

Elsewhere in *Ruins* we find statements that are entirely new, and that either have not yet been verified, or are unattested in the archaeological record and now cannot be verified because

the evidence is lost. An example of the former is found in Balakian's comments on the church of Tigran Honentsʿ (fig. 3), in which he noted that the exterior walls bear masons' marks:

each carved stone of this church, built of polished and uniform stones, bears the letter, Ա, Բ, Գ, Դ, Ե, and the succeeding letters of the Armenian alphabet. Consequently we can assume that the sculptures of each of these stones were separately carved, and in order not to create confusion for the stonecutters, they added the characters before they placed the stones in their present positions. Otherwise, at the height of the capitals, it would have been difficult to carve in such a delicate

13 Այս փոքրիկ եկեղեցին որ հազիւ 40-60 հաւատացեալ կրնայ պարունակել՝ 3 սիրուն դուռ ունի. On this count, it would be ideal to see Balakian's handwritten notes, should they survive.

14 The number ten however also contains symbolic value, however, and Ani's ten niches may be related to the number of canon tables prefacing Armenian gospel books, which were and are referred to in Armenian as *khoran* (lit. tent, canopy, but also used for the church sanctuary).

Figure 4. Eagle Capital, Zvartʿnotsʿ (Republic of Armenia). Photo by the Author

fashion images of flowers and animals on stones. (Balakian 1910, 35)[15]

Masons' marks are quite commonly found on seventh-century Armenian monuments, and appear, with less regularity, on those of the tenth and eleventh centuries (including the Cathedral).[16] Yet Balakian's is the first and only mention, to my knowledge, of masons' marks at the church of Tigran Honentsʿ. Such marks are not mentioned in the comprehensive monograph of the site by Jean-Michel and Nicole Thierry, published in 1993, nor found in any other publication known to me, nor known to Yavuz Özkaya, the restoration architect of the site.[17] Nor did they surface

from inspecting my own detailed photographs taken at the church over multiple years.

Could Balakian's report therefore constitute an error or a mistaken memory – a product of the 'haste' which possessed the 1909 pilgrims to Ani? Balakian's specific observation regarding the forms of the marks, and his rational explanation for their role in the construction process, would suggest otherwise. Further, masons' marks on Armenian churches are typically only shallow scratches, rather than the deeply-carved incisions of the formal epigraphy, and so it is perfectly possible that they either weathered or are just imperceptible unless one hunts for them in raking light. If Balakian's marks do indeed exist,

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15 English trans. Balakian 2018. Սրբատաշ եւ միաչափ քարերէ շինուած այս եկեղեցիին իւրաքանչիւր քանդակուած քարերը Ա.Բ.Գ.Դ.Ե. եւ այլն... քարերը [sic] կը կրեն [...] կ՛ենթադրուի թէ այդ քարերու քանդակները զատ զատ քանդակուած են եւ քարակոփներու շփոթութիւն չառթելու համար նշանագիրեր դրուած են եւ ապա զետեղուած իրենց այժմու տեղերը։ Այլապէս դժուար պիտի ըլլար [...] այդ բարձրութեամբ քարերուն վրայ այդքան նուրբ կերպով ծաղկանկար եւ կենդանակար քանդակել։

16 For masons' marks, see Tʿoramanyan 1984, 52-7; Barkhudaryan 1963, 212; Kazaryan 2012, 2: 23-7; Maranci 2015a.

17 I thank Yavuz Özkaya and Armen Kazaryan for discussing this problem with me.

though, they would be striking examples of the convention: typically, Armenian masons' marks do not appear on Armenian churches in alphabetic sequence, nor do they draw exclusively from the Armenian alphabet, but assume various geometric and diagrammatic, as well as Greek-alphabetic forms. Should Balakian's masons' marks exist (and obviously further investigation is necessary) they might shed important light on building practices in thirteenth-century Armenia.

Equally striking, although impossible now to verify, are Balakian's reports regarding the churches of the Holy Apostles (Surb Aṙakelots') and Gagkashēn. The former church, whose earliest inscription dates to 1031, is a now-ruined inscribed *tetraconch*; on its south façade stands a *gavit'* dated before 1215. The church has long earned the attention of scholars, both for its eleventh-century structure and potentially five-domed plan, and for its astonishing *gavit'* with *muqarnas* vaults, polychrome, and Islamicizing façades. Yet nowhere, to my knowledge, is mention of what Balakian claims to have seen there:

The visitor is amazed at what care and skill these massive monolithic stones were raised on these high walls; as in the Gagkashen church of Grigor, here too there were beautifully carved capitals in the form of eagles (Balakian 1910, 41).[18]

No eagle capitals survive today at the site of the church of the Holy Apostles, whether within the eleventh-century structure or in the *gavit'*, nor did they appear in any of the early photographs and drawings I have surveyed.

Even more bewilderingly, Balakian compares these eagle capitals with those at the church of Gagkashēn. Eagle capitals at Gagkashēn would be a surprise to anyone who specializes in Armenian architecture; yet Balakian mentions these not once, but again in his more detailed discussion of the church, when he writes that

on the gradually eroding upper [two] stories of the church stand on four huge columns made of massive stones whose four carved capitals are eagles with spread wings. (Balakian 1910, 48)[19]

Like those of the church of the Holy Apostles, these birds are also unattested in the literature, and cannot be found at the site or in archaeological records of it, as far as I know. T'oramanyan's published field notes and drawings of Gagkashēn do not preserve mention or images of eagle capitals. They appear elsewhere at Ani, certainly: the twin eagles on the south façade of Ani Cathedral; an eagle and hare carved in bas-relief on a carved spandrel (preserved, at the time of Lynch's visit to Ani, in the interior of the Cathedral); and the eagle spandrels of the church of Tigran Honents' (see Lynch 1901, 1: 372-3). Yet none of these forms a compelling parallel for what Balakian describes: namely, eagles, with wings outspread, positioned on columns.

Where we do indeed find such capitals, of course, is in the ruins of Gagkashēn's famous prototype, the aforementioned seventh-century church of Zvart'nots', near the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin (mod. Republic of Armenia). There, magnificent carved birds once roosted, precisely as Balakian describes, on the four capitals under the dome, their wings outspread (fig. 4).[20] Perhaps, then, Balakian confused the churches; Zvart'nots' had already been excavated and recorded by T'oramanyan, Balakian tells us that T'oramanyan showed him his drawings during his Ani visit, and Balakian mentions that he visited the excavations of Zvart'nots'. Therefore, Balakian might simply have projected the eagle capitals of Zvart'nots' onto Gagkashēn.

Yet ought one to dismiss definitively Balakian's eagle capitals as an accidental misremembering? If so, could he have misremembered eagles *both* at Gagkashēn *and* the church of the Apostles? This is unlikely; moreover, given the much better state of preservation of the archaeology at Ani in 1909, the difficult circumstances of the excavations and the upheaval of the following decades, it would be rash to dismiss this account out of hand. Gagkashēn, furthermore, imitated its prototype Zvart'nots' not only in ar-

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18 English trans. Balakian 2018. Այցելուն կը զարմանայ թէ այդ միակնուր եւ մեծագանգուած քարերն ի՞նչպէս եւ ինչո՞վ բարձրադուցած են բարձր որմներուն վրայ: Ինչպէս Գագկաշէն եկեղեցիին, նոյնպէս եւ […] մէջ արծիւ խոյակներ կան գեղեցիկ կերպով քանդակուած.

19 English trans. Balakian 2018 (brackets added). Եկեղեցւոյ հետզհետէ փորքրգող վերի երկյ յարկերը կանգնած են ներքնապէս մեծագանգուած քարերէ շինուած չորս հսկայ սիւներու վրայ, որոնց քանդակագարդ չորս խոյակները թեւատարած արծիւներ են.

20 For detailed discussion of the archaeology and reconstruction theories of Zvart'nots', see Maranci 2015b.

chitecture but also in its sculptural program of Ionic basket capitals, spandrels featuring human figures and vinescrolls, and even its sundial, further discouraging one from discarding Balakian's report.

Equally surprising is Balakian's description of the famous donor portrait of Gagkashēn, which was lost during the looting of Ani in the First World War and the Genocide.[21] Excavations of the church unearthed an over-life-size portrait of the patron, King Gagik Bagratuni I, together with a stone model of the church. After the statue and model were unearthed, they were brought the so-called Mosque of Minuchir, a large three-bayed vaulted structure located on a cliff of the Akhurean River, which had been transformed into one of the two on-site museums holding finds from the excavations. According to Nikolai Marr, the model was already broken upon discovery, with only its lower part intact. This is seemingly confirmed by excavation photographs, which show the careful and elaborate design of the model, with its exterior arcade and projecting capitals, incised spandrel decoration, profiled oculi, roof ribs, and its portal with jambs and a denticulated cornice (fig. 5).

All previous literature, to my knowledge, repeats this initial finding about the damaged condition of the model. Yet in Balakian's description, the model is intact:

[…] in [Gagik's] stretched out hands there was an undamaged, miniature stone model (անվնաս մնացած քարէ փոքրանկարը) of the church. For this reason, it has been easy to ascertain the original architectural style of this ruined church. It is a three-story tower (եռայարկ աշտարակ) ornamented with numerous windows and carvings which bear the mark of special care, and it is now in a glass case at the museum of Ani. The statue of Gagik shows him a long kaftan with wide sleeves, a wide turban on his head and a tassel hanging from each ear; he has an impressive face

with a long beard and a cross hanging from his chest. (Balakian 1910, 48-9)[22]

Balakian's text is vivid, recounting various details of Gagik's costume, including his kaftan, turban, and pectoral cross. The tassels "hanging from each ear" present yet another of Balakian's anomalies: photographs and descriptions of the sculpture reveal no such appendages (on this costume, see Jones 2007, 43-5). Of immediate interest however, is Balakian's description of the still-preserved, three-tiered model with its "numerous windows and carvings" bearing "the mark of special care" (բազմաթիւ լուսամուտներով ու քանդակներով, որ մասնաւոր խնամքի դրոշմը կը կրեն).

Balakian again makes mention of the undamaged model of Gagkashēn later in his text, in an account of the contents of the aforementioned Ani Museum. Much of this report can be verified by the 1906 and 1910 catalogues of Ani, by early photographs, and by existing objects today in the Historical Museum in Yerevan (see for example Marr 1906; Orbeli 1910a and 1910b). Balakian describes the layout of the interior, its wooden drawers and glass vitrines; he mentions the skeletal remains, fragments of shirts made of leather and embroidered silk, bows and arrows, iron and stone axes, tools, censers, lances, iron ornaments, porcelain vessels, candelabra, glass, guns, and shields (61-2). In this context, he mentions again the model of Gagkashēn:

The statue of Gagik I Bagratuni…is in a special glass showcase in this museum, and it remains a beautiful example of Armenian art of the tenth century. As we can see in the photograph, his Holiness the Catholicos was photographed next to it. Near this statue, there is a miniature model of the St. Gregory Church which was found undamaged and is now placed high up on the wall. It is a fine piece of work and thus appears to be the work of an accomplished artist. (Balakian 1910, 55)[23]

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21 A fragment of the elbow was rediscovered, however: see Kavtaradze 1999.

22 English trans. Balakian 2018. […] եւ ձեռքերն առաջ կարկառած, որոնց մէջ բռնած է իր շինած այս Գրիգոր եկեղեցւոյ անվնաս մնացած քարէ փոքրանկարը: Այսով դիւրին եղած է ճշտել աւս շատ հին եւ աւերակ եկեղեցւոյ նախնական ճարտարապետական ձեւը: Եռայարկ աշտարակի մը […] ունի՛ զարդարուած բազմաթիւ լուսամուտներով ու քանդակներով, որ մասնաւոր խնամքի դրոշմը կը կրեն: Կարելի եղած է Գագիկի արձանը անվնաս Անիի թանգարանը փոխադրել, որ պահուած է ապակեղարանի մը մէջ: Գագիկի զգեստն երկար վերարկու մըն է՛ լայն թեզանիքներով, իսկ գլուխը երկայն փաթթող մը ունի՛ ականջներուն քր […] մէյ մէկ ծոպեր կախուած եւ պատկառազդու դէմք մը՛ երկայն մօրուքով, որու կուրծքէն խաչ մըն ալ կախուած է:

23 Balakian 2018. Այս թանգարանի մասնաւոր ապակեղարանի մը մէջ պահուած է Գագկաշէն Ս. Գրիգոր եկեղեցւոյ մօտը՛ 1906 թիւին գտնուած Գագիկ Ա. Բագրատունեաց թագաւորի արձանն որ Ժ դարու Հայ արուեստի գեղեցիկ նմուշ

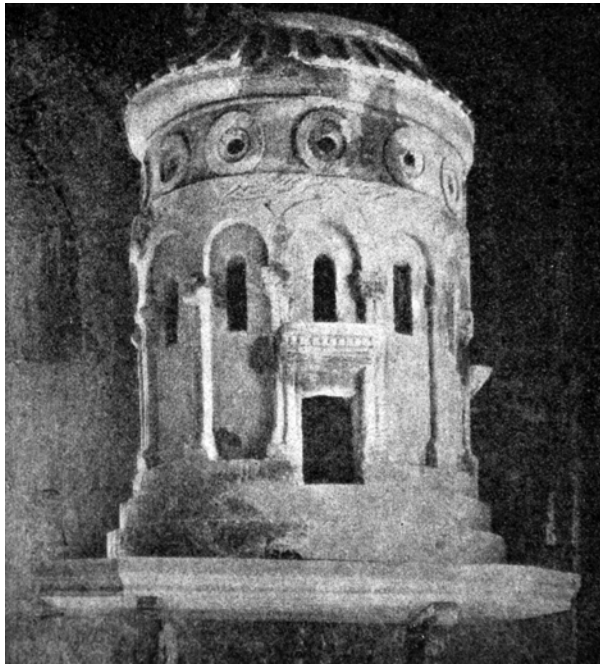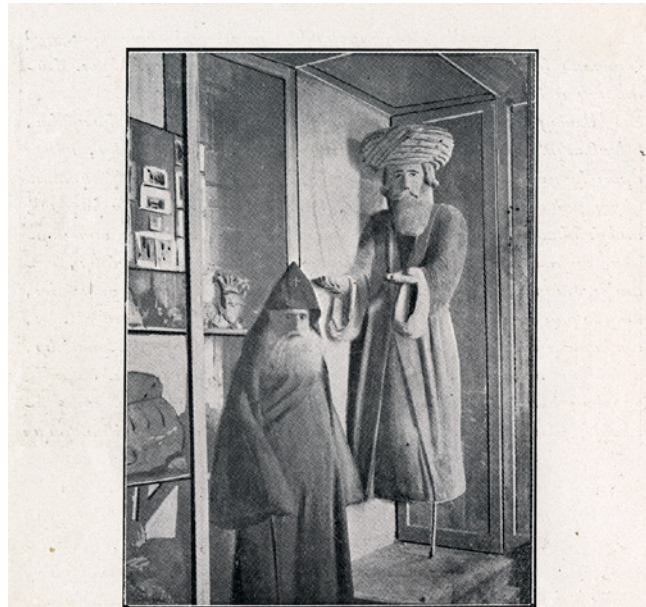**Maranci. Krikor (Grigor) Balakian's Ruins of Ani**

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Figure 6. Gagkashēn, stone model unearthed during excavations (now lost). (After Strzygowski, 1918, 55 fig. 72)

Գագիկ Ա. թագաւորի արձանը՝ եւ Մատթէոս Բ. Կաթողիկոս Ամենայն Հայոց

Figure 7. The catholicos Matt'ēos II Izmirlian at the Ani Museum with statue of King Gagik I, 1909 (from Balakian 1910)

Photographs of the museum, including Balakian's photograph of Catholicos Matt'ēos confirms his description of the vitrine sheltering the image of Gagik (fig. 7). Alas, the "undamaged" model, "placed high up on the wall" (որմին վրայ, բարձրը հաստատուած է), is not included in the frame. Another early photograph, showing Nikolai Marr in the museum, confirms that at least at one point, the statue of Gagik and the model were placed on adjacent walls; Gagik in a glass vitrine, and the model resting on a shelf with brackets.[24]

What accounts for Balakian's anomalous reporting? It is tantalizing to imagine that the upper tiers of the model still survived upon excavation. It is not impossible that the model was completed with additionally excavated fragments, which somehow escaped mention or documentation. A more sobering possibility also exists: that Balakian was looking at a modern representation of Gagik and his model. The excavation artist, S. Poltoratski, composed a drawing showing Gagik as he is known from photographs, but holding a complete, three-tiered model of the church. A three-dimensional reproduction of the statue (now held at the Historical Museum in Yerevan) was also created, and is also attributed to Poltoratski (Kavtaradze 1999, 63).[25] T'oramanyan, too, composed many reproductions of Zvart'nots', both as drawings and a three-dimensional model; perhaps one of these (or a similar model of Gagkashēn) was on view, and Balakian confused it with the original stone model. Yet would a modern copy be encased in a museum

մրն է: Ասոր մօտ [...]` Վեհ. Ս. Կաթողիկոսը նկարուեցաւ, ինչպէս կը տեսուի պատկերին մէջ: Այս արձանի մօտ՝ որմին վրայ, բարձրը հաստատուած է Գագիկ Թագաւորի անվնաս կերպով գտնուած Ս. Գրիգոր եկեղեցւոյ փոքրանկար նմուշը, որ կատարեալ արուեստագէտի մը [...] ըլլալ կը թուի իր այնքան նրբութեամբ եւ ճաշակաւոր [...].

24 This photograph was displayed in the exhibition *Poetry of Stones*, devoted to the city of Ani held in Istanbul and Yerevan in 2018 and is held in the archives of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. I thank Steven Sim for bringing it to my attention.

25 I know this object only from photographs: see for example the report by Hovik Charkhchyan, `https://en.168.am/2016/10/07/11101.html`, which also offers a useful summary of the fate of the original. The reproduction attributed to Poltoratski also appears in Usta and Hazaryan 2015, 117 and 198, labeled as *King Gagik holding the model of Gagkashēn church*. I thank Yavuz Özkaya for bringing these latter images to my attention.

vitrine? And would Balakian, himself an engineer, be incapable of differentiating between a modern copy and medieval original?

These speculations deserve careful attention because of the high stakes involved. Architectural models, in the medieval Armenian tradition, often followed closely the building with which they were associated, so the appearance of the model of Gagkashēn has real bearing on the original construction of the church, and by extension, its prototype, the seventh-century church of Zvartʻnotsʻ. I have elsewhere examined the complicated archaeology and reconstruction theories of Zvartʻnotsʻ; suffice it to state here that since both it, and the church of Gagkashēn, are in ruins, and that no Zvartʻnotsʻ 'copy' (there are others) survives intact, the model at Ani was a crucial piece of evidence (Maranci 2015b). If there were any chance that Balakian was accurate in his reporting, we would thus gain precious new insights about medieval Armenian architecture.

One final category of Balakian's anomalous reporting concerns the epigraphic corpus of Ani. Within the museum, Balakian writes, are

> small pieces of rock bearing Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, as well as many large and small fragments of rock with Latin, Greek, Armenian, Arabic, and Georgian inscriptions. (Balakian 1910, 56-7)[26]

Existing monuments and publications of Ani attest to Greek, Armenian, Arabic, and Georgian inscriptions (Jalaleantsʻ 1842, Orbeli 1966, Eastmond 2014). Cuneiform (presumably Urartian rather than Assyrian) is not attested, however, although circumstantial evidence certainly allows for the possibility. Marr reports the discovery of Urartian grave goods; additionally, there exists written correspondence, preserved in the Georgian National Museum Archives, concerning protests about the relocation of cuneiform inscriptions found at Ani (Pravilova 2016, 99). The presence of cuneiform inscriptions seems likely at least by the eighth century BCE, when the Kars basin was firmly under Urartian control.

Finally, as I have discussed elsewhere, Urartian stelae were often reused in medieval Armenia (particularly in Van but also farther north), so it is possible that such objects were excavated from within the medieval strata (Maranci 2015a).

More surprising, however, is the mention of Latin inscriptions in the Ani Museum. Unfortunately, Balakian does not elaborate on them, so one wonders whether they were formal texts or graffiti, whether ancient, medieval, or modern. Ani's role as a world trade centre during the medieval period certainly allows for various occurrences of Latinity. Trade, embassies, and missionary activity all provide possible contexts, and European travellers to Ani are known from texts, including William of Rubruck (c. 1220-c. 1293) and Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo († 1412) (Yazıcı 2017, I).[27] One can also imagine Neo-Latin graffiti carved by early modern travellers to the city, such as Heinrich von Poser und Große Nedlitz (1599-1661), or Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689). Without corroborating archaeological or textual evidence, however, the report remains a tantalizing possibility. If Balakian were right about the Latin inscriptions, the already impressive range of epigraphic languages known from Ani could be expanded yet further (Eastmond 2014).

4 Conclusion

Balakian's enigmatic comments open up a world of roiling doubt and tantalizing possibility, and, ultimately, confirm the tragedy that the majority of the excavated materials of Ani have simply vanished. The looting and destruction of Ani's museums, recently studied by Pravilova, coincided with the advance of Turkish troops towards Alexandropol (mod. Gyumri) in 1918.[28] By 1921, the museum was destroyed, its doors pried off the hinges and the roofs removed. There are reports of a train car packed with antiquities, headed for Tiflis, and then disappearing; there are other reports that the finds were reburied in the earth. In light of this uncertainty, and the continued destruction of the city in subsequent

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26 English trans. Balakian 2018. Այս տեղ կը պահուին Ասորերէն բեւեռագիր արձանագրութիւն կրող քարի կտորներ, ինչպէս նաեւ Լատինէրէն, Յունարէն, Հայերէն, Արաբերէն, Վրացերէն արձանագրութիւն պարունակող մեծ ու փոքր բազմաթիւ քարի բեկորներ։

27 I thank the author for graciously providing me with a copy of this volume.

28 See detailed discussions with citations of early sources in Pravilova 2016, 98-9; Watenpaugh 2015, 535 and note 38; https://www.virtualani.org/marr/index.htm; and Kavtaradze 1999.

decades, one is saddened to read of the missed opportunity to salvage the artefacts:

> Rumors reached us in Etchmiadzin that Saint Petersburg is considering moving Marr's Ani museum to Petersburg. I believe that the Petersburg Imperial Archaeological Academy will make a terrible mistake if it tries to move the museum there because the thousands of visitors from many nations who visit Ani will never have the opportunity nor the means to visit the museum in Petersburg. If the Academy is going to move the museum to Petersburg so it will be in the great Russian capital I would hope that both the patriarch in holy Etchmiadzin and Professor Marr himself will protest. It is appropriate and impressive for Ani's museum to be in Ani and furthermore the work of those conducting research is easer this way. Furthermore the Russian government should not take artifacts out of Ani – because the artifacts are both a source of great pride and even consolation. (Balakian 1910, 83)[29]

Marr also shared Balakian's disapproval of the Saint Petersburg relocation, declaring in 1917 that artifacts from Ani should main in situ with 'only ideas' taken away by scholars (Pravilova 2016, 99). Had the museum been moved to Petersburg, however, many of the conjectures raised in the present essay about the archaeological record would probably be unnecessary. Nevertheless, given the lack of surviving evidence from Ani, we are obliged to acknowledge Balakian's documentation, whether or not it conforms to the previous scholarly consensus. Balakian's anomalous reports invite one to wonder what else might lurk in memoirs and personal diaries, as yet neglected or unpublished, of travellers to Ani during the Russian period.

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29 English trans. Balakian 2018. Ցաւալի է որ Ռուս Մայրաքաղաքի Կայս. Հնագիտական Կաճառը թէեւ պարզ ճանապարհածախսով մը կը մասնակցի Անիի Մառեան պեղումներուն, սակայն կը խորհի Բեդերսպուրկ փոխադրել Անիի ի Մառեան Թանգարանը, ինչպէս որ այսպիսի մէկ տարածայնութիւն մեր ակսնջին հասաւ մեծ Ս. Էջմիածին գտնուած ժամանակ: Ապաքէն ամենամեծ գրկանքն ըրած պիտի ըլլայ Բեդերսպուրկի Կայս. Կաճառը, եթէ այսպիսի փոխադրութիւն մը փորձէ ընել: Որովհետեւ այժմ Անի այցելող հազարաւոր ամենազգի հետաքրքիր այցելուներ ո՛չ առիթ եւ ո՛չ միջոց կրնան ունենալ Անիի հնութեանց թանգարանը տեսնելու համար մինչեւ Բեդերսպուրկ ուղեւորելու: Իսկ եթէ Ակադեմիան Ռուս մեծ մայրաքաղաքի ժողովրդին եւ Միջազգային գիտական աշխարհին դիրութիւն մը ընծայելու համար` կը խորհի Անիի Մառեան թանգարանը Բեդերսպուրկ փոխադրել, առաջին բողոքը պէտք է ըլլայ Ս. Էջմիածնի Ընդհանրական Հայրապետէն, ինչպէս եւ նոյն իսկ Բրոֆ. Մառէն: Որովհետեւ Անիի թանգարանն Անիի մէջ վայելել եւ յոժ սպաւորիչ է պահել իր տեղւոյն վրայ, որպէս զի ուսումնասիրութիւն ընդողներու գործը յՀՃշւարանայ ու չՀարկադրուին անընք մինչեւ ծայրագոյն հիւսիս ուղեւորել, տեսնել եւ դիտել Անիի Հնագիտական թանգարանը Բեդերսպուրկի մէջ.

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"The Heritage of Ancestors"
Early Studies on Armenian Manuscripts and Miniature Painting

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Abstract   This essay deals with the emergence of scholarship on medieval Armenian artifacts with a particular emphasis on the study of manuscripts and miniature painting, and covers the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century. While the title of this article may appear to stress the heritage of the Armenians as belonging to a 'national culture', it also alludes to some early approaches, according to which the origins of non-Armenian arts were also sought in medieval Armenia. Amidst the growing waves of contemporary imperialist and nationalist sentiments in the nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, the interest in Armenian miniature painting commenced almost simultaneously in four different intellectual milieus – Russian, German-speaking, French, and Armenian – each approaching the subject from its own perspective and motivated by issues specific to the given cultural-political realm. Additionally, the citations listed here provide a bibliography of Armenian manuscript catalogues published prior to 1900.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 Imperial Russia and Illustrations of Medieval Armenian Manuscripts. – 3 Armenian Miniature Painting in the German-speaking Scholarship. – 4 The '(in)authentic' Art of the Armenians in the French Scholarship. – 5 The Armenian Approach to the Native Heritage. – 6 Conclusions.

Keywords   Armenian miniature painting. Manuscripts. Russification. Imperialism. Nationalism. National art. Ēǰmiacin. Orient. Renewal of traditions.

1   Introduction

Armenian manuscript illumination, together with Armenian architecture, has received a great deal of attention by all generations of researchers. The scholarly study of miniature painting, and medieval Armenian art in general, commenced in the mid-nineteenth century and emerged among the scholars working in diverse parts of Europe, the Russian and the Ottoman Empires. While the title of this essay may appear to stress the heritage of the Armenians as belonging to a 'national culture', it also alludes to some early approaches, according to which the origins of non-Armenian arts were also sought in medieval Armenia. We may distinguish four main 'schools' of thought, in which various interpretative paradigms were developed, reflecting cultural and political developments in the countries where they emerged. This paper[1] will explore how in each of these intellectual *milieus* we may trace different concerns and mentality of the time, which played a great role in shaping our understanding of the subject in question.

To some readers, the division of scholarly approaches into four more or less distinct 'schools' – Russian, German-speaking, French, and Armenian – with implications of certain features that each of them exhibited might appear too strict. Indeed, researchers who will be discussed below under each of these sub-headings were not merely working in some sort of isolation within their home countries, but they often travelled and, moreover, were well interconnected with scholars and institutions of other countries as well. This division does not attempt to place the authors and their works in strictly and exclusively national frameworks, even though this aspect was largely present and should not be ignored. At the same time, the careers and influence of some of them exerted in scholarly circles surely went beyond their countries. Indeed, the life and work of Josef Strzygowski, the controversial but influential Austrian art historian, reflects perfectly the international academic network that this scholar was able to create owing to his multiple contacts and his broad knowledge of different arts (Marchand

2015, 257-85). Another example of such a 'global' scholar might be the Paris-based Armenian intellectual Aršak Čʻōpanean who, being an enthusiastic supporter of contemporary Western-born ideologies, comfortably shared both Armenian and French values and interests, and played a determining role in the *armenophile* movement in France.[2] However, despite clear indications of such global networks among scholars of the time, we might find it difficult to document an equanimous and universally respectful disposition in the work of these early scholars towards all cultures and arts they treated. These authors lived and worked in a century when concepts of ethnicities, nations and the relationship between those conditioned many aspects of political and cultural life, leaving an intense – if not, in certain cases, decisive – impact also on scholarship. It would be naïve to expect nineteenth-century scholars to have been entirely free of biases inherent in their own time, culture and, in some cases, country of origin. Research conducted in the last decades has made it clear that nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars dealing with history of art were supported either by their governments or by the concerned (and far from unbiased) circles and individuals who, for one reason or another, showed a keen interest in undertaking research into the past. The various tendencies, then, found their way in the scholarly production of the time.

These general remarks are applicable also when we look at the study of medieval Armenian miniature painting. Thus, the French explorer Jules Mourier, whose relevant publications are discussed in this paper, went to work in the Caucasus with the support of a French government scholarship. Count Aleksej Uvarov, who authored the very first article on Armenian miniature painting, was the founder of Russian Archaeological Congresses that took place on a regular basis and was also the son of Sergej Uvarov, the Minister of Public Education and one of the most renowned authorities in nineteenth-century Russia. No less remarkable was the involvement of Armenian philanthropic organisations and wealthy Armenian benefactors, who, based in different countries stretching from Egypt to the Caucasus, sponsored the education of hundreds of Armenian students in European and Russian universities. Their patronage often covered also

the work and publications of the scholars who were not necessarily of Armenian origin, such as Frédéric Macler.

Naturally, the socio-political realities of mid-nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries were not the same for every scholar; nor did these realities impact everyone to the same extent and in the same way. However, impact of different ideological, political and cultural realities that each scholar experienced in his intellectual *milieu* cannot be neglected, especially when one documents a number of profoundly different interpretations for a single inheritance. One of the most striking and principal issues that make this difference obvious was the perception of 'East' and 'West'. What was understood under 'East' in the contemporary European and Eurocentric approaches was not necessarily the same in the scholarship developed by Armenian scholars (including, notably, the understanding of Byzantine art). The reasons for this are far from being linked exclusively to geography; rather, they are linked to the ideological incongruities and differences between the various 'schools' of research to be considered here.

This paper seeks to understand some of these reasons for at least four distinct 'schools' of thought discussed here, without, however, diminishing or underestimating the merit of these early studies. Aleksej Uvarov and Vladimir Stasov were among the first researchers to dedicate extensive articles on the decorations of Armenian manuscripts and to treat them from an artistic point of view. Josef Strzygowski's work on Armenian miniature painting, with all of its methodological and ideological controversies, opened up a new horizon in the history of Armenian, and Christian art in general, stimulating a still unceasing interest in this field. The contributions of such scholars, as Frédéric Macler, Garegin Yovsēpʻian and many others cited here, are invaluable for discovering and publishing a great number of Armenian manuscripts scattered all over the world. The value of some of these publications produced in the nineteenth and beginning twentieth centuries becomes even more precious in the light of the afterlives of many manuscripts and artworks, which are now lost forever or whose whereabouts are unknown. In the following pages, the

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2 On Aršak Čʻōpanean and his activities, see: Khayadjian 2001. For the *armenophile* movement in France in the nineteenth and beginning twentieth centuries, see also the contributions in Mouradian 2007.

immense work undertaken in the field of miniature painting will hopefully be taken for granted by the readers, but this essay has a different purpose than merely focusing on the value of the early scholars' works, something that has been undertaken on numerous other occasions in the past. Rather, it attempts to outline the ideological hallmarks of each of the main 'schools' of thought that pioneered research in Armenian manuscript painting and to comprehend how the time and place in which these scholars lived and worked shaped their views, which, to a greater or smaller extent, continued to impact the scholarship over the next century.

2 Imperial Russia and Illustrations of Medieval Armenian Manuscripts

Until now, the doors of this rich treasury were closed for any European, and the monks who preserve it did not allow any foreigner to enter there, as they strongly believe that it will cause covetousness. (Brosset 1840, 3)

This is how, in 1840 the French orientalist Marie-Félicité Brosset (1802-1880) from the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg described the treasury of the Armenian catholicossate of Ēǰmiacin in the introduction to the first systematic catalogue of Armenian manuscripts.[3] By this time, Eastern Armenia had fallen under Russian control as a result of the two Russian-Iranian wars, which came to an end with the Treaty of Turkmenchai (1828). The new lands of the Russian Empire attracted the attention of scholars working in imperial institutions, and Brosset was the first to 'discover' the manuscript library of the Armenian catholicossate. Brosset's scholarship left an important mark on the study of medieval Armenian and Georgian history, but it is the aftermath of his Ēǰmiacin catalogue that is of interest to this narrative, for its publication in 1840 largely stimulated the interest in medieval Armenian history and culture.

A few decades after Brosset's catalogue appeared, Count Aleksej Sergeevič Uvarov (1825-1884) published the first article on Armenian miniature painting, which was presented at the Fifth Russian Archaeological Congress in Tbilisi (1882) organised by the count himself (Uvarov 1882, 350-77). This survey was based on a selected group of 35 illustrated manuscripts, dating from tenth to the late seventeenth century. Uvarov studied them during his six-day visit to Ēǰmiacin with the help of Nikolaj Tēr-Ōsipov, the procurator of the Ēǰmiacin Synod, who accompanied Uvarov and translated for him, and the librarian Bishop Nersēs, who "perfectly knew which manuscripts are the most beautiful ones" (351). This short-term research was however enough for the Russian diplomat and scholar to draw sufficient conclusions regarding the illustrations of these manuscripts, in the majority of which he identified Byzantine style and images. Before we discuss Uvarov's specific ideas, let us remember what were some of the political, cultural and ideological currents of his time that appear to have influenced his studies and concepts.

Uvarov's approach must be viewed within the contemporary political ideology of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Russian Empire. In this respect, one of the most important concepts was to represent the cultural heritage of various communities and ethnicities subjected to the empire within the context of homogeneous Orthodoxy based on Byzantine traditions. Already in 1832, under the rule of Emperor Nikolaj I, the idea of establishing a homogeneous society was advanced due to the efforts of Count Sergej Uvarov (1786-1855), the Minister of Public Education, who was also the father of Aleksej Uvarov. It was Sergej Uvarov who came up with the influential concept known as 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality', in which Orthodoxy was regarded as a national religion that had to be further strengthened for the sake of the empire's prosperity.[4] In the following decades and certainly by the 1880s, Russia started to represent itself as the natural successor of the Byzantine Empire and as an authoritative bearer

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3 In fact, the catalogue was prepared by two local monks, Hovhannes Šahxatʿunyancʿ and Hovhannes Łrimecʿi. For both Šahxatʿunyancʿ and Łrimecʿi's contribution to Brosset's catalogue, see Asatur Mnacʿakanyan's introduction to the *General Catalogue* 1984, XI.

4 Modern scholars have demonstrated that Uvarov's source of inspiration for the creation of this ideology can be found in German romanticism – the same source that also inspired the emergence of Armenian art history, discussed below. For Sergej Uvarov and his ideology, see: Whittaker 1999; Zorin 1996, 105-28; Ivanov 2001, 92-111. See also: Clay 2000, 61-82; Rakitin 2013, 101-7.

of Orthodox traditions, a conscious act that was in line with its expansive ambitions and with its desire to maintain inner unity.[5] This new type of Russian identity often went beyond concepts of ethnic Russianness and tried to incorporate all the other peoples within it. This ideology is precisely reflected in the study of arts of different ethnicities, which were seen as parts of the same nation. As will be shown next, it is this multi-ethnic character of a 'nation' that was developed that would allow also medieval Armenian and Georgian arts to be absorbed in Russian art – a concept in which Byzantine art served as a strong argument to substantiate this assimilation. Similarly, Viktor Rozen and his disciples, who later became renowned orientalists, were set off in search of Arabic influence on Byzantium by studying Oriental and Muslim communities within the empire.[6]

It was at this moment that Aleksej Uvarov's pioneering article on Armenian illustrated manuscripts appeared, declaring not only the existence of numerous 'beautiful' manuscripts kept in the Ēǰmiacin Treasury, but also, and rather more significantly, their Byzantine background, thus providing an interpretative paradigm that fit comfortably with the Byzantine-oriented search for the origins of Russian religiosity and culture.[7] The latter aspect was quickly developed and enhanced by Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906), another representative of the russophile movement.

In his extensive article entitled "Armenian Manuscripts and Their Ornamentation", Stasov criticised the French translation of Uvarov's work by Jules Mourier, who disagreed with Uvarov, arguing that the significance of Armenian miniature painting was due not only to its absorption of Byzantine influences but also because it was unique in its own right and represented independent artistic style.[8] The respected Russian intellectual expressed regret that the first study on Armenian manuscript illumination written in a European language represented it in an incorrect and distorted way. Stasov stated that it was this understanding that led him to explore the matter by himself. It is worth citing a passage from Stasov to demonstrate the grist of his argument:

Armenian and Georgian arts of Byzantine era had a strong influence on Russian art during its formative period, and today when studying the first periods of Russian art, be it architecture, ornaments, or miniature painting, it is impossible to leave aside Armenian and Georgian art. It is a great delusion to think that the original sources of our national art can only be found in Byzantine art. In the majority of cases, especially in Russian architecture, the initial influences were not only specifically Byzantine but also Armenian-Byzantine and Georgian-Byzantine (Stasov 1886, 140)

Being an enthusiastic supporter of what was proclaimed as 'Russian national art', Stasov was trying to create a common past for the Russians, Georgians and Armenians, in which they were all strongly tied together due to their common Byzantine roots. By that time, the ideology of having a national art, which would also comprise the cultural heritage of the newcomers, gradually became dominant within the expanded borders of the Russian Empire. In *L'ornament slave et oriental*, published with the support of Tsar Alexandr III, Armenian manuscript illustration appears faithful to the spirit of the above-mentioned ideology. Here, Stasov made similar observations as before:

In the beginning, in accordance with the prevalent opinion, I thought that all this ornamentation [of Russian manuscripts] was borrowed from Graeco-Byzantine, Bulgarian and Serbian manuscripts. Yet, by becoming more closely acquainted with these [manuscripts] in the rich collections of our Public Library, as well as in South Slavic collections [...], I became convinced that the adoption from only the Byzantines, Serbians and Bulgarians would not be enough to explain all ornamental forms of our manuscripts. I

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5 Foletti 2011, 38-41; Foletti 2016, 22, 24; Rakitin 2013, 98-109.

6 On Rozen's vision and strategy of Oriental Studies in Russia, see: Tolz 2008, 53-81.

7 Further discussion of Uvarov's article is in the second paragraph.

8 Stasov 1886, 133-54; Mourier 1885. It is noteworthy to mention that in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Stasov's approach on Armenian and Oriental manuscript ornaments was assessed by Soviet-Armenian art historian Ruben Drampjan as having 'a series of correct observations'. See: Drampjan 1946, 37.

think that certain forms also derive from sources other than Byzantium, Bulgaria and Serbia, and these forms have local, that is to say, truly Russian origins. (Stasov 1887, I-II)

By 'local Russian art' was understood the art located within the borders of the Russian Empire. This term was also applied to describe architectural monuments and other artefacts. Indeed, in the six-volume collection of *Russian Antiquities*, jointly prepared by Ivan Tolstoj and Nikodim Kondakov,[9] the thousand-years heritage of various communities who now lived in the Russian Empire was represented as a process of gradual transformation 'into one state with a single nation' and as a great contribution to the treasury of Russian antiquities.[10]

Yet, because of dogmatic differences between the Armenian and Byzantine churches, the concept of pan-Orthodoxy that underpinned Russian scholarship was not suitable when approaching the medieval heritage of the Armenians. While Georgian, Byzantine and Russian churches were essentially in agreement concerning doctrine, the Armenian church remained isolated in this company because of Christological disagreements and the Armenian church's rejection of the Chalcedon Council (451). This point, however, did not seem to matter much, at least in the 1880s. Since the incorporation of Eastern Armenia into the Russian Empire, the relationship between Ēǰmiacin and the imperial government had developed through a series of controversial phases. The Russian emperor was actively engaged in the election and approval of the catholicos of all Armenians. At the same time he attempted to emphasise by all possible means the Ēǰmiacin catholicos' supreme status over the catholicos of Sis and the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem.[11] With the introduction of the Statute of 11 March 1836, known as *Položenie*, the Russian government further increased its participation in the election of the Armenian catholicos (Tuṇjan 2017, 225-40). It is noteworthy to mention that in the aftermath of this *Položenie*, the Armenian Apostolic church was referred to as 'Gregorian' (after the name of Saint Gregory the Enlightener) within Russian communities, apparently in order to ignore its apostolicity.[12]

Although in the beginning Russia regarded Ēǰmiacin as a useful tool for its foreign policy in regards to the Ottoman Empire and endowed the Armenian catholicos with some privileges and authority, in the 1880s this attitude changed in accordance with more intensified and systematic russification polities within the empire.[13] With the active presence of numerous schools and periodicals belonging to the Armenian church, as well as of many patriotic organisations based in both the Russian and Ottoman Empires, it became a difficult task to incorporate the Armenians into the new, 'Russian national' identity. The schools operated by the Armenian church (which were also serving as public schools) were forced to close, later to be reopened in 1886, after implementing specific modifications to teaching programs and methods, in which knowledge of the Russian language became obligatory (Sarafian 1923, 263-4; Suny 1993, 36, 45, 69). Religious persecutions became particularly intolerable in the early twentieth century. With the decree of June 12, 1903 issued by Emperor Nikolaj II, the property of the Armenian church was confiscated, and the Armenian schools were closed again (Sarafian 1923, 264.5; Suny 1993, 92). Although the schools were reopened in August 1905 and the confiscated property was returned to the Armenian church, the latter was still regarded as having an antigovernmental position. In light of these developments, Armenian students started to experience difficulties when attempting to enroll in Russian institutions of higher education, since their prior education at the schools run by the Armenian church was not considered valid. A particularly cautious attitude was adopted towards the students who graduated from the Gēorgean Seminary in Ēǰmiacin, the Nersisean School in Tbilisi, and the Seminary of Nor Naxiǰewan (Rostov-on-Don), which were regard-

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[9] Tolstoj, Kondakov 1889, 1889, 1890, 1891, 1897, 1899. The Armenian art is treated in the fourth volume subtitled *Christian Antiquities of Crimea, Caucasus and Kiev* (1891).

[10] Tolz 2011, 35. See also: Tolz 2005, 127-50; Foletti 2011, 42-3; Foletti 2016, 27.

[11] Werth 2006, 205-9. For Russian patronage of the Ēǰmiacin Catholicos during the first decades of the nineteenth century, see also: Suny 1993, 36.

[12] Werth 2006, 204 fn. 3; Werth 2014, 24 fn. 39; Kostandyan 2009, 100; Melikset-Bekov 1911, 3.

[13] For the russification policies towards the Armenians in the 1880s, see: Suny 1993, 44-51.

ed as non-Orthodox seminaries and therefore unsuitable as providers of higher education. In an explanatory letter (1907) addressed to Ivan Borgman, the rector of the Saint Petersburg Imperial University, the Deputy Minister of Education, Osip Gerasimov, felt it necessary to explain his decision to accept students who graduated from the seminaries of the 'Armenian Gregorian church'. He felt necessary to assure, among other things, that the level of Russian language and history taught at these institutions were high and concluded his letter by insisting that rather than banning the Armenian students from pursuing their education at imperial universities, they should be encouraged to do so:

> It is impossible not to notice that by creating extreme difficulties for the graduate students of Armenian seminaries to enter Russian universities you will contribute to the outflow of young Armenian students to Western European and especially German institutions of higher education, which will reduce the impact of our native universities and will hinder the Russian enlightenment work in the Caucasus. (Kostandyan 2009, 103)

In fact, Borgman's 'alarming' conclusion about the consequences stimulated by European and especially German education was not without reason, as will be seen in the final part of this paper.

3 Armenian Miniature Painting in the German-speaking Scholarship

In the mid-nineteenth century, the German art historian Carl Schnaase (1798-1875) had included the medieval architectures of Armenia and Georgia into his multivolume work *Geschichte der bildenden Künste* (Schnaase 1844, 248-76, 312-18). In this work, he set out his thesis that these arts were expressions of a so-called national character, a phenomenon that he found to be substantially based on Christian values.[14]

Here, Armenian art appeared under the general chapter dedicated to Byzantine art, which, for Schnaase, had played a particular role in the formation of not only Armenian and Russian arts but also of the art of the Germanic people. Yet, in Schnaase's view, the art of Germanic people, unlike the first two, was able to reach "a most free and accomplished level of development" (Schnaase 1844, 312-3).[15] Another point worth mentioning is that contrary to Russian scholarship, nineteenth-century German art history highlighted the political and religious 'loneliness' of Armenia, hinting at the non-Chalcedonian orientation of the Armenian church (Schnaase 1844, 315-6, 258). As a consequence, Armenian medieval art, architecture in particular, was interpreted as having an idiosyncratic style, which also inspired neighbouring Georgian architecture (268-9, 273). However, as noted by Vardan Azatyan, although the first German art historians underlined the 'uniqueness' of Armenian architecture and the 'Armenian style', they also usually concluded their observations by subordinating it to European architecture for various reasons. For example, Schnaase's subordination was based on the conviction that Armenian architecture reflects also the 'adventurous' and artistically less significant taste of the Arabs, which places these architectures into a lower position in comparison to the European one (Schnaase 1844, 275-6).[16]

The earliest studies on Armenian miniature painting is closely linked also with the name of Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941). Before launching himself into an exploration of the origins of Armenian architecture in his famous *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, Strzygowski's interests focused on miniature painting. Infatuated with contemporary nationalistic and racist ideas, the Austro-Hungarian scholar saw 'Aryan' elements in Armenian architecture.[17] During the preparation of this book, Strzygowski had promised the Armenians that his studies would demonstrate "the extraordinary value of ancient Armenian art", in exchange for the photographs and materials that the local scholars provided

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14 An excellent discussion of Schnaase's approach to Armenian and Georgian medieval arts, as well as the emergence of interest in these arts in Germany, are explored in Azatyan 2012. For a previous discussion on Schnaase's approach, see: Klingenburg 1981, 369-76.

15 On some ethical issues of Schnaase's theory, see Azatyan 2012, 127-49.

16 For discussion, see: Azatyan 2012, 100-13, 121-2.

17 See Christina Maranci's detailed analysis of Stzygowski's work on Armenian architecture: Maranci 1998, 363-80; Maranci 2001, Chapter 3.

him (Marchand 2015, 268). This, however, oc-curred at a later stage in his scholarly career. His earlier publications on miniature painting represented this field somewhat sporadically, rather than approaching it as a characteristic phenomenon of Armenian culture.

Strzygowski's first study, dedicated to the tenth-century *Ēǰmiacin Gospel* (now in Mate-nadaran, no. 2374), was published in the newly created series *Byzantinische Denkmäler* with the support of the well-known Russian diplomat and collector Alexander Nelidov (Strzygowski 1891). Nelidov had facilitated Strzygowski's travels to the Caucasus (August 1888-April 1890) through his many letters addressed to the relevant au-thorities. Nelidov's own involvement in the pro-ject can be explained by his interest in extending the borders of Byzantine art, in accordance with the above-mentioned cultural politics adopted by the Russian Empire, with an eye to includ-ing the Caucasus in this field.[18] The resultant monograph was Strzygowski's first work *en route* to producing a history of Byzantine art that aimed to explain "since when and to what extent Byzantine influence appears in such an art-poor region as Armenia" (Strzygowski 1891, VI). Against possibly different expectations of Nelidov, Strzygowski concluded his study by as-cribing the illustrations of the Ēǰmiacin Gospel to Syrian miniaturists and associating the ori-gins of Armenian miniature painting with the importation of Syrian archetypes in the sixth century,[19] something which was not entirely incorrect. The observation that there was no Armenian tradition of book illustration prior to the tenth-eleventh centuries fostered further Strzygowski's approach to the origins of Chris-tian art, which, by the scholar's conviction, had to be found in the East, in particular in Syria and Egypt. Unlike the widespread Rome-centred approach, Strzygowski's groundbreaking theory argued that the art of the Orient was able to preserve its originality and remain untouched by classical influences. It is therefore in the Orient

that the scholar suggests to look for the roots of Europe's Christian art (Marquand 1910, 357-65; Marchand 1994, 117-20). It should be men-tioned that Strzygowski was not the only Ger-man-speaking scholar who identified the origins of Armenian Gospel illustration in Syrian art; similar observations were also made by Anton Baumstark (Baumstark 1911, 249-60).

In his monograph dedicated to the Ēǰmiacin Gospel, Strzygowski drew some parallels be-tween Armenian and Byzantine arts, especially when discussing the manuscript illustration of the following centuries. He would soon change his stance and argue that Armenian miniature painting was directly inspired by more ancient, Iranian and Mesopotamian, cultures and that it was likely that it imparted artistic forms to Byzantine art, rather than the other way round (Strzygowski 1907, 27-8). To illustrate this, Strzygowski discussed the decorations of a twelfth-century Armenian Gospel codex kept in the Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen (no. MA XIII, 1). He associated it with ninth-century mo-saics from Baghdad and argued for his thesis through an imaginary Armenian colophon pre-sumably dated to 893, but which was, in fact, falsely represented as the archetypal, original colophon.[20]

Thus, if Russian scholarship was trying to 'byzantinize' and then to 'russify' the art of the recently imperialized Southern Cauca-sus, Strzygowski's approach of including more far-reaching territories in the east was a part of his Orient-centred project. The medieval art of Armenia located in the Iranian neighborhood made this approach particularly attractive and reasonable, since it would serve to prove the long-lasting presence of Christianity in the re-gion, making it easier to trace the Christian art of Europe back to Iranian artistic forms. Similar methodology and conclusions may be observed in Strzygowski's analysis of Armenian architec-ture, which he regarded as a transitional stage connecting the 'Aryan' architecture of ancient

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18 At that time, Nelidov had also sponsored other young researchers in order to promote the study of Byzantine art. For example, he played a significant role in shaping Theodore Schmidt's scholarly interests, who in 1901 was sent to work on Byzantine monuments in the Russian Archaeological Institute of Constantinople. Being the ambassador of Russia in Istanbul at that time, Nelidov himself was actively engaged in the foundation of this institute (1894). See: Sivolap 2006, 20.

19 Similar observations are made by Strzygowski concerning another tenth-century manuscript, the so-called Second Ēǰmiacin Gospel (no. 2555, Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem). See: Strzygowski 1911, 345-52.

20 The colophon of the Tübingen Gospel is a nineteenth-century falsification, which was copied, largely using the text of a colophon of another Gospel book, now Matenadaran manuscript no. 6763 produced in 1113 in Cilician Drazark. This wide-spread confusion about the date and provenance of the Tübingen manuscript was caused by the above-mentioned publication of Strzygwski, who relied on the information provided to him by the art dealer.

Iran with that of modern Europe (Maranci 1998, 363-80; Grigor 2007, 565).

The art-historical analysis formulated in Russian and German-speaking studies greatly impacted the work of contemporary Russian and European scholars. Based on Strzygowski's study on the Ējmiacin Gospel, in his book *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* Dmitrij Ajnalov treated the final four miniatures of this manuscript as Syrian artworks.[21] In 1898, Johan Jacob Tikkanen, the first professor of art history in Finland, published a study about Armenian manuscript illustration, which refers to three manuscripts kept at that time in the Oriental collection of Dr. Fredrick Robert Martin (Tikkanen 1898, 65-91). Faithful to the spirit of current approaches, Tikkanen affirmed that Armenian miniature painting was largely depended on foreign cultures and that it had merely played a role of a mediator as a result of the Armenians' centuries-long existence between Europe, Asia and Africa (Tikkanen 1898, 91).

Similarly, in the second volume of Karl Woermann's *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker*, Armenian art and architecture is labelled as 'Mischkunst', following the approach formulated earlier by Schnaase in his *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst* (Azatyan 2012, 29-30, 203-5). While saying that there was no miniature painting in Armenia (nor in Georgia) prior to the tenth and eleventh century, Woermann was, in fact, repeating Strzygowski's above-mentioned expression, although without mentioning him directly (Woermann 1905, 76). Woermann continued his narrative by delineating what was, for him, typically Armenian. He found these characteristics in a manuscript dating from the tenth-eleventh century, known as the Trapisond Gospel (Venice, Mekhitarist congregation, no. 1400/108). This choice was significant and may be understood based on a previous study done by Stasov (again, without mentioning him), who a few years earlier had paid a particular attention to this same manuscript, developing Uvarov's observations that tenth-century Armenian illustrations had "indisputably Byzantine images, but of modern type" (Uvarov 1882, 354). Shortly after, Stasov added that the Trapisond Gospel expressed this modern, Armenian type of miniature painting,

which could be observed in animal and architectural ornaments, even in 'Armenian physiognomies' (Stasov 1886, 142-7). The designation of the *Trapisond Gospel*, its probable place of creation, and the presence of certain elements (such as inscriptions in Greek), allowing one to speak of Armenian-Byzantine interactions, made this codex particularly attractive to Stasov. In summer 1880, when he visited the Library of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice and benefited from the valuable help of Łewond Ališan, he was able to see this manuscript personally and to choose it from many other illustrated books, a decision which owed to its 'Byzantine-Armenian' features listed above. The choice of this Venice manuscript was dictated by a-priori political-cultural considerations about the Byzantine nature of Armenian illuminated manuscripts and the search for primarily this type of manuscripts as opposed to many other illustrated manuscripts without such 'obvious' Byzantinizing features.

Following Stasov, Woermann too affirmed the 'Armenianness' of bird ornaments found in the Trapisond Gospel. Yet, for the German scholar, this remained as an artwork of a Mischkunst type.

To sum up, the German-speaking scholarship of the late nineteenth and beginning twentieth centuries on Armenian miniature painting largely followed Strzygowski's studies. Here, only a few selectively chosen manuscripts were treated, mostly those which were related to Early Christian traditions. Strzygowski's choice of these earliest manuscripts was very cautious (as was that of Uvarov and Stasov), for it had to suit the scholar's current concerns on locating the origins of Armenian art (and Christian art in general) in Syria and Egypt. If Baumstark's observations about Armenian miniature painting were entirely inspired by Strzygowski's 'Syrian' approach, then some other followers of the Austrian scholar, like Tikkanen or Woermann, made some more efforts on seeing Armenian manuscript art in the light of other cultures as well. Yet, their conclusions too did not vary significantly from the current tendencies introduced earlier, as their assessment too was based on representing this art as merely having the role of a mediator.

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21 Ajnalov 1900, 58-60. It is noteworthy to mention that in 1890 Strzygowski attended the Archaeological Congress in Moscow, where he met Ajnalov and his professor, slavophilic scholar Kondakov. This meeting may well have deepened further Strzygowski's anti-Roman position. See: Marchand 2015, 267.

4 The '(in)Authentic' Art of the Armenians in the French Scholarship

In the nineteenth century an intensified interest in Oriental studies characterised also French scholarship. In his *Recherches anthropologiques dans le Caucase 1885-1887*, Ernest Chantre assured his compatriots that "the European has placed his cradle in the Armenian Highlands" (Vinson 2004, 73). Hinting at the Biblical story of the Universal Flood and the Mount Ararat, Jules Mourier wrote that Armenia had played a great role in the history of the mankind, for it "is the cradle of the oldest traditions of our race".[22] The enduring idea of Ararat's place as 'the cradle of mankind' was apparently inspired by the Enlightenment and early modern philosophers, and even earlier, by the masters of Renaissance. These figures highlighted Armenia as a place of rebirth, witnessing through their mythic-philosophical visions the great catastrophe of Deluge and the re-creation of mankind, which became a model of a new beginning within their own societies.[23]

In the French scholarship of this period, the vector of a renewal was shifted to the Oriental civilisations, whose early histories were now being relentlessly represented in the light of an imaginative past commonly shared with Westerners. In this discourse, the question was often regarded through the prism of the Christian-Islamic dichotomy and a desire to return to original (Christian) traditions (Vinson 2004, 74-5). These conceptions were also explicitly reflected in the methodology of the first French scholars who explored medieval Armenian art. While it is not possible to include all relevant materials in this brief essay (as for example all accounts of travellers and explorers), this paper will however address at least most of the major studies written on the subject of miniature painting.

Jules Mourier (born in 1846) was the first French intellectual to show interest in Armenian illustrated manuscripts, when he translated Alexey Uvarov's article into French, publishing it under the title *La bibliothèque d'Edchmiadzine et les manuscrits arméniens* (Tbilisi 1885). Yet, Mourier found it important to express his dis-

agreement with Uvarov specifically regarding the conviction that Armenian miniature painting was solely influenced by Byzantine art.[24] A quick glance at Mourier's Caucasian activities might help us to understand why the French explorer was not inclined to see Armenian manuscript illustrations in the shadow of Byzantine art alone and also what he meant by interpreting Armenian art as 'independent and original'.

Mourier moved to work in the Caucasus in the 1880s with the support of a scholarship of 5,000 franks granted him by the French Ministry of Public Instruction. Upon his arrival, he initiated the publication of the first francophone journals in Caucasus, *Le Caucase Illustré* and *La Revue Commerciale et Industrielle du Caucase*, both based in Tbilisi and available for subscription in the Russian Empire and in France (Cheishvili 2013, 13). As he wrote himself, the aim of this sojourn, which was mainly spent in Tbilisi, was to locate "the traces of Oriental peoples' migrations to Europe, as well as to gather Georgian and Armenian artefacts which have some artistic value" (13). Focusing his research on the artistic production of the Georgians and Armenians, Mourier was apparently familiar with the previous work on the region, written by Schnaase, for he applies similar methods and rhetoric used earlier by the German art historian. In *L'art au Caucase*, the arts of Armenia and Georgia are treated by Mourier through the lens of these nations' 'characters', an approach, which characterised the contemporary German scholarship. First, these arts were praised within a Caucasian framework as being the only noteworthy ones, apparently because of their Christian context. Then, following again his German colleagues and implementing a somewhat polemical rhetoric, Mourier accused the Armenians and Georgians of being unable to reach the level of perfection found in Western art, thus identifying the formers as subordinate and inferior to the latter. Typical of the essentializing attitudes of his day, he went on to write the following:

> The Georgians are beautiful, bright, brave, and generous. They have strongly developed sentiments of hospitality and honor. But they

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[22] Mourier 1894, 109. The notion 'cradle of civilisation' repeatedly appears in the works of many French explorers sent to the Caucasus in this period. See: Mourier 1887a, 10; De Morgan 1889, III.

[23] On the stories of Ararat and their reuse in post-medieval times, see: Matossian 2009; Trompf 2015, 629-66.

[24] In his *L'art religieux au Caucase*, Mourier dedicated a chapter to Armenian and Georgian manuscripts, in which he reproduced the contents of the mentioned article and confirmed his previous statements. See: Mourier 1887b, 91-139.

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are lazy, careless and without any spirit of consistency and even less of perseverance. The Armenians have a positive and practical spirit. They have a unique aptitude for trade and are looking for all possible means to double their fortune. Less chivalrous and less brave than Georgians, the insinuating and smart Armenian likes only one thing – money; and because of this he [the Armenian] has lost today all artistic inclinations he could have possessed once. In sum, in the Caucasus only two nations were able to demonstrate any intellectual value: the Georgians and the Armenians. However, this value is quite poor and their moral qualities are scarcely better than those of their intelligence.

The architecture will show that this evaluation is exact in every point. Neither the Armenians nor the Georgians were able to create an absolutely original art. To do so, one needs elevation of spirit, breadth of views, personal inspiration, which they do not possess. Their architecture, like their country, has perpetually undergone foreign influence. Are not their moral weakness and their inconstancy reflected in the exiguity of their constructions? In the period of its splendor, the Cathedral of Ani, the capital of Armenia, also the one of Kutaisi, in Imereti, were not much greater than the churches of villages in the West. (Mourier 1896, 1: 8)[25]

The above text was deeply inspired by Johann Herder's *Ideen zur Pholosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. It could perhaps be understood as a retelling of Herder's writing, in which he attributed the Armenians and the Georgians with similar characteristics as Mourier.[26] Continuing the reading of *L'art au Caucase*, one can note how Armenian and Georgian arts were gradually merged into one – 'Armeno-Georgian art'. Mourier introduces a general common source from which all Christian arts originated but, here too, he highlights the superiority of Western art, especially Gothic architecture, over others (Mourier 1896, 1: 25-6). Thus, the analysis of Christian ar-

tefacts created by the Armenians and Georgians were carried out in conformity to contemporary European ideas and prejudices about Oriental civilisations and their relationship to the West. When Mourier moved to the Caucasus to study the material heritage of the local peoples, he a priori sketched out the expected results of his future research – to find "traces of Oriental peoples' migration to Europe" (Cheishvili 2013, 13). It is in the context of this presumed migration that the French scholar saw the 'independence and originality' of Armenian miniature painting, which was later assimilated to 'much greater', Western art. As will be shown below, the ideas about such a migration and the erstwhile common traditions believed to have been shared between the East and West were largely present in the works of another celebrated French intellectual, Frédéric Macler (1869-1938).

Having dedicated his life to revealing and propagating the material and literary heritage of Armenia, Frédéric Macler enjoyed the extensive support of such wealthy philanthropists as Levon Mantashev, Boghos Nubar Pasha, Calouste Gulbenkian, Dickran Khan Kelekian, Yervant Agathon Bey, and many others. In the 1900s, the scholar published a study dedicated to the bindings of some manuscripts kept in the National Library of France (Macler 1905, 14-20) and prepared the catalogue of Armenian and Georgian manuscripts preserved in the same library (Macler 1908). The work of cataloguing manuscripts continued also in the following years. This included the manuscripts found in various libraries in Central Europe (Macler 1913b, 229-84, 559-686), Spain, France (Macler 1920, 1921, 1922), Cyprus (Macler 1923), Crimea (Macler 1930), and Transylvania (Macler 1935), in addition to the single manuscripts he was publishing regularly (Macler 1920b, 129-38; Macler 1926a, 169-76; Macler 1926b, 27-31).

A man of his times, Macler too started his research in the field of miniature painting with the same concern and search for origins. He intended to contribute to the question that had become classical by his time – where can the origins of

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25 See also: Mourier 1887b, 3-4.

26 Herder 1792, 97-8. Note that, also Immanuel Kant, in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), had described the Armenians, though quite positively, as tradesmen who have "a commercial spirit of a special kind" (for a discussion of the relevant texts of the two German philosophers, see Azatyan 2012, 49-58). Also in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia, there was a prevalent image of the Armenians as commercial people, who entirely controlled the trade in the Caucasus. As for the Georgians, the characteristics quoted above are reflected in the work of the Russian ethnographer Kovalevskij, *Kavkaz*. See: Kovalevskij 1914, 203-73, esp. 234-5 (on the Georgians), 285-309, esp. 299-301 (on the Armenians). See also: Suny 1993, 37-42.

Armenian art be located?[27] While searching for an answer throughout his long and prolific career, he produced numerous works dedicated to illustrated manuscripts, which still impress the reader in terms of their rich and high-quality printings. Discussing the possible contacts between various traditions suggested in previous hypotheses, Macler usually concluded his studies with the observation that Armenian manuscript illumination was to be studied as a distinct field. He proposed that while Armenia was at the centre of cross-cultural contacts, its arts were free of any substantial interactions with other cultures that might have changed its essence and originality.[28] Developing this further, he came to have the conclusion that, whilst travelling to Europe, Armenian artists brought these 'pure' artistic traditions with them. He argued that they played an influential role in the formation of Western art, and used the example of (Cilician) Armenian communities in medieval Italy. This circle was then closed by comparing medieval Armenian miniatures with "their Carolingian congeners" (Abdullah, Macler 1909, 366). Thus, Armenian and Carolingian miniature paintings were seen by Macler as originating from a common 'gene', whose renewal was consistently pursued in the contemporary French society.

In the aftermath of the First World War and the Armenian Genocide, Macler's studies became even more Armeno-centric and were accompanied by increasing hints for finding a positive resolution of the Armenian Question and preserving the Armenian people. The culmination of efforts to demonstrate Armenian-French historical and artistic relationships was Macler's work entitled *La France et l'Arménie à travers l'art et l'histoire*, in which the author started from the period "when France was still called Gaul" (Macler 1917, 7). In another text, within the context of Europe's primacy, the French scholar calls the Armenians as "avant-garde of the Occidental civilisation in the Orient" (Macler 1924, 12). In a later work dedicated to the miniature painting of secular manuscripts, Macler included the photographs and images of well-dressed and good-looking Armenian women, who at first sight had nothing to do with the content of the book (Macler 1928, 5, 7, 19, 21, 27, 29). Here, through the lens of illustrated Armenian versions of the Alexander Romance, Macler continuously drew parallels between Eastern and Western copies of this romance and concluded his discussion with the following statement:

> The Armenians, situated between the Orient and Occident, did not fail in their duties as a civilised nation by producing a History of Alexander in a good and correct prose, as well as interesting miniatures. (Macler 1928, 19)

Whilst maintaining the praise for Armenian art and underscoring its common origins with Western art, Macler and his orientophile compatriots were not, however, seeking Oriental elements that would indicate a change in the essence of French art. Rather, they were attempting to find a new stimulus for further growth in France, which could be provided by Oriental civilisations. The exemplary case studies discussed so far indicate some of the attitudes prevalent in Western scholarship of Armenian art, which fit within a wider perception of and expectations from the Orient common in the West. An apt formulation of such attitudes has been provided by Edward Said four decades ago:

> European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self. (Said 1978, 3)

Now let us look at the self-perception of the Armenians of their own, or, as they say 'ancestral' art and see how it can compare and contrast to Russian and European approaches.

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[27]   See the introductions to the following works, in which the author repeatedly emphasises the question of the origins of Armenian art: Abdullah, Macler 1909, 280-302, 345-66; Macler 1913.

[28]   See, for example, the introduction to the first volume of the *Revue des Études arméniennes*, which was founded by Macler, Antoine Meillet and other armenologists (*Revue des Études arméniennes*, 1, 1920, 1-2). See also: Macler 1920a, 13; Macler 1928, 8.

5 The Armenian Approach to the Native Heritage

By 1907 when Ivan Borgman, the rector of Saint Petersburg University, raised cause for concern with the Deputy Minister of Education about what he felt were the 'negative' consequences of German education on Armenian students, that education had already shaped the ideological orientation of many Armenians. From the time of Herder, a prevailing idea on the concept of 'nations' circulating in German-speaking societies stressed the utmost importance of language in the formation of a culture and of a nation. This concept was warmly received by young Armenian intellectuals.[29] The Armenian language and the continuing discoveries of its centuries-long heritage as preserved in the language became the central pillar for these future scholars in the reconstruction and conceptualization of their own national identity. In his doctoral dissertation *Der armenische Volksglaube*, Manuk Abeghian – one of the prominent Armenian philologists and linguists of the twentieth century – employed this idea and he was apparently inspired by his own German education (in Jena, Leipzig, Berlin, and then later in Paris). He wrote: "Language serves as one means of differentiating foreign elements from those which are native Armenian or have been Armenized."[30] It was also from the German-speaking intellectual *milieus* of Europe and Russia that the ideas of promoting the arts as a key element in the process of nation-building penetrated into Armenian circles.

When examining early studies of miniature painting scattered throughout Armenian publications of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one regularly comes across expressions that underline the importance of finding and studying the material remnants of the heritage created by the ancestors. As one can deduce from these texts, the uncovering of the original roots was conditioned by the necessity of reviving national and religious values, which were deeply rooted in the past. The awakening of cultural consciousness was regarded as a knot that would tie the Armenians' past to their present and would contribute to the construction of their glowing future. The patriotic spirit of education and scholarly approach to cultural heritage were regarded as the first steps towards the realisation of these goals. It is within this context that the first art historical studies were produced in Armenian intellectual centres located both in Russian and Ottoman Empires, as well as in Europe, where the Mekhitarist fathers had already started their extensive research activities in the previous century. With the foundation of *Bazmavēp* (1843), the periodical of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice, religious scholars and congregation members wished to research Armenian artefacts "for the sake of love towards the nation" (Grigoryan 2011a, 251-8). It was thought that this would help to transform the Armenians into a cultured people by applying methods similar to those employed by contemporary European scholars.

The scholarly interest in miniature painting developed alongside the cataloguing of manuscripts, which gradually revealed a series of sumptuously decorated specimens. By the end of the nineteenth century, more than 2,000 manuscripts kept in the libraries in Ēǰmiacin, Sevan, Arc'ax, Kesaria (Kayseri), Karin (Erzurum), Tbilisi, Saint Petersburg, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, and Vatican were already described and available to the scholarly community,[31] in addition to several dozen single manuscripts from other libraries and private collections.[32] The clerics and scholars, who had access to these manuscripts, continually expressed hope that, by publishing descriptions of manuscripts, they would reveal the invaluable legacy of their ancestors to the Armenians. Thinking from this perspective strong-

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29 See Azatyan 2012, 60-2, 243-50. Although the importance of language was already noted by the Mekhitarists and expressed in their voluminous studies, it was most likely from the German circles of Europe and Russia that Eastern Armenian intellectuals adopted it.

30 Abeghian 1899a, 5. English translation by Robert Bedrosian (*Armenian Folk Beliefs*, 2012).

31 Two decades after Brosset's catalogue came out, a more detailed catalogue of the Ēǰmiacin manuscripts was prepared by the librarian Daniel Šahnazareanc'. The latter is known as 'Karineanc' Catalogue' after the name of Mr. Yakob Karineanc' (from the city of Karin/Erzurum), who had encouraged and supported the publication. See: Šahnazareanc' 1863. For manuscript catalogues of other collections, see: Marr 1892; T'ōp'čean 1898; T'ōp'čean 1900; Palean 1893; Adjarian 1900; Kanajeanz 1893; Dorn 1852, 568-72; Karamianz 1888; Kalemkiar 1892; Dashian 1891; Dashian 1895; Misk'čean 1892.

32 The following is an incomplete list of individual manuscripts published prior to 1900 (excluding the works which are already cited in my paper): Yovsēp'ean 1898, 519; Palean 1898, 244-8: Xalat'eanc' 1899; Yovhannēsean 1900a, 117-8; Yovhannēsean 1900b, 595-7; Dashian 1900, 353-7.

ly influenced the rhetoric employed by Armenian researchers. Their approach was motivated by a desire to awaken national consciousness and challenge contemporary perceptions of Armenian art as was developed by Russian and Western scholarships. While the Armenian scholars tried to break free of European-imposed paradigms and concepts, they still measured the advances of their own art with a European yard-stick and compared the achievements of Armenian art to European art. In the article "Painting and Architecture during the Time of Our Ancestors" by Yovhannēs Tʻorosean, a member of the Mekhitarist Congregation, concluded with the following statement:

> Thus, all these [artworks] are enough to demonstrate that if the Armenian nation did not have any of Palagi, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rubens, etc., it does not necessarily mean that they were tasteless in architecture and (miniature) painting. (Tʻorosean 1897, 233)[33]

From the mid-nineteenth century on, Eastern Armenia also became actively involved in the formation of a national education and scholarship, an interest which was motivated by all the same conviction that the cultural heritage was of utmost significance for a nation's further progress. As mentioned above, after the annexation of Eastern Armenia, the Russian government gave certain autonomy to the Armenian catholicossate with a view to use the latter's authority in the Russian Empire's foreign affairs with the Ottoman Empire. Benefiting from this somewhat privileged situation, in 1868, the official periodical of the Mother See of Holy Ējmiacin, *Ararat*, was founded. In the very first sentence of the first volume, *Ararat* makes immediately clear its sympathy for Western-born ideological tendencies:

> The Earth's surface demonstrates us that the Sun rises in the East and illuminates all the countries. But, today, it appears likely that our Armenia is being illuminated in a different way, for its amiable illuminators come from the West.[34]

As defined in this first volume, the purpose of *Ararat* was to satisfy the desire of Ējmiacin's studious clergy, to contribute to the national education, and "to revive the historical relics of national greatness". In one of the following volumes, Łazaros Ałayeancʻs article upholds that *Ararat* "must create an image, in which every Armenian can see his past and his present" (Ałayeancʻ 1869a, 3). In the same volume, Ałayeancʻ signed another article in which he speaks of the role of education and science. In author's view, this does not introduce a contradiction because the Armenians are a religious people; rather, on the contrary, it advances the preservation of their Christian heritage (Ałayeancʻ 1869b, 22-4).

The new periodical had to target not only the educated classes but also the broader masses of the Armenian population. To reach this goal effectively, *Ararat* chose the vernacular Ašxarhabar language, the dialect of Yerevan, which was closer to Grabar (Classical Armenian) and, as the editors hoped, was to some extent understandable also to Ottoman Armenians.[35] The studies on the manuscripts from the rich library of Ējmiacin started to appear on the pages of *Ararat*,[36] making it a significant scholarly pavilion and at the same time a peculiar source for nourishing national and nationalistic sentiments.

The new principles of patriotic education proclaimed by *Ararat* were soon put on more practical grounds with the establishment of the Gēorgean Theological Seminary at the Mother See in 1874 (Abeghian 1899b, 84-92; Sarafian 1923, 265). These two major undertakings were accompanied with the creation of the Ējmiacin Museum, all three initiated by Catholicos Gēorg (Kevork) IV (1813-1882). Before moving to Eastern Armenia, Catholicos Gēorg served in several locations (including as patriarch of Constantinople) and was actively involved in organising the Armenian communal life in the Ottoman Empire. The last factor was certainly decisive

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33 See also: Azatyan 2012, 246-7.

34 *Ararat*, 1 (1868), in introduction (without pagination). This illustrative quotation recalls Aršak Čʻōpanean's introduction to the first volume of *Anahit* (1898), in which the author associates 'the elevation of Armenian spirit' with the recovery ability of the stimulus that originates from European ideas. See: Čʻōpanean 1898, 1-6. On *Anahit*, see also: Khayadjian 2001, 117-8.

35 *Ararat*, 1 (1868), in introduction (without pagination).

36 From 1888, these studies were published under a special rubric called "The Library of Holy Ējmiacin".

in receiving the support of Saint Petersburg for his election. This was the second consecutive time that an Ottoman Armenian became catholicos in Ējmiacin with the support of the Russian government. In the aftermath of the Crimean War, Russia demonstrated a keen interest in observing the situation in Constantinople through the religious leader of the Armenians.[37] Enjoying the initial support of the Russian government and navigating between the two empires, the new catholicos could manage to undertake the foundations of the periodical, the seminary, and the museum, all of which would soon play a significant role in the rise of national sentiments within Eastern Armenia and beyond. As one can learn from the biography of Gēorg IV, his activities were motivated by the necessity of creating new generations of educated clergy who would preserve and spread the traditions of the Armenian Apostolic church and contribute to the national education. It seems not unimportant to mention that the biography of Gēorg IV was written by Manuk Abeghian, who had just completed his German education and returned to Ējmiacin to pursue familiar aspirations inherited from the late catholicos. The ideological convictions of the catholicos (and also of Abeghian) regarding the necessity of modern education and the development and continuity of the nation are particularly explicit in chapter 9 entitled "The Demands of the Time from Catholicos" (Abeghian 1899b).

Indeed, the newly founded seminary immediately became the main educational and intellectual centre in Eastern Armenia, thus joining two other Armenian institutions of higher education in the Russian Empire; the Lazarean (Lazarev) Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow (established in 1815) and the Nersisean School in Tbilisi (established in 1824). With the support of philanthropic societies, the pupils and alumni of the Ējmiacin Seminary had the opportunity to continue their education in universities abroad. Among those organisations particularly supportive were the Armenian Philanthropic Society of Baku (established in 1864) and the Armenian

Benevolent Society of the Caucasus (established in 1881, Tbilisi). One of the students who benefited from this support was Garegin Yovsēpʻean (1867-1952), a pioneering scholar of Armenian art history, whose works still nourish Armenian Studies.

Garegin Yovsēpʻean was born in 1867 in the village of Małavuz, in Arcʻax.[38] Graduating from the Gēorgean Seminary in 1890, he soon moved to Germany to study theology, philosophy and history at the universities of Halle, Berlin and Leipzig. In 1897, he acquired the title of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Leipzig for his dissertation on the origins of monotheletism (Yovsēpʻean 1897). Upon his return to Ējmiacin in the same year, Yovsēpʻean's research interests were soon widened to include the study of medieval artefacts and manuscripts in particular. Unsurprisingly, it was from German-speaking intellectual circles that art history permeated into Armenia. Inspired by contemporary European ideas of nations' modernisation and convinced in the key role of cultural heritage in this process, Yovsēpʻean launched himself into an intensive study of miniature painting. His first work on the subject was published in the Tbilisi-based Armenian journal *Lumay* under the title "The Art of Miniature Painting among the Armenians" (Yovsēpʻean 1902, 194-200). While trying to determine the origins and development of Armenian manuscript illustration, Yovsēpʻean names this field *terra incognita*. He stresses that the study of manuscripts should not be disregarded by scholars and continues his narrative with the following words:

The creative spirit of the ancestors is now laying dormant within Armenian people and in (their) church. But it is possible to revive it, if we start to study the ancient art and make it accessible for educated society, and if we follow the churches to be constructed and reconstructed. The uniqueness and independence of our church must be expressed in its architecture and in art in general.[39]

37 For Russia's tolerable attitude towards the Armenian catholicossate for the sake of its foreign politics, see: Werth 2006, 203-17.

38 For biographical and bibliographical references, as well as citations from his thoughts, see the commemorative collection of the *Ējmiacin Monthly* (volume 6, 1962) dedicated to the tenth anniversary of Garegin Yovsēpʻean's death. See also: Ghazaryan 1979, 34-45.

39 Yovsēpʻean 1902, 195. It is perhaps reasonable to assume that this short quotation concerning the necessity of (re)constructing Armenian churches alludes to the newly appeared Russian cathedrals and churches in the Caucasus. This could give birth to zealous feelings in Yovsēpʻean, as a fervent protector of native church traditions.

In the same article, Yovsēpʿean speaks about Armenian-Byzantine artistic interactions, dating the origins of this 'alliance' to the sixth, rather than the tenth-eleventh century, as was earlier proposed and adopted by Russian scholarship. Moreover, when speaking about Byzantine miniature painting, Yovsēpʿean did not fail to mention that it was under the reign of the 'Armenian (Macedonian) dynasty' (apparently hinting at the origin of Emperor Basil I specifically, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty) that Christian manuscript illumination had reached its apogee in Byzantium. Concerning 'the golden age' of Armenian miniature painting, he emphasised the importance of manuscripts created in the Kingdom of Cilicia in the twelfth-fourteenth centuries, which, in the author's opinion, "could compete with the same kind arts of all contemporary nations" (Yovsēpʿean 1902, 198). Returning to the necessity of researching miniature painting, Yovsēpʿean writes:

> The large field of [miniature painting] needs to be studied, for it is related to the glory of our ancestors and to the conscious advancement of (our) church. This new beginning of spiritual (intellectual) life and civilization must then be expected from the Mother See (of Ējmiacin), if the Armenian people want to nourish their land with love and make it capable of producing fruit. (198-9)

Yovsēpʿean's vision regarding Armenia's modernisation and development was formed around the Armenian Apostolic church and its historical centre of Ējmiacin. Although not entirely ignoring the pre-medieval period, nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectuals viewed Christianity as fundamentally shaping the Armenians, differentiating from their neighbours and unifying them as one nation. This approach required a demonstration of continuity, something that was largely present in Yovsēpʿean's works. The scholar achieved this by comparing various motifs of medieval illustrated manuscripts with those found in carpets and tombstones produced long after the Middle Ages, in an effort to provide material support to his thesis.

In his studies, Yovsēpʿean did not bypass the question of the origins of Armenian art, which he located in the East. As we saw above, also the Western and Russian scholarships were interested in the question of their own arts' origins, whereas Yovsēpʿean had this same approach for 'his own', i.e. Armenian art. Most likely because in Western scholarship Byzantium was viewed as 'the East', the Armenian scholar found it expedient to explain what he meant by the notion of 'Eastern art': "By saying Eastern, we understand Persia, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Assyria" (Yovsēpʿean 1910, 250). From his narratives it becomes clear that he viewed the formation of Byzantine art as having been under a strong influence of those Eastern arts.[40] At first sight, this approach recalls the theory developed by Strzygowski. Yet, contrary to the Austrian scholar, Yovsēpʿean's studies were clearly aimed at representing Armenia as one of the ancient representatives of Eastern art rather than a recipient of those traditions, and one that had long-standing contacts with equally important Persian and Mesopotamian cultures. Additionally, unlike Strzygowski's morphological and anti-philological methods, Yovsēpʿean's art history was essentially based on literary sources, colophons, and inscriptions, which became a solid factor for placing medieval Armenian miniature painting within a distinct Armenian historical context.

Yovsēpʿean was among the first scholars to research miniature portraits of historical individuals and kings, who were considered to be of particular importance in demonstrating to the Armenians their 'glorious ancestors'.[41] This interest in royal images was also shared by his contemporary Mesrop Tēr-Movsisean (1865-1939), another representative of Ējmiacin,

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40 See, for example: Yovsēpʿean 1910, 252, 257.

41 The praise of the 'ancestors' heritage' continued to play a central role also later, when Yovsēpʿean moved to the USA as the primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian church (1938) and then to Lebanon as the Catholicos of Cilicia (1943). Although the world had long changed since the time when he first started to study the native heritage, the national awakening to it, which started in the previous century, remained somewhat unaccomplished for the Armenians. The consequences of the Genocide and the sovietization of Eastern Armenia gradually built up a barrier between Eastern and Western Armenians, who were by this point spread all over the world. This new reality kept alive the dreams of the national state, and Yovsēpʿean did not cease to study Armenian artworks, evaluating them as important identity-markers. In his *Towards Light and Life* (Antilias, 1947), Yovsēpʿean came again to this issue stressing that the heritage preserved in medieval Armenian manuscripts put the Armenians among the most civilised nations. For relevant citations, see: Kʿolanǰyan 1962, 26; Grigoryan 2011b, 192.

whose name is much less well-known.[42] Despite the rather unfriendly relationship between these two pioneers of Armenian manuscript studies, both had a familiar, patriotic attitude towards their native heritage.[43]

Inspired by the Viennese Mekhitarists' work, Mesrop Magistros (as Tēr-Movsisean often signed) initiated an extraordinary undertaking to prepare a catalogue of all Armenian manuscripts. What should only have been a work of several years would eventually last his whole life, and still, the catalogue was never completed.[44] While working on this project, he intensively published on illustrated manuscripts, which he came across in Ējmiacin and during his many travels abroad (Istanbul, Jerusalem, Cairo, Rome, Paris, London, Oxford, Venice, etc.). Unlike Yovsēpʻean, Tēr-Movsisean did not raise the question of the origins of Armenian miniature painting, but satisfied his reader with descriptions of miniatures, often accompanied with patriotic remarks about their medieval commissioners.

The study of medieval Armenian miniatures was however not only concentrated in religious centres. Many references to this field are to be found in the *Anahit* (established in 1898, Paris) and *Gełaruest* (Fine Arts) (established in 1908, Tbilisi) periodicals. In the first volume of *Gełaruest*, an article by the editor, Garegin Lewonean, on miniature painting is titled "an attempt of research" (Lewonean 1908a, 1908b, 1909, 1911). Here, Lewonean writes that when one speaks of Armenian art, the architecture of ancient and medieval periods comes to mind, rather than the art of manuscripts. The author then recalls his journey to the Imperial Library of Saint Petersburg in Autumn 1902, during which he met the aged Vladimir Stasov. The latter encouraged Lewonean to study miniature painting and criticised the Armenians for being indifferent to their own art, whereas "Ējmiacin, Jerusalem and Venice are unlimited sources for a scholar" (Lewonean 1908a, 25).

Lewonean's research aims, as shown in the pages of *Gełaruest*, were focused on creating delineating parameters of a national art that would differentiate the Armenians from the other peoples and contribute to the shaping of their national identity. Following Strzygowski and Yovsēpʻean, Lewonean classified the periods of Armenian miniature painting and illustrated their general characteristics. At the same time, he remained faithful to the spirit of the ongoing approach that represented the cultural heritage from a thoroughly national point of view. For him, even if early Armenian miniaturists could have used some 'foreign' elements, the traditions of Armenian manuscript illumination at its apex (a process whose beginning he placed in the eleventh century) was entirely free from non-Armenian patterns, since these masters, who were well-skilled in what Lewonean calls "national independent style", depicted "Armenian faces, Armenian architectural buildings, and Armenian cross(es)" (Lewonean 1911, 27-8). As for Western influences observed in the manuscripts produced in Armenian Cilicia, Lewonean held that these influences

> should not nonetheless depreciate (Cilician) miniaturists, given that they might have learned their art from western masters, or they might have even been of foreign origin. (Lewonean 1911, 28)

This brief overview of the approach adopted by scholars of Armenian origin demonstrates that the field of miniature painting was regarded as a source for (re)constructing their national history and identity. Written in Armenian and for the Armenians, these studies strove to revive the 'glorious' memories of ancestors, seeking both continuity and a new beginning, which would lead to the creation of a future Armenian state.

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42 Tēr-Movsisean 1907, 200-4; Tēr-Movsisean 1910a, 332-41; Tēr-Movsisean 1910b, 5-32; Tēr-Movsisean 1911, 683-7.

43 On Tēr-Movsisean's relationship with Garegin Yovsēpʻean and certain disagreements between the Ējmiacin clerics, see: Ter-Vardanian 1999, 14.

44 The never before published catalogue, including the descriptions of more than 23,000 manuscripts, is now kept in Matenadaran. For this project and the biography of Tēr-Movsisean, see: Ter-Vardanian 1999, 69-83.

6 Conclusions

Although this essay mainly focused on manuscript illustration, certain observations and conclusions drawn are applicable also to other artistic media. Most early scholars who approached the subject integrated miniature painting within a broader project whose aim was to locate the origins of Armenian art and to trace its relationship with modernity. While keeping this in mind, the main endeavour of this paper has been to trace the main concepts that characterised the works of different scholars and bring them together in an effort to understand the divergent contexts in which the early study of Armenian miniature painting emerged in different parts of Europe, Russia and by scholars of Armenian origin.

In the pursuit of homogeneous Orthodoxy, which was needed to secure a peaceful, multi-confessional coexistence in the Russian Empire, Russian scholarship of the 1880s characterised Armenian miniature painting as having Byzantine style and images. This was important also because Byzantium was seen as the predecessor of what was called 'Russian national art'. The theory developed by Strzygowski had very different ideological basis and interests. His efforts were aimed at emphasising the Syrian influences revealed by Armenian miniature art, as Austrian scholar was at pains to demonstrate the common origins of pan-Christian art in general. Over a few decades, Strzygowski widened the geography of his Orient-centred approach and placed the origins of Armenian manuscript illumination within the context of ancient Iranian and Mesopotamian traditions, making it one of the transitional points that connected Ancient Iran with the Christian West. In difference to these, the French scholarship mainly adopted a theory according to which the 'authentic' art of medieval Armenia played a determining role in the formation of Western art, which was seeking renewal and renaissance through the revalorization of the Oriental civilisations.

Compared to the European approaches outlined above, many scholars of Armenian origin both shared some of their concerns in the search of 'origins', and developed some unique explanatory paradigms. They emphasised the Armenianness of Armenian miniature painting that had been largely neglected in the theories proposed by Russian, German-speaking, and French scholarship, valorizing it for what it was, rather than for what it represented as a transmitter of Byzantine and Eastern art-forms to Western Europe and Russia. As a result, the Armenian intellectuals explored the heritage of their ancestors from a uniquely Armenian point of view, possibly avoiding comparative contexts with other cultures and promoting the idea of a 'pure' and unchanging art. Such an approach, they believed, would contribute to the rise of a national consciousness and would pave the way for Armenia's future development.

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Illuminating an Armenian Set of Manuscripts
A Forgotten Treasure in the Layard Collection

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Abstract   In 1902 Enid Layard bequeathed four illuminated Armenian manuscripts, belonging to her late husband, to the Armenian Mekhitarist College of Venice and to the Correr Museum. This survey retraces the manuscripts' earlier provenance and their arrival in the Venetian collections. Austen Henry Layard's private papers and publications attest to a close relationship with the Armenian community, both in Constantinople and Venice. The aim of this paper is not only to show more fully the early reception of Armenian artworks in a Western context, but also to present a first study of these manuscripts by providing some comparisons.

Summary   1. Souvenirs d'Orient. – 2 Early Contacts with Armenia. – 3 A Sign of Respect and Gratitude. – 4 The Bequest. – 5 Conclusion – 6 Analysing Layard's Armenian Manuscripts. – 6.1 The Four Gospels in the Library of the Correr Museum. – 6.2 The Psalter in the Library of Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus. – 6.3 The Four Gospels in the Library of the Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus.

Keywords   Henry Layard. History of Collecting. Provenance. 19th century. Bequests and donations.

The study of provenance has now become an essential tool for establishing authenticity, quality and legality of artworks, yet it represents "an alternative way of narrating a history of art" (Feigenbaum, Reist 2012, viii). In this framework, I would like to conduct my survey of four illuminated Armenian codices, which once belonged to the Layard collection.

Armenian manuscripts possess in themselves a wonderful feature that records ownership that is the *yišatakarank'* – namely, the colophon. It furnishes an abundance of details on the history of the codex until its change of use, at the time at which it became a mere object of art and retained no more its original devotional function. These manuscripts were in essence pledges for the salvation of the donors. Consequently, owners had their names recorded into the colophon in testimony of their pious act, and so that those who might later use these codices could recall them in the prayers. Provenance and notably the "social life of provenance", as Anne Higonnet has remarked, become a valuable tool for investigating the history of these manuscripts. For that purpose, this paper will try to fill the hiatus, the gap between the origin and the actual collocation of these four manuscripts. After all,

In the gap are hidden the dramas of global power dynamics, military conquest, massive movements of wealth from one continent to another, and the tragedies of racism. (Higonnet 2012, 197)

One aspect of this article, therefore, aims at investigating why those manuscripts are in Venice, and how they entered the Layard collection, by delving into Henry and Enid Layard's private papers. An examination of how such artefacts were displayed and used enables us to gain a better understanding of the meaning of this part of the collection to both its owner and his contemporaries. I also provide a first, though not exhaustive, analysis of these manuscripts.

1   Souvenirs d'Orient

Since February 1902 the catalogue of the Correr Museum's Library counts among its innumerable treasures an Armenian illuminated Gospel of early seventeenth century.[1] The presence of this artefact should come as no surprise given the close and constant relationship that Venice had entertained with the Armenian community, due

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[1]   The manuscript corresponds to Inv. No. PD 10a. This is not the only Armenian specimen possessed by the Library; there is also another manuscript, bequeathed by Emmanuele A. Cicogna in 1852. See Uluhogian 2010, 383, 401-3.

to the establishment of a Mekhitarist Convent on the island of Saint Lazarus. Nonetheless, as its provenance will show, the Convent was only the last stage of its ultimate history. The Gospel, in fact, came from the collection of the British archaeologist and diplomat, Sir Austen Henry Layard (Paris, 1817-London, 1894), who, in 1881, had decided to make his abode in Venice.[2] Layard had gathered the vast majority of his collection at Ca' Cappello. Not only did the palace display Assyrian bas-reliefs, Italian Old Masters, and Flemish tapestries, but the building itself reflected the collection; together, the collection and its setting served to enhance the reputation of the well-known Englishman.

In the terms of his will, Layard's painting collection was destined to the National Gallery of London, of which he had been a Trustee for almost thirty years (1866-94); the reminder of the collection would pass into the hands of his wife, Lady Enid Layard (London, 1843-Venice, 1912).[3] Among Spanish wooden sculpture, old Venetian glass and Caucasian rugs, the collection also included four Armenian manuscripts. Layard was not a bibliophile, and appears more simply as a collector of curiosities in this field. It is in this light, therefore, that his collection of manuscripts and old books ought properly to be seen.[4] The evidence that emerges in his private correspondence further helps underpin this point. In a letter addressed to the well-known Italian art critic Giovanni Morelli (Verona, 1816-Milan, 1891), Layard admitted that he had exchanged "quelques-unes de mes bibles auxquelles je n'attachais pas de grand valeur",[5] for the purchase of an old tapestry through the dealer Michelangelo Guggenheim.[6] Yet, the question remains as to how these Armenian manuscripts entered his collection.

2 Early Contacts with Armenia

In his wanderings in pursuit of cuneiform inscriptions, Layard had extensively explored the Southern Caucasus, in company of his assistant Hormuzd Rassam (Mosul, 1826-unknown, 1910) (cf. Wright 2004). *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert,* published in 1853, and subsequently, in 1867, *Nineveh and Babylon,* reveal Layard's early curiosity and relish for "eastern Armenia and Kurdistan, both on account of the novelty of part of the country in a geographical point of view, and its political interest" (Layard 1853, 4-5). By means of those expeditions, he could experience how "enterprising and industrious people" (Layard 1867, 206) Armenians were, their social organization and their school system. Layard's attention chiefly lingered over the district of Lake Van, of which he provides descriptions of its beautiful scenery and "its numerous remarkable monuments of antiquity".[7] Notably, the Fortress, the Church of Akdamar and the Monastery of Varag fascinated him. Inspections of "early Christian ruins of Armenia" allowed him to recognise a "connection between Eastern and Western architecture" (Layard 1853, 33), and led him to recommend accurate studies on the matter, as well as the Monastery of Varzahan, that reminded him of certain Gothic masonry and decoration. Despite those direct surveys, it appears that Layard hardly saw any Armenian manuscripts during this time, since most of the libraries he visited had been ransacked. Nonetheless, at a later stage, he had the chance to examine several "valuable MSS with their splendid bindings set with precious stones",[8] as Lady Layard penned in her journal.

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2 For a general account on Layard, see Parry 2004. On his painting collection, see Penny 2004. Forthcoming studies on his collections are due.

3 London, British Library (hereafter BL), Layard Papers, Vol. XLVIII, Add MS 58196, fols. 36-37: Last Will and Testament of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Austen Layard, 2 August 1892.

4 Layard possessed several first editions of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries books; see Layard 1904.

5 London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI, Add MS 38966, f. 319: Letter A.H. Layard to G. Morelli, 26 November 1880.

6 The tapestry, presently untraced, was considered a Flemish XV century specimen, later restored by Eraclito Gentili. See London, National Gallery Archive, NG7/292/13(vii)(e): Payment Agreement, December 1880. For a full account on the Venetian art dealer Michelangelo Guggenheim, see Martignon 2015.

7 Layard 1853, 336. His interest for Armenian culture permeates in his notebooks as well. See London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CLIII, Add MS 39083, fols. 22, 46-8.

8 Lady Layard's Journals are kept in London in the repositories of the British Library, Layard Papers, Add MSS 46153 – 46170. It exists a digitalised version – to which we will refer throughout the paper – provided by the Armstrong Browning

This precocious interest Layard nurtured for Armenia and its culture developed, during his ambassadorial appointment at the Sublime Porte (1877-80, see fig. 1), into a concrete engagement both at a political and diplomatic level. Needless to say, Layard was well aware that the Ottoman Empire should

> Represent a population composed of heterogeneous races and sects, a Society made up of a complication of religious interests, an aggregate of incompatible elements, which, though they may be reconciled can never be moulded into an homogeneous whole.[9]

Several volumes of general correspondence and dispatches between Layard and diplomats across Europe chart the issues he dealt with whilst ambassador, as well as his advocacy for an anti-Russian policy. Letters relating to the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78) highlight tensions and the embittered conditions of the Christian communities.

In fact, the *Armenian question* had become exceedingly urgent and was worthy of serious and immediate consideration. In Layard's own terms, it

> Is destined, if I am not mistaken, to have no inconsiderable influence on the future of the Ottoman Empire in Asia. The interest I felt in it arose both out of sympathy for the people as an oppressed and suffering race, and from a personal knowledge of them and of their country acquired during my travels in early life in that district chiefly inhabited by them in the Sultan's Asiatic Territories which was little known at that time in England. Travellers in Asia Minor had occasionally mentioned them in their books […] I was, I believe, the first

to penetrate in these districts and published a description of them in my work. (Kuneralp 2009, 439)

Therefore, in these years, Layard looked after minor religious communities, such as the Protestant Community,[10] and strove for their recognition. For this purpose, he was acquainted with the heads of all these parties, and especially he "was in constant and intimate communication" with the Patriarch of the Armenian Church, Nerses Varjabedian (Constantinople, 1837-1884), whom he considered "a learned and very intelligent priest"[11] (fig. 2). He had also supported the Protestant Armenian Community of Constantinople in the matter of Constitution – "a footing of equality with other Christian bodies in th[e] Empire"[12] – by having it sanctioned by the Turkish Government.

It is no accident that Layard had looked favourably on the reforms of the Armenian provinces proposed by the Treaty of San Stefano (3 March 1878, Art. XVI).[13] However, in the immediate aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War, he could but write:

> Tout ce qui s'est passé pendant la domination Turque n'est absolument rien en comparaison avec l'était des choses actuel. Les Bulgares, sous la protection de leurs libérateurs, ayant à peu près exterminé les malheureux Musulmans, se dirigent maintenant sur les Grecs, les Catholique et les Juifs. C'est enfin une persécution générale.[14]

Turkish misbehaviour towards the Christians was unfortunately due to rise. And further dramatic reports, on the conditions of some remote Armenian provinces, reached him through Hor-

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Library, Baylor University, Texas, USA. Lady Layard's Journal, Jerusalem, 20 September 1879. URL http://pops.baylor.edu/layard/xml.php?fn=18790920.xml&h= (2018-06-12)

9   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fol. 46: Remarks concerning representation in the Turkish Parliament, 24 March 1877.

10   See London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fols. 214, 219, 222; fols. 263-264: Protestant Armenian Community of Constantinople thanks for assistance to A.H. Layard, Constantinople, 1 June 1880; Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fols. 59-65.

11   Kuneralp 2009, 443. See also, London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fol. 55: 1874.

12   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fol. 264: Protestant Armenian Community of Constantinople to A.H. Layard, Constantinople, 1 June 1880.

13   On this topic, see Nalbandian 1963, 27; Soderini 2010. All the documents related to the Treaty and its development are kept in London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fols. 77-195.

14   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI, Add MS 38966, fol. 275*v*: Letter A.H. Layard to G. Morelli, British Embassy, Constantinople, 22 March 1878.

Figure 1. Unknown photographer, The British Embassy at Pera. Undated. Postcard, 10 × 13 cm. © The Levantine Heritage Foundation

muzd Rassam and Reverend George C. Knapp, an American Missionary in Bitlis.[15] Despite the fact that Layard adhered to no orthodox belief, but in an attempt to sooth the situation, he provided both economical support and assistance by devising measures for the protection of the Christian communities. "His argument to the Foreign Office was that two great principles were at stake, firstly religious liberty and secondly the rights of foreigners under the agreements known as the Capitulations" (Waterfield 1963, 437). Furthermore, he took an active role in the educational programs, supervising the creation of a scholastic program for the "Real Schule Ira-

gan Varjaran".[16] As he had already pointed out, improving education would "ultimately tend to raise their political, as well as their social, position" (Layard 1853, 404). Lady Enid, in turn, was committed to charitable activities, especially to the Kavak Hospital and "[presida] une petite société des dames qui s'occupent nuit et jour, faisant des vêtements des draps de lit, des bandages etc.",[17] named "Ladies' Association for the relief of Turkish sick and wounded fugitives from the seat of war".[18] Evidence of this support can be found in one of the additional manuscripts of the Layard papers, held at the British Library, which retains the "Liste des familles Israélites

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15   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XCIV, Add MS 39024, fols. 89-92: Letter H. Rassam to A.H. Layard, Mosul, 22 December 1878; fols. 93-96: Letter G.C. Knapp to H. Rassam, Bitlis, 2 September 1878; fols. 245-249: Letter H. Rassam to A.H. Layard, Mosul, 12 January 1879.

16   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CCVIII, Add MS 39138, fol. 94: Letter T. Tersian to A.H. Layard, 20 August 1878; and fol. 126: Letter G. Infiedjian to A.H. Layard, 24 December 1878.

17   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XXXVI, Add MS 38966, fols. 270*v*-271*r*: Letter A.H. Layard to G. Morelli, British Embassy, Constantinople, 7 September 1877.

18   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XLVIII, Add MS 58196, fol. 30: Appeal, 19 September 1877. See also Vol. CXXIV, Add MS 39054, fols. 95, 96; fols. 128-137: photographs of wounded people; fol. 138: sample of the Scutari infirmary; fol. 196-202: Project on the establishment of Refugee in Asia Minor; fols. 248-251: Project of resettlement of Turkish Refugees in Asia Minor, 15 December 1879; fols. 252-259: Project of resettlement of Turkish Refugees in Asia Minor, 14 November 1878. For a detailed account on these facts, cf. Lady Layard's Journal.

Figure 2. The photograph shows, according to Lady Layard's journal (but without allowing us to distinguish between the five standing figures) Austen Henry Layard, Lady Layard and their niece Alice Du Cane, Mr Nicholson, Mr Noel Temple Moore, the Armenian Patriarch, Mr Salami, Sir Arthur Sandison, on 20 September 1879 on the roof of the Armenian Convent in Jerusalem. © The Levantine Heritage Foundation

réfugiées à Philippolis", a note of other refugees at Konstchouk and Sophia, and a "Collecte de vêtements en faveur des émigrés de Bulgarie faite à Constantinople par les Israelites".[19]

3   A Sign of Respect and Gratitude

Layard's *good offices* were even known to the Prefect of the Congregation for Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni (Paliano, 1816-Rome, 1892). In a letter of thanks, the Cardinal acknowledged Layard's unflagging support "in difesa degli oppressi", and exhorted him in sparing no effort to wield his power in favour of the "sventurati cattolici orientali di tutti

i riti".[20] Nevertheless, Layard's reports of Christian massacres of Turks, along with his heated and outspoken dispatches exacerbated his relationships with the British Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone (Liverpool, 1809-Hawarden Castle, 1898). Hence, in June 1880, Layard was recalled from Constantinople.[21]

It is possible, however, that his benevolent attitude towards the Christian communities and the high regard in which he was held by the Christian authorities, resulted in a gift to him of the four illuminated Armenian manuscripts. There is no definitive record of when they entered the collection that Layard had been accruing since the late 1850s, nor regarding their provenance, but, according to Lady Enid, "he must have got

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19   See London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. CXXV, Add MS 39055, fols. 50-54.

20   London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XC, Add MS 39020, fol. 54: Letter Card. G. Simeoni to A.H. Layard, 7 May 1878. Layard and Simeoni were acquainted since 1875 ca, see London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. LXXX, Add MS 39010, fol. 370: Letter G. Simeoni to A.H. Layard, Rome, 9 December 1876. Layard's influence, and consequently that of the British Government, on the Sultan Abdul Hamid II was so apparent that, after the cession of Cyprus, Layard was awarded the GCB in June 1878.

21   In Layard's own words: "Considering the enemies I have in the Cabinet, who will never forgive me for being a real liberal and sympathising with Musulmans [*sic*] as well as Christians when exposed to oppression and [harm], a personal appeal could be fruitless". Oxford, Bodleian Library, Gregory Papers, Dep. d. 970, fol. 117: A.H. Layard to W.H. Gregory, Rome, 11 December 1880.

[them] while at Constantinople".[22] Indeed, they were to appear at the Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Art and Applied Art in Venice in September 1881.[23]

For this occasion, Sir Henry had also lent other objects still less known to the Venetian public, such as several archaeological objects, either from Nineveh or Samos, two Spanish armours, and a Hispano-Moresque plate.[24] The choice seems by no means to have been accidental. Layard envisaged re-establishing his public persona; therefore, he had carefully combined antiquities that had contributed to his fame with others of less acknowledged merits. But Venice, where he had decided to settle since early 1881, was exempt from "English snobberies" (Parry 2004). Effectively, the exhibition proved to be successful and Layard's collection garnered great attention. After a short while, Layard received a request from the Director of the State Archive, Bartolomeo Cecchetti (Venice, 1838-Rome, 1889), to donate specimens akin to those lent to the exhibition for scholarly purposes.[25] The manuscripts, too, had captivated the attention of the Armenian Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus, with whom the Layards appear to have been well acquainted.[26]

It should be thus unsurprising that, in May 1885, Layard resolved to sit for a portrait with one of these codices (fig. 3).[27]

The portrait, made by a young and little-known artist named Charles Vigor, depicts Sir Henry in the foreground of a generic interior with a greyish wall, seated in a red velvet, wooden armchair, and holding on his lap an open codex, which I have identified as one of his Four Gospels (now at the Library of the Armenian Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus, inv. 1591), open on the Gospel of Luke (fig. 4).[28] The brightness and exuberance of the pages of the manuscript are counterbalanced by the solemnity of this "Victorian worthy of later years".[29] Ironically, Layard wrote to his friend Elizabeth Rigby, wife of the late Sir Charles L. Eastlake (Norwich, 1809-London, 1893):

I have been sitting for my portrait to a young artist, Mr Vigor, who has produced what is genuinely considered a very good likeness. I can only say that I look so virtuous, benevolent and pious that it only requires that an aureola should be put round my head to make me a perfect Saint![30]

Despite Lady Eastlake's reply, "I fear I sh[oul]d not recognize it! or rather you",[31] essential aspects of Layard's late diplomatic career, in this

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22 Lady Layard's Journal, Ca' Cappello, Venice, 26 February 1902. URL http://pops.baylor.edu/layard/xml.php?fn=19020226.xml&h (2018-06-12).

23 The Exhibition was held to coincide with the meeting in Venice of the *Third International Geographical Congress*, to which Layard participated as delegate for England, India, and colonies. See the articles appeared in the *Illustrazione Italiana*, 1881, 38, 190; and in the *Gazzetta di Venezia*, 27 September 1881, 2: *Esposizione d'arte antica e moderna e d'arte applicata all'industria*. Cf. the articles published between 27 August and 19 October 1881.

24 See Esposizione d'arte antica e moderna 1881, room I, nos. 25, 3; room II, nos. 81-2, 94-7, 118, 120, 133.

25 For a full account of the archaeological bequest that Layard made to the Venice State Archive, see Ermidoro 2018.

26 Lady Layard's journals chart many visits to the island of Saint Lazarus.

27 Charles Vigor, *Portrait of Austen Henry Layard*. 1885. Oil on canvas, 120.5 × 80.5 cm. London, British Museum, 1968,0518.1 On Charles Vigor there is little information, he was active in London between 1882 and 1907 and if one considers that among the portraits painted by Vigor in that same 1885, there were those of Lady Layard (BM, 2006,0307.1), General Layard, Edward Layard, Alexander Malcolm, Antonio Cortelazzo and Lord Hammond, it can be fairly said that Layard played the role of Maecenas with him. With the exception of the latter portrait, the rest were displayed in Layards' London house, at 1 Queen Anne, and by terms of Sir Henry's will passed to Major Arthur Layard in 1912, and are presently untraced.

28 Charles Vigor was a British painter, distinctly of portraits and figurative subjects. He was active between 1881 and 1917. Among the principal venues where he exhibited his works are the Manchester Art Gallery (1888), the Grosvenor Gallery (1889), and the Royal Academy (1894). In 1912, Queen Alexandra bought one of his paintings entitled *A Golden Stream*; see *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1912.

29 Curtis, Reade 1995, 221.

30 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland (hereafter only NLS), John Murray Archive, MS.42336, fol. 94*v*: Letter A.H. Layard to E. Eastlake (née Rigby), Ca' Cappello, San Polo, Venice, 1 July 1885. On Lady Eastlake, see Sheldon 2009, 1-27; Avery-Quash, Sheldon 2011, 50-80.

31 Edinburgh, NLS, John Murray Archive, MS.42171: Letter E. Eastlake (née Rigby) to A.H. Layard, 7 FitzRoy Square, 12 July 1885. Quoted in Sheldon 2009, 547.
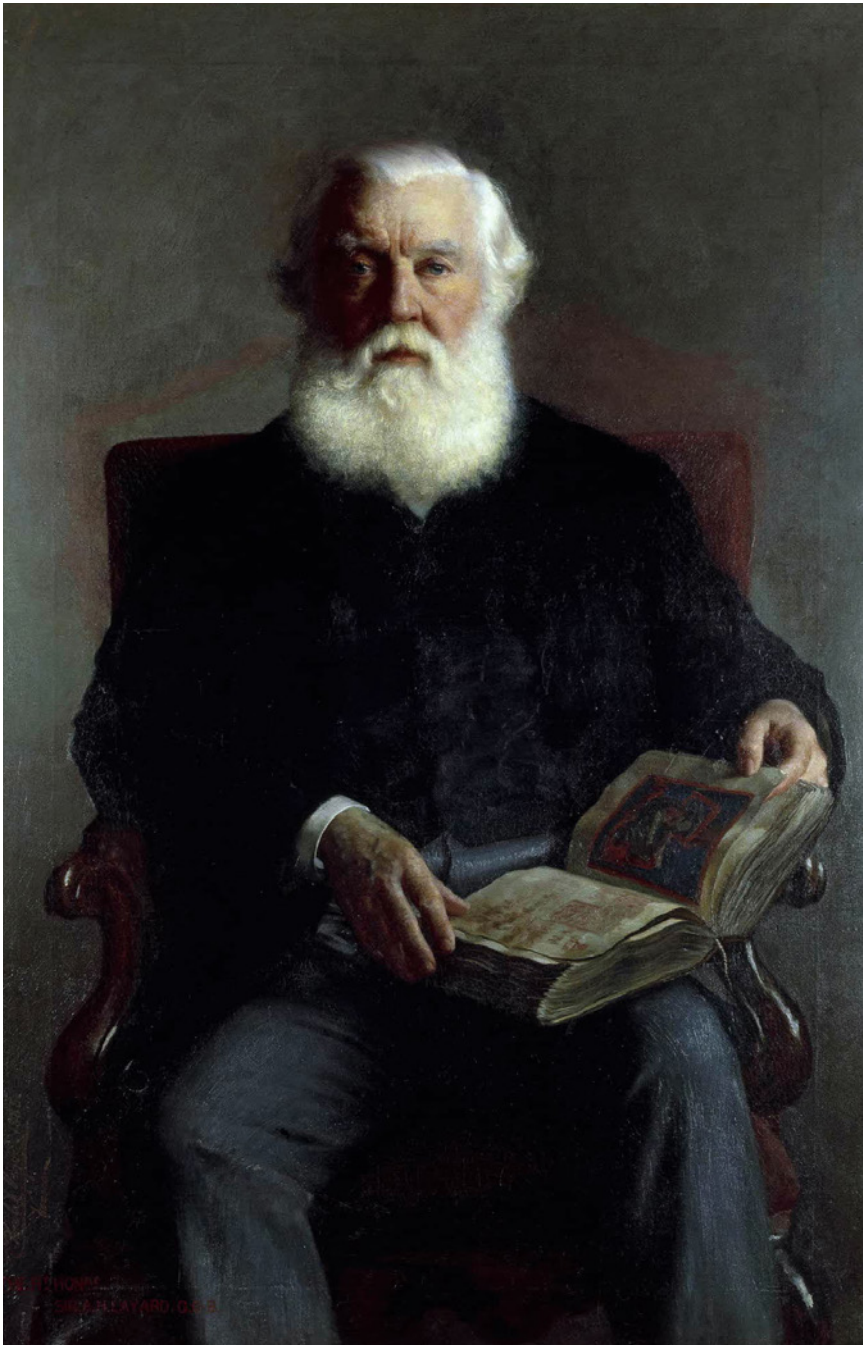
Figure 3. Charles Vigor, *Portrait of Austen Henry Layard*. 1885. Oil on canvas, 120.5 × 80.5 cm. London, British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum

portrait, come alive before one's very eyes. Yet paradoxically Layard, "the man who unintentionally had proved the Bible true" through his discovery of Nineveh, again recurred to a hint of early Christianity to restate his image.[32]

His joking aside, Layard was fairly proud of the result of portrait, as appears from his correspondence with Sir William H. Gregory (Dublin Castle, 1816-London, 1892), another dear friend and fellow Trustee of the National Gallery.[33] In

32   In 1886 Layard was elected President of the Society of Biblical Archaeology. London, BL, Layard Papers, Vol. XVI, Add MS 58164, fol. 68: W.H. Rylands to A.H. Layard, 12 January 1886.

33   On William Henry Gregory, see Falkiner 2004.

Figure 4. Unknown miniaturist, *Portrait of St. Luke*. 1469. Paper, 255 × 180 mm, fol. 134*v*. Venice, Mekhitarist Library. 2018. ©
Biblioteca dei Padri Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro

it, Layard happily asserted that the portrait "is certainly clever and is said to be like".[34] By December of that same year, the painting was sent to 1 Queen Anne Street, the Layards London house, and there hung.

4 The Bequest

Some months following Sir Henry's death (5 July 1894), the Armenian Father Ghewond Ališan (Constantinople, 1820-Venice, 1901), to whom the codices had already been made available for study, dared requesting them for the Mekhitarist library.

> Illustrissima Signora,
> Giacché ha piaciuto a Lei, secondo mi riferirono le Sig.ne Holas, che o personalmente o per scritto, io chiarisca la mia idea intorno i manoscritti Armeni del compianto Sir H. L., prendo la libertà di esporla. Quanto mi riccordo [sic] erano quat[t]ro i Manoscritti armeni, tutti libri di chiesa, comunissimi, di conservazione assai buona, di esecuzione mediocre. Forse vi si troveranno le mie note che in schede separate ho messo in ciascheduno.
>
> Supposto che non siano rigorosamente destinati pel Museo Britannico, (il quale avendo mezzi forti ci ha rapito tanti e tanti altri Manoscritti), e che Lei, Signora, potesse disporne, io desidererei per memoria della lunga ed onorevole amicizia del nobile Possessore che ci ha mostrata e a me e alla mia nipote (Stavrides), di collocare i detti Man[oscrit]ti fra gli nostri di S. Lazzaro, e perpetuare in pari tempo la sua e la di Lei compiacenza. Tutto però se non ci sia nessuna difficoltà, e che aggredisca [sic] a Lei, Signora, al cui resto con rispetto,
> Umil. Servo
> P. Leon M. Alishan Mekit [35]

It is apparent that, at this time, Lady Layard, who was still busy reordering her husband's papers, did not know how to dispose them and no evidence of a reply has come to light yet.[36] Notwithstanding, the gift was then granted, though partly. In February 1902 Lady Layard resolved to present to the Armenian Mekhitarist College of Venice, Moorat Raphael, located at Palazzo Zenobio, one Psalter (inv. 1583), Four Gospels (inv. 1591), and a third manuscript of which no current record can be found. The fourth codex, instead, was destined for the Correr Museum at Michelangelo Guggenheim's suggestion (fig. 5).[37]

Lady Layard, in fact, had chosen to donate the manuscripts, not only "where they are understood & appreciated", but also "as a remembrance of [Sir Henry]".[38] No better place than these two institutions can be imagined for these codices that Layard had so much appreciated.

5 Conclusion

The turning point in the history and meaning of these manuscripts, retraced here, illustrates a change both in attitude and collecting. Notably, it contributes to explaining the rise of interest in this kind of artefact, not only in Europe, but also throughout United States, especially if we consider figures like John Pierpont Morgan (who started collecting this type of manuscript about 1917), Chester Beatty (ante 1920), Calouste Gulbenkian (1926-35), Edgar Johnson Goodspeed (1927ca), and Henry Walters (by 1931). The manuscripts were a remarkable expression of Layard's multifaceted interests and tastes and, no doubt, immensely useful to the recovery of his reputation as a discerning collector and scholar of Eastern topics.

If a collection is to be intended as a dialogue space, as well as self-celebratory, then Layard's decision to be portrayed with one of the latest and most representative pieces in his collection, testi-

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34 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Gregory Papers, Dep. d. 972, fol. 64: A.H. Layard to W.H. Gregory, Ca' Cappello, San Polo, Venice, 16 June 1885.

35 Venice, Library of Mekhitarist of Saint Lazarus: Letter Fr. G. Ališan to E. Layard, 2 November 1894.

36 Lady Layard did not even acknowledge receipt of the letter in her journal.

37 Venice, Archivio Museo Correr (hereafter AMC), Registro Doni, no. 750a. Venice, AMC, no. 51/1902: Minute for the letter of thanks to E. Layard, 28 February 1902; Letter A. Scrinzi to E. Layard, 28 February 1902. On this occasion, Lady Layard also donated four Spanish combs to the Correr Museum, which she believed "interesting for the history of costumes". Lady Layard's Journal, Ca' Cappello, Venice, 26 February 1902. URL `http://pops.baylor.edu/layard/xml.php?fn=19020226.xml&h` (2018-06-12)
See also, AMC, Registro Doni, no. 795. Guggenheim took a great interest in expanding the collections of the Correr Museum, to which he donated over 350 pieces of textiles, see Moronato 1988.

38 Lady Layard's Journal, Ca' Cappello, Venice, 26 February 1902.
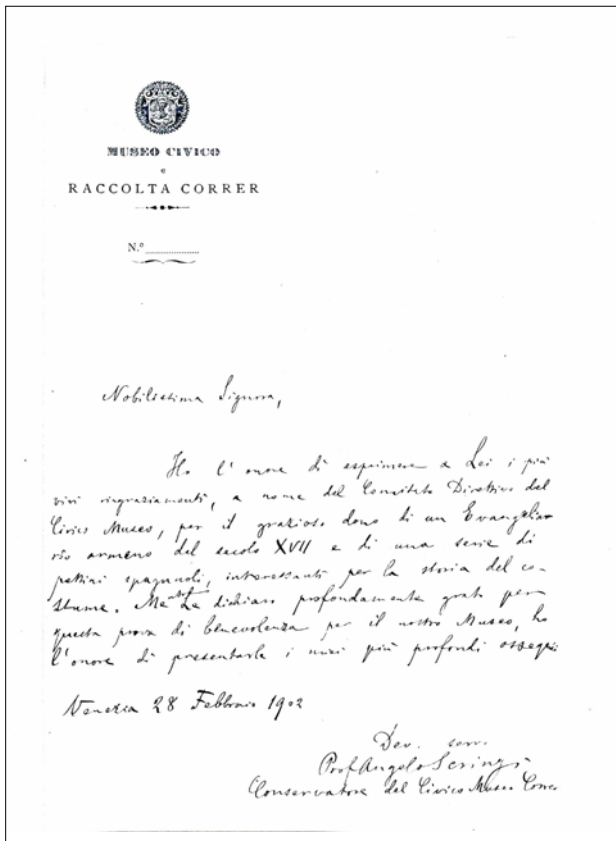

Figure 5. Angelo Scrinzi, Letter to Enid Layard. 28 February 1902. Venice, Library of the Correr Museum. 2018. © Biblioteca Correr - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

fies to his wish to be remembered for his supportive interventions in the Armenian Question.

This study is thus aimed not only at making public a lesser-known part of the Layard collection, but also at renewing scholarly attention to it.

6 Analysing Layard's Armenian Manuscripts

The codices presented here range from 1469 to early seventeenth century and consist of a Psalter and two so-called Four Gospels, each representing a different artistic trend. The information gathered derives mainly from a direct analysis of the manuscripts, combined with the notes of Father Ališan.[39]

6.1 The Four Gospels in the Library of the Correr Museum

This pocket tetra-gospel (inv. no. PD 10a) presents the typical Armenian style binding, in wooden boards covered with blind-stamped brown leather, embellished with a floret border and intertwining motifs. In the centre, there is a cross with floral arms inscribed in a rhombus. The surface of both boards shows the holes left by studs or by a dust jacket, now missing as well as the clasp. The *ex libris* of the Correr Museum and a vignette reminiscent of Lady Layard's donation are glued on the front counter-plate.

There is no evidence either about the copyist or the miniaturist. A handwritten loose note reads: "Four Gospels without date; it seems written at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The first pages of St. Mark and St. Luke are missing, certainly cut for their ornaments, as well as the figures of the four Evangelists".

The text, written in black ink on a compact and polished paper of oriental origin, is arranged on two columns bounded by thin red ink lines. The number of lines varies between 18 (fol. 1*v*) and 24 (fol. 112*r*), depending on the size of the *bolorgir*. The codex, severely mutilated and trimmed, consists of 24 gatherings of varying sizes and is numbered in Armenian letters (fols. 2-24).

The recent foliation, pencilled on the recto of each folio in the upper right corner, numbers 271 folios. Apart from the removal of the incipit of the Gospels of St. Luke and Mark and the full-page portraits of all the evangelists, the Gospel of St. Mark preserves only the chapters from I, 14 to XVI, 8. Further mutilations involve the rear guards, *membranaceus* like the anterior ones. Most folios have water staining and consequently mould damage, causing some brown flecking throughout the manuscript. Due to trimming, all of the pages have lost pieces of decoration in the upper part. Often paint has been transferred from marginal ornaments to the adjacent page (see e.g. fols. 10, 121, 201) and has somewhat faded. Some folios are loose. Despite the common quality of the work and the numerous subtractions, the codex is qualitatively discreet thanks to a profuse ornamentation and its rich palette.

The structure is that of the Byzantine type

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39 A concise analysis of the Correr *Four Gospels* (Inv. No. PD 10a) and the *Saghmosaran* (Inv. No 1583) has been presented for the exhibition *Voglia d'Italia. Il collezionismo internazionale nella Roma del Vittoriano*, held in Rome and curated by Emanuele Pellegrini. See Riva 2017, 360-2. I would like to acknowledge my warmest thanks to Father Hamazasp for having provided me with all the details relating to the manuscripts at San Lazzaro.

Figure 6. Unknown miniaturist, *Xoran, or headpiece, and incipit of St. Matthew's Gospel*. XVII century. Paper, 135 × 105 mm, fol. 10*r*. Venice, Library of the Correr Museum, 2018. © Biblioteca Correr - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

Figure 7. Unknown miniaturist, *Xoran, or headpiece, and incipit of St. John's Gospel*. XVII century. Paper, 135 × 105 mm, fol. 201*r*. Venice, Library of the Correr Museum. 2018. © Biblioteca Correr - Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

of gospel, with the only addition at the end of the text being the pericope of the adulterous woman (fol. 227): Eusebius of Caesarea's epistle to Carpianus (fols. 1*v*-2*r*); four tables of concordances (fols. 3*v*-7*v*); Gospel of Matthew (fols. 8*r*-83*r*); Gospel of Mark (fols. 185*r*-122*r*); index of the Gospel of Luke (fols. 122*v*-123*v*); Gospel of Luke (fols. 124*r*-199*r*); index of the Gospel of John (fol. 199*v*); incomplete Trinitarian doxology, perhaps written by another hand (fol. 200*r*); Gospel of John (fols. 201*r*-227*r*); glosses (fol. 227*v*).

The proemial pages of Matthew (fig. 6) and John (fig. 7) are thus the richest: under the elaborate headpieces, *xoran*, embellished with guilloche plant volutes and crowned with colourful striped birds, the initial letter of each Gospel is formed by the symbol of the Evangelist, engaged in supporting the book. Along the right-

hand margin extends the typical incipient ornament with floral interweaving, for the whole length of the text field. The first lines of the text are ornate and written in gold, blue and red *erkat'agir* – namely, letters of forged iron, a standard script used from the fifth to the thirteenth century. Conversely, the rest of the text is in *bolorgir*, which corresponds to the rounded, minuscule hand. The decoration is then expressed in the initials by the ornithomorphic motifs of each pericope and in the numerous marginalia, sometimes aniconic (see e.g., fols. 51*r*, 77*v*, 188*v*), sometimes figurative (fols. 81*v*, 121*r*, 196*v*). Rubrics are in red, as small secondary initials.

For the structure and the ornamental apparatus of the Eusebian canons, Macler used to compare the Correr Gospel with the Codex Parisinus no. 21 and the MS of Bologna no. 3290.[40] Further

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40 Macler 1913, 593. The parallel with the Bologna manuscript is also sustained by Uluhogian 2010, 400.

stylistic parallels, particularly in the structure of the figures and in the modelling of the faces, can be found in the Hymnal W. 547 (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, see e.g. fol. 7*v*), in the MS Or. 14161 (London, British Library) and in the John Frederick Lewis Oriental MS No. 116 (Philadelphia, Free Library).

These stylistic features, typical of seventeenth century Constantinopolitan scriptoria, anchor the origins of the manuscript more firmly in this context.

6.2 The Psalter in the Library of Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus

With regard to the *Saghmosaran* – namely, an Armenian Psalter – the colophon informs us that the codex was produced at Constantinople during the catholicosate of Melkisetek (1599-1600, inv. no. 1583). It was drafted by the Bishop Lazarus in the Monastery of Saint George, on behalf of a "cultivated person and astronomer", who was also a bibliophile, but whose name had been obliterated "per mala voglia o invidia". Further alterations, though discrete, are due to the preservation of the codex, which shows little colour falls, traces of burnishing of the paper and trimming in the top. It appears to be complete in pages. Altogether the manuscript is well preserved.

The binding, which appears to have been re-backed in modern times, is Moroccan red on cardboard plates, bordered by three gilded frames, stamped as well with the small floral iron cross at the centre of the field. The spine, in brown leather with five ribs, is decorated with golden geometric patterns. The *ex libris* of the Armenian Fathers of Saint Lazarus is glued on the front counter-plate, under which the origin of the gift has been handwritten in ink. The foliation, which corresponds to the same period, is affixed in Arabic numerals by means of a mechanical stamp on the front of each folio, in the bottom right hand corner.

The parchment flyleaves belong to an older manuscript written in *erkat'agir*.

The manuscript, which measures 151x104 mm, is written in black ink on oriental laid paper, thick and yellowish white in colour and contains altogether 320 folios (plus the four unfoliated pa-

per flyleaves). The text is in alternating colours of red, blue and gold. Red only is used for small secondary initials and rubrics.

The codex comprises: letter of Epiphany, bishop of Cyprus (fols. 1*r*-9*r*), the Prayer of the scribes (fols. 9*v*-11*r*), a full-page illumination of King David (fol. 11*v*), canonical psalms (fols. 12*r*-298*v*), apocryphal psalms (fols. 299*r*-300*r*), the Prayer to Manassé, King of Judas (fols. 300*v*-302*v*), the *Magnificat* (fol. 303*r*), the *Benedictus* (fols. 303*v*-305*r*), the *Nunc dimittis* (Canticle of Simeon, fol. 305*v*), antiphon composed by the scribe (fol. 309), prayer of San Nersēs of Glay called the Gracious (fol. 311), the *Gloria*, *Pater nostrum* and *yišatakarank'* (fol. 318).

The *mise en page* is refined and accurate: the text is written in *bolorgir* in one column of 17 lines per page. With the exception of the first folio, which appears incomplete in decoration and has been severely damaged, the others bear rich ornamentation, mainly of floral and geometrical patterns. Emphasis is given to the opening of the sections, that usually displays a larger ornithomorphic or zoomorphic initial; the first three lines alternate gold and red ink, the incipit is further highlighted by the presence of marginalia. These mainly consist of birds, scrolls and flower elements, executed in gold, blue and green. Colours are brilliant and intense, and richness is asserted also by chrysography.

There is just one full-page illumination depicting King David seated on a throne, resting his bare feet on a green pillow (fig. 8). A red frame borders the scene: *the Beloved* is portrayed with white beard and moustache, sporting on his head a crown richly adorned with pearls and gems, surrounded by a golden halo. In his hands he holds a zither, whose end part terminates in a goose shape. He wears a blue robe, above which there is a purple mantle. Above, in the upper right corner, the hand of God appears through round-disk clouds to bless him. Thanks to divine inspiration, King David intones the psalms, which start on the adjacent folio. Another figural illumination appears at fol. 223*v*, in which the prophet Ezekiel is represented sitting on a throne, wearing the robe of the sultan and a crown, and holding a scroll of parchment with his right hand, while with his left hand he supports his chin in a meditative attitude.

6.3 The Four Gospels in the Library of the Mekhitarist Fathers of Saint Lazarus

Codex inv. no. 1591 is the oldest among the three Layard manuscripts. It contains both figural and ornamental miniatures, though figural representations are limited to the full-page portraits of the four Evangelists.

According to the colophon, the manuscript was commissioned by Normanuk, the wife of the scribe Stephen, in memory of her parents, cousin and son. It was then donated to the church of the Holy Mother of God, which, together with the Churches of Saint John the Baptist and the Holy Apostles, was part of the Monastery of Avak Vankʻ.[41] Dated 1469, it measures 255 × 180 mm and is bound in thick dark leather and decorated with a central stepped cross, flanked by ornamental motifs intertwined. The volume should have been adorned with a book cover, as suggested by the presence of hollows and grooves on both boards. The spine is decorated with vine-scroll stamp in the vertical and shows a modern label for shelf marking, written both in Armenian letters and Arabic numerals.

As indicated earlier, the scribe named Stephen wrote the manuscript. The miniaturist remains anonymous, or might be the same Stephen, as suggested by Father Ališan.

The extant binding, due to a certain Peter, dates back to 1636 and replaces the original one made by Knar. The parchment flyleaves having been lost were replaced by a sheet of parchment of an older manuscript, maybe a lectionary, written in two columns in angular, square *erkatʻagir*. A part from those four unfoliated pages, the codex counts 278 folios with 23 lines each.

The manuscript is in fairly good conditions, apart from occasional creases and small deteriorations: some pages have brown flecking, and there is water staining, perhaps caused by mould damage, notably in the outer bottom and top margins throughout. Some folios were trimmed (fols. 123, 134) and others repaired with new paper. However, the missing pages are part of Mark 8:9-20; John 5:4 and 7:53- 8:11. The pericope of the woman caught in adultery might come from another manuscript, since the comments on the text and the chapter's numbers appear to be different.

The text is written with perfect, very regular calligraphy, in black ink in *bolorgir*. The first let-

Figure 8. Unknown miniaturist, *King David*. 1599-1600 ca. Paper, 151 × 104 mm, fol. 11*v*. Venice, Mekhitarist Library. 2018. © Biblioteca dei Padri Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro

ters of the Gospels adopt the shape of their symbols and the first three lines are entirely illuminated with foliate motifs. At the beginning of each section, the initial is a large uncial red ink letter.

The manuscript opens with the *Epistula ad Carpianum* (fols. 2*v*-3*r*). The Canons of Concordance then follow (fols. 4-11); these are included within multi-coloured columns and arches surmounted by shelducks (fols. 4, 5), glossy ibis (fols. 6, 7), pheasants (fols. 8, 9), and curlews (fols. 10, 11). Furthermore, the Canons's headpieces are filled with carpet-like designs and display a wide variety of red, green and blue flowers, birds, lions, anthropomorphic figures, and other decorative patterns. Arches are richly filled with geometric features, each one distinct. Marginal ornaments contribute to the animation

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41 On the Monastery of Avak Vankʻ, see Thierry de Crussol 2005, 109-12.

Venezia Arti, 27, 2018, 103-118

Figure 9. Unknown miniaturist, *Portrait of St. Mark and incipit of his gospel*. 1469.
Paper, 255 × 180 mm, fols. 15*v*, 16*r*. Venice, Mekhitarist Library. 2018.
© Biblioteca dei Padri Mechitaristi di San Lazzaro

of the composition, and vary between stylised palmette and acanthus scrolls, striped birds, eagle-headed men (fols. 89*r*, 123*r*, 135*v*), crosses, and elegant circumvolutions.

Each Gospel is preceded by the index. Full-page illuminations are devoted to the Evangelists only, and in spite of being deprived of their original golden embellishment, they display bright and vivid tonalities, which are yet one-dimensional. Attempts at shading are limited to the face, arms and feet of the Evangelists. Their figures are plastically modelled, in contrast to the ample bulging draperies and the more schematised architectural elements that fill the background.

Matthew (fol. 15*v*), Mark (fol. 88*v*), and Luke (fol. 134*v*, fig. 4) are seated on a wide wooden bench. Matthew is accompanied by the angel (fol. 16*r*, fig. 9), clad in a long skirt and a belted tunic, Mark

by two facing lions (fol. 89*r*), and Luke by the ox (fol. 135*r*). John (fol. 211*r*), instead, represents an "iconographic variant [...] commonly used in Byzantine art from the 11th century on" (Nersessian 1963, 63); he is traditionally depicted standing and dictating to his disciple Procoros on the island of Patmos. The Gospels are concluded by short summaries that were later added.

Similarities in the decoration of this codex can be found in some contemporary manuscripts designed in Constantinople or in its surroundings. The most remarkable parallels appear with the Four Gospels, dated 1488, inv. W. 542 (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery), especially with regard to the epistle of Eusebius and the Canon Tables (fols. 3*v*-10*r*), and with most of the headpieces at the beginning of the Gospels (fols. 15*r*, 89*r*, 219*r*). However, the Venetian specimen is richer.

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Armenian Art and Culture
from the Pages of the *Historia Imperii Mediterranei*

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Abstract   The article studies the editorial series called "Historia Imperii Mediterranei" (HIM) that was directed by Lauro Mainardi, an official of the National Fascist Party, in cooperation with the Armenian Committee of Italy. Between 1939 and 1941, the HIM published a series of booklets entitled *Armenia* that contained not only articles on Armenia but also "essays on Oriental culture". According to Mainardi, the HIM had a wide cultural interest in art and architecture but also in literature, poetry, philosophy, and politics. The series published two significant essays: the article by Josef Strzygowski, where he innovatively affirmed the role of the East in Christian art and where he employed "Aryan" racial theory; and Giuseppe Frasson's article, which shows that Strzygowski was recognised as an innovator but, at the same time, that Byzantine studies in Italy were confined to the nationalistic purpose of affirming 'Italian' elements in Roman art. In conclusion, the HIM illustrates the political and cultural strategy of the Fascist party with respect to the Caucasian question in addition to its support of the strategy of the Armenian Committee of Italy for protecting Armenians in Italy before the Second World War.

Summary   1 The Article of Josef Strzygowski. – 2 Aryan Architecture and Italian Nationalism. – 3 The Sixth Volume: *Armenian Art*. – 4 conclusion.

Keywords   Historia Imperii Mediterranei (HIM). Armenian architecture. Armenian art. Armenian culture. Italian Fascist culture. Italian artistic historiography. Lauro Mainardi. Josef Strzygowski. Giuseppe Frasson.

There is a lacuna in Italian historiography about Armenian Art. It lacks any specific study, not even a short mention, of the *Historia Imperii Mediterranei* (hereafter called HIM), an editorial series directed by Lauro Mainardi and published in Rome between 1939 and 1941.[1] These essays are indeed mostly unknown to critics, although they are significant for Italian cultural history. To understand the reasons for this silence, it is necessary to take a few steps back in the history of Italy.

In 1915, the *Comitato Armeno d'Italia* (Armenian Committee of Italy) was founded in Milan by former students of the Moorat Raphaël college in Venice who lived in Milan and Turin, and some Armenian traders who worked in the Milan area (Manoukian 2014). This was the first association of the current *Unione Armeni d'Italia* (Union of Armenians of Italy), founded with the purpose to protect the right of Armenians residing and working in Italy. The Italian government officially recognized the *Comitato* in a letter written by Achille Grandi, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated 5 December 1927 (Manoukian 2014, 73-5). In 1938, because of the rapprochement to the National Fascist Party, a

joint Italian-Armenian publishing venture was launched to make Armenian culture more visible in Italy. Lauro Mainardi, an official of the National Fascist Party, director of the *Archivio storico dei movimenti separatisti, irredentisti e revisionisti* (Historical archive of separatist, irredentist and revisionist movements), promoted this venture. He was in charge of seeking and creating alliances with the Caucasian minorities who were still interested in reoccupying the territories that had fell to the Soviet regime (73-6). Mainardi, in agreement with the *Comitato*, proposed to make the problems of Armenia and the Caucasus known to the wider public, in order "to remove some misunderstandings of the Armenian people, spread by malicious people, so that the Armenians, better known and more appreciated by this work of propaganda, can be accepted and received with increasing benevolence from the Italian public opinion" (letter quoted by Manoukian 2014, 77).

Mainardi's interest is part of Italian foreign policy initiatives towards the Caucasian region (Mamulia 2007; Manoukian 2014, 77) which, from the end of the First World War, as a re-
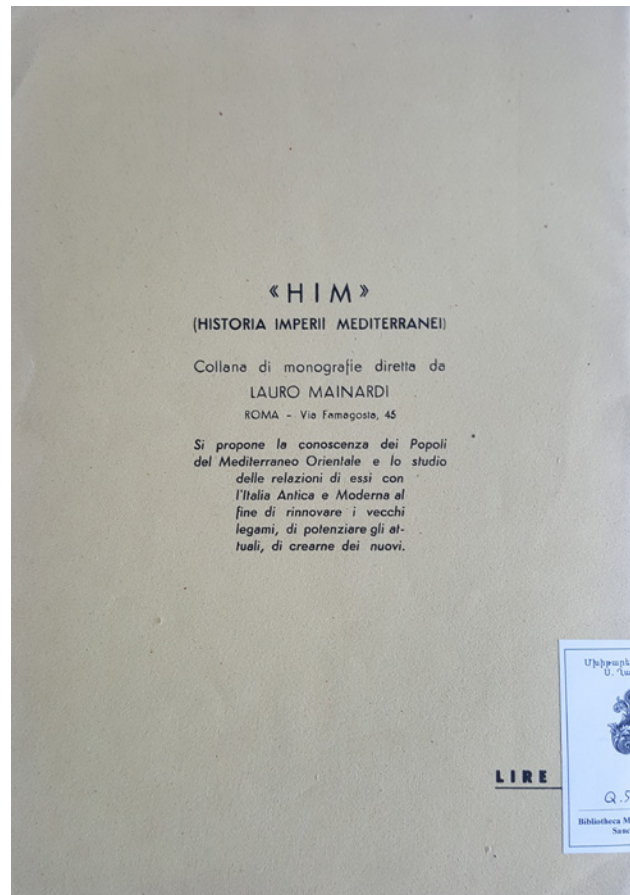
Figure 1. G. Cartella Gelardi. *Per la grande vittima: l'Armenia!*. Roma: HIM, 1940. Back cover. Photo by the Author

Figure 2. *Armenia. L'Armenia per la sua storia, la sua cultura, la sua posizione geografica, è il ponte naturale tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente*. Roma: HIM, 1, 1939. Cover. Photo by the Author

Figure 3. L. Mainardi. *Erivan contro Mosca*. Roma: HIM, 1941. Book. Photo by the Author

sult of its anti-Soviet perspective and desire to recover the Anatolian region, showed varying attitudes toward the Turkish government, from its support to its total exclusion (Penati 2008).
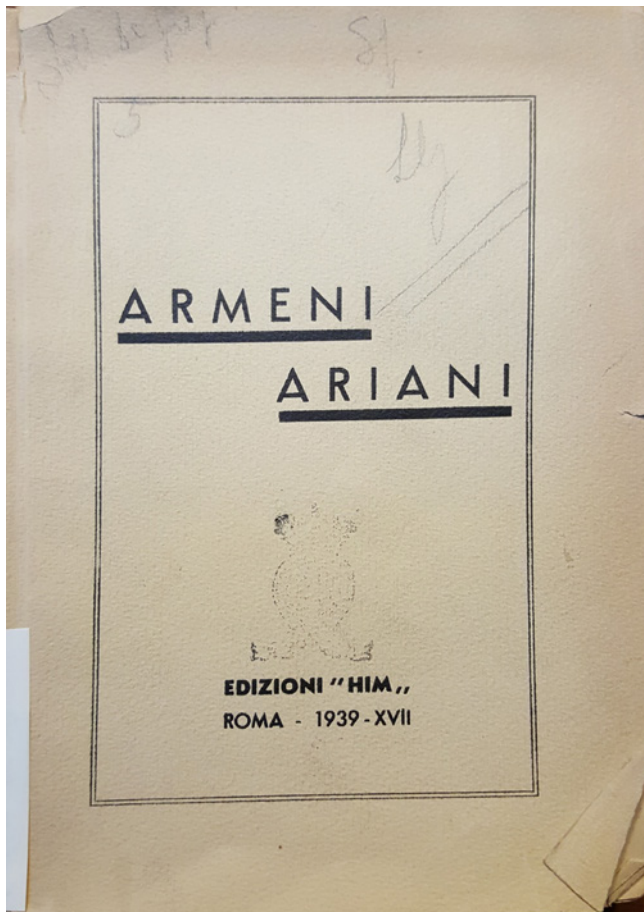
For a better understanding of HIM's birth in the historical context, we must remember that the Armenians, after the race laws were enacted (Law no. 1728, 17 November 1938), remembering their persecutions, tried to be part of the dominant culture in order to escape new misfortunes (Manoukian 2014, 76).

Lauro Mainardi played a part in this strategy. According to his words: "Armenia is a purely-Aryan nation, which, surrounded by people of different races, fought to defend civilization and Aryanism". Armenia is also considered to be "the one nation that can spread Romanity in the East".[2] Above all, according to Mainardi, Armenia's perspective was similar to the Italian one: it was waiting for the Fascism to win, because Fascism's complete triumph represented the only opportunity to resolve its sad situation. Indeed, just like Italy, Armenia was 'deceived' by the promises of the hegemonic empires [of England and France]" and, "just like Italy after the First World War it was betrayed".[3] Then, Mainardi refers to the Sèvres Treaty (1920), which recognized Armenia's Independence. However, because of the Turkish War

2 "È l'Armenia una purissima Nazione Ariana che, circondata da popoli di razza diversi, ha lottato per millenni per la difesa della civiltà e dell'Arianesimo. Di essa si può dire che è stata, ed è al presente, anche nelle sue strazianti condizioni attuali, la vera propagatrice della Romanità nel prossimo Oriente" (Mainardi 1941, 9).

3 "Ingannata, come l'Italia dalle promesse degli imperi egemonici, come l'Italia determinata a condurre una lotta decisiva e all'ultimo sangue con chi ostacolava le sue legittime aspirazioni irredentistiche, l'Armenia scese a fianco dell'Intesa, lottò con valore leggendario, subì sacrifici enormi e cruentissimi e fu poi, come il nostro Paese, tradita da coloro stessi che avevano sfruttato al massimo grado il suo eroismo e i suoi indicibili martiri" (Mainardi 1941, 9-10).

ARMENI

ARIANI

EDIZIONI "HIM,,
ROMA - 1939 - XVII

LAURO
MAINARDI

un'altra vittima
dei francoinglesi
L'ARMENIA

EDIZIONI HIM 1941-XIX

of Independence, the Treaty of Lausanne replaced the Treaty of Sèvres on 24 July 1923.

Between 1938 and 1940, the *Comitato* financed the publication of a number of essays that differed in importance and quality. Indeed, the acronym of the publisher, HIM, has two possible meanings: it is the name of the *Comitato* expressed in Armenian; in Latin, it alludes to the history of the Mediterranean empire.

Mainardi's aim, in accordance with the Armenian community, was to demonstrate how friendly and similar to Italians Armenians were. The editorial series "aim[ed] to promote knowledge of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean and to study their relations with ancient and modern Italy, in order to renew old bonds, to strengthen present ones, and to create new ones",[4] as stated in the back cover of each booklet (fig. 1).

The agreements between Mainardi and the

Armenians established that each publication should be sent from Rome to all addresses indicated by the *Comitato*. Mainardi selected and sent the publications to political and cultural authorities, including the Pope, the King, the Duce and also Galeazzo Ciano (Manoukian 2014, 87). This strategy proved very useful after the war started. On 29 August 1939, shortly before the Germans invaded Poland, President Arzumanian and Secretary Sarian, on behalf of the *Comitato*, wrote to Mainardi. They requested that "the Armenian citizens of other countries (such as France, Turkey, etc....) be recognized, first of all, as Armenians (whose spiritual loyalty to the cause of Fascism cannot be questioned)" (93). Thus, Mainardi became an essential connection to Rome's authority and power to extend protection to the Armenian people. In 1940, when Italy declared war on France, many Armenians who

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4 "Si propone di promuovere la conoscenza dei Popoli del Mediterraneo Orientale e lo studio delle relazioni di essi con l'Italia Antica e Moderna al fine di rinnovare i vecchi legami, di potenziare gli attuali, di crearne dei nuovi".

resided in Italy and possessed a French passport were classified as enemies, subjected to trade restrictions, and even imprisoned. Only the intervention of the *Comitato* and its policy adopted to show friendship between Italy and Armenia succeeded in revoking the measures and persuaded Mussolini to promulgate a decree that freed Armenians from the restrictions (95-100).

Finally, the lack of interest of scholars of art history and architecture in the HIM was due to its strong link with Fascism, which made its contents, from a scientific point of view, too ideologically oriented.

HIM

Beginning in 1939, the HIM published a series of booklets entitled *Armenia*. During 1939 and 1940, booklets number 1-5 are, according to Mainardi, "essays of Oriental culture". They were first published in *Fronte Unico* and contain articles that are not only on Armenia. Booklets numbers 6-12 are described as "historical-literary essays", each with a different title. Four booklets do not have a number or a link with the HIM, which in the meantime had permanently stopped publishing.

During 1939 and 1940, six other independent booklets were published, three dedicated to poetry, an anthology of literary and historical texts, an essay on the Peace Congress of Paris and an essay on Armenian architecture published by Frasson first in *Pazmaveb*, the journal of the Mechitarist congregation. Finally, three books were published; the last one, *Erivan contro Mosca*, by Mainardi (1941), marks the end of the publishing house's activity.

These are the collected essays and books in chronological order, according also to the list published by Manoukian (2014, 358).

Essays of Oriental Culture

"Armenia" 1, *Armenia: l'Armenia per la sua storia, la sua cultura, la sua posizione geografica, è il ponte naturale tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente*, estratto da *Fronte Unico,* gennaio 1939 (fig. 2)
"Armenia" 2, estratto da *Fronte Unico*, febbraio-marzo 1939
"Armenia" 3, estratto da *Fronte Unico*, marzo-aprile 1939
"Armenia" 4, estratto da *Fronte Unico*, maggio 1939
"Armenia" 5, estratto da *Fronte Unico*, giugno 1939

Historical-literary essays

"Armenia" 6, *L'arte armena*, 1939
"Armenia" 7, *Il volto eroico dell'Armenia. Introduzione di Lauro Mainardi*, 1939
"Armenia" 8, *Urfa e l'eroismo armeno*, 1940
"Armenia" 9, [Karniguian, Tacvor], *La dottrina del fascismo e l'espansione ariana in Oriente negli studi di Tazor Karnigouian*, 1940 (introduction by Lauro Mainardi)
"Armenia" 10, *Testimonianze*, aprile 1940
"Armenia" 11, Giuseppe Martucci, *La comunità armena d'Etiopia*, agosto 1940
"Armenia" 12, Jusik Hovrep Achrafian (Viazzi Glauco), *Il periodo post-romantico nella letteratura armeno-occidentale*, settembre 1940

Independent Booklets

Carducci, Giosuè et al. (1939). *L'Armenia e gli Armeni nella penisola italiana. Raccolta di liriche dedicate al valore ed al martirio del Popolo Armeno*
Achrafian, Jusik Hovrep (1939). *Diciotto liriche armene raccolte e presentate da J. Achrafian*
Cartella Gelardi, Giuseppe (1939). *Nor Arax. Poemetto di Giuseppe Cartella Gelardi*
Frasson, Giuseppe (1939). *L'architettura armena e quella di Bisanzio* (first edition *Pazmaveb*, 1-2, 1939, 234-45)
Cartella Gelardi, Giuseppe (1940). *Per la grande vittima, l'Armenia!*
Gorrini, Giacomo (1940). *Armenia nel congresso della pace a Parigi*

Books

Schaeder, Hans Heinrich et al. (1939). *Armeni ariani. Studi tradotti dal tedesco da Maria Molteni, prefazione di Carlo Barduzzi*
Mainardi, Lauro (1941). *Un'altra vittima dei franco-inglesi: l'Armenia!*
Mainardi, Lauro (1941). *Erivan contro Mosca* (fig. 3)

This index shows that the HIM had a wider cultural interest involving literature, poetry, philosophy, and politics. The interest on history of art or architecture was not its central focus.

The editorial series begins with a booklet and a book, both miscellaneous, which were published simultaneously in January 1939: *Armeni*

Ariani and *Armenia. L'Armenia per la sua storia, la sua cultura, la sua posizione geografica, è il ponte naturale tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente,* HIM, 1. These essays had a relatively high circulation because they were distributed free of charge to all authorities of the regime in order to underline that Armenians belonged to a friendly area.

Armeni Ariani (Aryan Armenians) is a study on the racial characteristics of Armenians, translated from the original German edition published in 1934 by the German-Armenian Society of Berlin, which was dedicated to the memory of the historian and orientalist philologist Josef Markwart (1864-1930). As the "Note" to the Italian translation states: "This work […] offers a set of conclusive evidence of Armenian people's aryanity, which followed the Decree issued on 3 July 1933 by the National Socialist Government". The decree stated that, in order to rearrange careers from the bureaucratic point of view, Armenians should be considered in all respects Aryans. Carlo Barduzzi's preface also contains the same thought: "This documentation undermines the common and false assertion of an absurd racial connection between Armenian people and Jewish people […]. Thus, the Armenian nation has a pure Aryan origin".[5] Barduzzi, Consul General of His Majesty and professor at the National Center for Political Preparation for Youth (*Console generale di Sua Maestà* and *Docente al Centro Nazionale di Preparazione Politica per i giovani*), also wrote the *Romanità dell'Armenia* (Barduzzi 1940), which briefly outlined the tormented history of Armenia, which was called the "sentinel of the Roman Empire", in strong contrast with Israel, whose descendants were also away from their homeland.

Johann von Leers, in the essay entitled *Armeni ed Arii* (Armenians and Arii) (1939, 17-25),[6] clearly stated that Armenians were Aryan. He refers specifically to Hans Günther's *The Racial Elements of European History* (1927). According to Günther's school of racial classification, the term 'Aryan' should not be considered a synonym of Nordic (because the Nordic character, also mixed, is only a part of the Armenian one).[7]

After a brief introduction to the origin of the word 'Arian', from the Aryan people, which indicates its belonging to a pure, non-deviated, strain of Indo-European peoples, he considered the term in relation to struggles against Judaism. He described the conflict between Jews and Christians in racial terms, thus, shifting to the issue of race between Jews and European peoples. Von Leers wrote: "Then, in contrast to the Jews, you must put Germans, Italians, Russians, Polish, like English" (1939, 19), "but what about the Armenian people? Can the term Aryan also include them?" (20) To this question, he replied: "It can be affirmed without any doubt that the Armenian people, by origin, language, and for purely Nordic character […] is part of the Aryan peoples". Indeed, the tragedy for this people is that "it has been able to preserve its culture and Aryan customs tenaciously in a geopolitical Middle-Earth where Semites, Mongols and Urals met".[8] Moreover, Armenians occupied a Christian outpost, "during the religious battle of the Orient, surrounded everywhere by Islam" (von Leers 1939, 24). Therefore, "it must be enough for defining this population as Aryan that it has not accepted Jewish elements, has no negro blood, and has a blood which is bonded to the clearly recognizable Nordic race. Not only the Armenian people completely satisfies these requirements, but it is also proved that it is part of the European branch of the Aryan family, speaks a Nordic language, and has Nordic characters which are clearly recognizable. Therefore, Armenians are an Aryan people!".[9]

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5 "Con tale documentazione viene a cadere l'asserto inventato e comune di una assurda correlazione razziale tra il popolo armeno e il popolo giudeo […]. La nazione armena è dunque di schietta origine ariana" (Barduzzi 1939, 7).

6 Also published in the first number of the HIM and republished from *Fronte Unico,* 10 January, 1939-XVII, 1.

7 The rise of the Aryan myth in early modern scholarship has been well examined by Leon Poliakov (1971) and Maurice Olender (1989).

8 "Si può affermare indubbiamente che il popolo armeno, per origine, lingua e per il carattere prettamente nordico […] fa parte dei popoli ariani […] Esso ha saputo mantenere tenacemente la propria cultura ed i propri costumi ariani, in un territorio geopolitico di transito, ove si incontrarono semiti, mongoli ed urali" (von Leers 1939, 24).

9 "Deve bastare che un popolo non abbia accolto in sé elementi ebraici, non abbia sangue negro e possegga un legame di sangue con la razza nordica, chiaramente riconoscibile, per definirlo ario. Il popolo armeno non si trova solamente in queste condizioni, ma è anche provato che esso rappresenta una parte del ramo europeo della famiglia ariana, parla una lingua ed ancora oggigiorno ha dei caratteri nordici chiaramente riconoscibili. Gli Armeni sono dunque un popolo ariano!" (von Leers 1939, 25).

Johann von Leers was among the earliest members of the Nazi Party, in the Waffen SS in 1938 as a *Sturmbannführer* (staff sergeant/major), professor of History at the University of Jena, and he devoted himself to linguistic studies (Sennholz 2013, Mutti 2015). As one of the most passionate and active anti-Semite upholders of the Third Reich's propaganda, after moving to Berlin in 1933 together with his wife, he became the editor of the *Nordische Welt*, a monthly periodical of the Society for the Prehistory and Germanic Prehistory (*Gesellschaft für germanische Ur- und Vorgeschichte*), directed by Herman Wirth. With Wirth, von Leers established "a theosophical Nordicist circle, which had the purpose, among other things, to revive the ancient Germanic religion, in particular sun worship" (D'Onofrio 1997, 146). In 1938, von Leers was appointed *professore di scambio* (kind of visiting professor) at the University of Rome. Here he joined the editorship of the magazines *La Difesa della Razza* and *La Vita Italiana* and held some public conferences. It is likely that at that time he met Mainardi who asked him to publish in the HIM. Von Leers's short article, published twice in the HIM in slightly different versions, reveals his terrible ideas and his acquaintance with Hans F.K. Günther.

Then, there are four more essays on race (Abeghian 1939, Roth 1939, Klinge 1939, Ewald Stier 1939) and, finally, the article by Josef Strzygowski (1939): *Gli Armeni banditori del pensiero architettonico ariano* (Armenians promoters of Aryan architectural thinking).

1 The Article of Josef Strzygowski

Strzygowski, according to his *Orient oder Rome* (1901), researched the prototype of the monument that could explain all further developments of Western medieval art in the East. In his model, Rome was rejected, the Christian spirit was in Orient. In *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* (1918), he went further by aiming to demonstrate the origins of Armenian architecture in the East (Iran) and its resulting influence on the origin of Western architecture.

The article published in the HIM begins with a brief explanation of the Indo-European language, conceived not only as 'simple linguistic family' but also as a 'blood unit', as the author stated in *Die Baukunst*. Moreover, in his *The Origin of Christian Church Art* (1924), he suggested that the domed church migrated from Armenia to the West. According to his theory, already in the fourth century, the central-plan martyria of Constantine revealed the influence of early Armenian forms, and, by the sixth century, Armenian influence reached Byzantium (Maranci 1998, 365). But, as Maranci pointed out, by the 1930s Armenia's role in Strzygowski's theory changed. Indeed, he was more interested in the origins of Eastern forms and in a number of works, collected in *Early Church Art in Northern Europe* (1928), and theorized the common origins of 'Indo-German' architecture. Finally, in *Spuren Indogermanischen Glaubens in der Bildenden Kunst* (1936), since he was convinced of the existence of an Aryan architecture, Strzygowski formulated the basic principles of his *Urarchitectur*, and Armenia became an important carrier of Indo-German building tradition. The most important feature of Indo-German architecture is that the ground plan is often surmounted by a dome, a scheme described as *strahlenform* or radiating form, in contrast to the longitudinal basilica. The socio-political context behind Strzygowski's anti-Roman theory became clear when he, after his early moderate years, revealed himself to be explicitly racist and a Nazi sympathizer (Foletti, Lovino 2018, 8). The article published in the HIM corresponds to this last step of his career.

According to Strzygowski, the Armenians, the first people converted to Christianity, built their churches according to the form of the Iranian temple of fire (just like pre-Romanesque buildings in Germany). It was only later that the Church attempted to introduce the basilica as the only acceptable form. But Armenia stuck to pre-Christian architecture. This is why "in the Caucasian territory and in Ararat 'churches' [...] the basilica disappears completely except for few exceptions and later we found a compromise solution, which retains the dome in the middle, despite the elongated shape, the so-called dome-shaped nave".[10]

In his analysis of the form of Armenian churches, Strzygowski, observing that they

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[10] "Si rimane sorpresi, trovando nel territorio caucasico e nell'Ararat delle "chiese" che non sono tali secondo le concezioni occidentali, ma sono dei veri monumenti plastici, in forma circolare, ottagonale o quadrata [...] La basilica scompare completamente salvo qualche eccezione [...] più tardi si impone una soluzione di compromesso, la quale mantiene la cupola nel mezzo, malgrado la forma allungata, la cosiddetta navata a cupola" (Strzygowski 1939, 74).

"were circular, octagonal or square-shaped, with a dome", suggested a constructive purpose called 'circumambulation' (circular walking or circular ambulation). Along the Caucasus there is a great deal of evidence for this arrangement, beginning with the Iranian fire temple up to the ancient Slavic temple, which was later taken by the Orthodox church, and to the temple of the Borgund Vikings, which probably derived from naval buildings (Strzygowski 1939, 77). According to Strzygowski, these monuments were remnants of an Ancient Aryan wooden architecture that stretched from India to Norway. Indeed, he dated the tradition of wooden architecture in Europe to before the eleventh century (the first dated stave churches) and believed that it was related to Eastern developments (Maranci 1998, 372). Moreover, by examining circular ambulatories in North Europe and Iran, Strzygowski established an almost-direct link to the choirs in Gothic architecture, which also retain a trace of *strahlenform* (Maranci 1998, 379).

Indo-European scholarship played a fundamental role in Strzygowski's formulation of Aryan architecture. Along with the rise of racist ideology in contemporary scholarship, his detailed comparative studies gave way to shorter and more polemical works in the 1930s and 1940s (Maranci 2001).

The emphasis on Armenian architecture as Aryan architecture resonates in contemporary Armenian studies in Europe, such as Artashes Abeghia's *Die Armenische Volksglaube*, which stressed the Aryan character of Armenian language and religion.

Strygzowski's publication in the HIM was part of a political strategy just like the release of his article in *Amiwtum-Ariertum*, a pamphlet published by the German-Armenian society of Berlin.

The purpose of the German Society and of the Italian *Comitato* was the same, that is, to stress Armenia's Aryan descent and to strengthen its relationship with Germany and Italy.

2 Aryan Architecture and Italian Nationalism

In the first booklet of the HIM: *Armenia. L'Armenia per la sua storia, la sua cultura, la sua posizione geografica, è il ponte naturale tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente*, HIM, 1, 1939, Strzygowksi's article is replaced by a brief, and non-scientific, contribution signed by an unknown S. Djevahir (1939a), *L'architettura armena è ariana* (Armenian architecture is Aryan). Here, theories on race and the method adopted therein, are also applied to art and, in particular, to architecture. Starting from the previous essays that showed that "the Armenian people are one of the oldest Aryan breeds on earth", Djevahir aimed to examine the issue "from an artistic point of view, considering that in Armenia the most complete expression of art is represented by architecture". But he approached the question in racialized terms: "Every people has a conception of life and of art that is inherent in its race and its origins".[11]

So, the theory of race switched, in a way that is at the same time ridiculous and dangerous, to art history and, in particular, to architectural history. Indeed, "Armenians have an artistic conception that agrees with the art of all the Aryan people". Moreover, "although the Armenians were under the domination of non-Aryan peoples, Armenian art and architecture were not influenced by those rulers. And this is because the non-Aryan aspirations of invaders could not meet the purpose of Armenian art".[12]

Finally, Armenian art remained foreign to Semitic art, and Armenian architecture showed the elements of Aryan architecture. They are:
1. Armenian building's plan is based on an Aryan conception, as it derives from the Greco-Roman elongated rectangular plane.
2. The Armenian temple is a remake of a Greco-Roman temple in Eastern forms. This temple is the model for Armenian churches and has both the plan and elevation similar to Western buildings.

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[11] "Ogni popolo ha una concezione della vita e delle arti che è inerente alla sua razza ed alle sue origini" (Djevahir 1939a, 23).

[12] "Gli Armeni hanno una concezione artistica che concorda con l'arte di tutti i popoli ariani. E l'architettura armena riflette in tutte le sue estrinsecazioni questa concezione artistica ed a tal punto che nella loro lunga storia, ogni volta che gli Armeni si sono trovati sotto dominazione di popoli non ariani l'arte e l'architettura armene sono restate estranee a quelle dei dominatori. E ciò perché le aspirazioni non ariane degli invasori non potevano soddisfare le tendenze dell'arte armena" (Djevahir 1939a, 23).

3. The Armenian building is well proportioned and its size is quite small, therefore, it is close to the Greco-Roman Aryan building.
4. Armenian architecture developed its own decoration, in which we can see a slight Iranian influence.
5. The dome represents the royal crown, which is the Aryan symbol of domination and authority. (Djevahir 1939a, 23).

In conclusion, Djevahir tried, clumsily, to find a compromise between Strzygowski's 'orientalist' theories and the nationalistic theories of the Regime's ideology. He considered pre-Christian Armenian architecture to be Aryan art, with regards to its plans, proportions, and decoration, which derived from Greco-Roman architecture. After the rise of the Christian Era, Aryan features are emphasized, especially with the introduction of the dome in religious buildings, even if the Armenian dome is perceived as significantly different from Roman features.

Also in 1939, Djevahir wrote a brief contribution on the temple of Garni, contained in volume 6 of *L'arte armena* (The Armenian art) (Djevahir 1939b). Here, Djevahir superficially connected the Armenian temple to the "pure ancient Roman style" and stressed the high level that the Armenians achieved in the elaboration and diffusion of the Roman civilization, according to the Italian nationalistic interpretation of art.

In the same year, Giuseppe Frasson published *L'architettura armena e quella di Bisanzio* (The Architecture of Armenia and of Byzantium), in *Pazmaveb*, soon republished in the HIM by Mainardi.

Frasson, an architectural historian, addressed Armenian architecture in a more reasonable and critical way. He outlined a brief history of research up to Strzygowski, whom he recognizes as an innovator, even though he does not accept all his positions. Frasson placed Armenian architecture within the broader theme of the Origins of Byzantine Art but he is nonetheless still influenced by nationalistic interpretations.

While Strzygowski was expanding his research on the role of the East in Christian art, Byzantine studies in Italy were reduced to nationalistic purposes (Frantova 2018, 94) and the

ideas of the Austrian art historian met large acceptance and strong opposition (Bernabò 2003, 79-83). Massimo Bernabò's research shows that the anti-Byzantine arguments of various Italian nationalists were later regularly published in the pro-fascist newspaper *Il Giornale d'Italia* and in its monthly magazine *La Rivista illustrata del Popolo d'Italia* (Bernabò 2010, 139). In the 1930s, the target of this periodical's political attacks was, among others, Josef Strzygowski (Bernabò 2003, 117-30). Sergio Bettini, at first fascinated by Strzygowski's approach, later established a deep connection with the formalism of the Wien School (Bettini [1942] 2011, Agazzi 2011). At the same time, he seems to be influenced by Mussolini's imperial rhetoric (Bernabò 2003, 167). According to Bettini, vaults and domes are Roman and Christian architecture was born in Rome, not in the East (Bettini 1939; Lemerle 1952). Bettini debated Armenian architecture in his *Architettura Bizantina* (Bettini 1937) and he found similarities, as pointed out by Cartella Gelardi, between "Romanesque and Proto-gothic forms" and the "spiritual harmony", like an expression of a "pure art, like Bach's music" (Cartella Gelardi 1940a, 17).

Frasson's approach also is strongly nationalistic. In his opinion, art is a natural expression of peoples, and therefore "it will affect the soul, the character of its people, and the environment in which they live. Cultural and artistic differences between one people and another are real, and they can have their effect. But later, the national element will revive, perhaps in other forms, and will produce a 'Renaissance'".[13]

He distinguished between creative peoples, with artistic ingenuity (peoples who have their own culture but are inward-looking) and communicative peoples, with political ingenuity (who are able to assimilate and unify, imposing their political power on neighbouring peoples and assimilating their cultures in order to share their achievements with a wider civilization).

The most typical example of the second category is Roman art, which embraces the art of several countries such as Etruria, Greece and the East. Also Byzantine art belongs to communicative peoples. The art of Byzantium is the art of an empire; it is very complex because it combines

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13 "Ad esso subordiniamo inconsciamente la suddivisione che esiste fra i vari popoli e varie civiltà. Ma si deve pensare che ogni popolo, in quanto distinto da un altro, ha anche distinto il suo sviluppo. Così l'arte, che ne è l'espressione naturale, risentirà dell'animo, del carattere delle sue genti e delle condizioni d'ambiente in cui esse vivono. Scambi culturali e artistici fra un popolo ed un altro esistono, e possono avere il loro effetto, ma poi l'elemento nazionale tornerà a risorgere, magari sotto un nuovo aspetto, e si avrà un "Rinascimento" (Frasson 1939a, 234).

Eastern and Western elements, especially in its architecture.

Assuming that the dome is the distinctive element of Byzantine architecture, Frasson wondered if this architectural element could come from Armenia. He analysed all the different types of Armenian architecture and observed that they are almost always domed architectures, both in central and longitudinal-plan buildings, while considering, with Strzygowski, basilica churches to be an exception and as foreign influence.

According to Strzygowski, in the first phase of Armenian church architecture, the simplest type of dome consisted in a dome on a square base, the 'domed square' *Kuppelquadrat*, which he considered to be of oriental origin, deriving from Churasan and Eastern Persia. On the contrary, according to Frasson, this type already existed in Roman art. The second type, called 'domed apsidal square', adds semicircular apses to each side of the central square bay, as in the seventh-century churches of Mastara, Artik, Haritcha, Avan, and St. Hripsime at Vagharshapat.[14] During the seventh century, after the wars against the Parthians (571-91), these buildings show the great flowering of Armenian art, which, for Frasson, represents the rising of the national element.

Another type is the 'plan with four piers'. The most ancient extant example in Armenia is the church of Bagaran, in which four central piers support a tall drum and dome, surrounded by a vaulted, apsidal ambulatory. According to Stryzgowski, this plan appeared as early as the fourth century both in Armenia and Iran and this type influenced Western architecture up to the Renaissance. He reported a legend in which Leonardo is said to have been in Armenia, from where this type spread widely. Giuseppe Cartella Gelardi recorded the same legend in *Testimonianze* (Cartella Gelardi 1940b, 45). Frasson, on the contrary, strongly upheld Italian Renaissance's originality and rejected this hypothesis (a legend, in fact).

According to Strzygowski, the central-plan buildings represent in Armenia also a second group of apse-buttressed buildings that evolved from the tetraconch to the hexagon and octagon. Many monuments in Armenia belong to these types but they seem to be late. Frasson, again, rejected Strzygowski's arguments about these types of churches. He rejected the argument that in Armenia there was also the octoconch, which is the model of St. Vitale and SS. Sergius and Bacchus in Constantinople, or the quadriconch, the model of S. Lorenzo of Milan, or the decaconch, the model of the temple of Minerva Medica. Rather, he preferred to consider this kind of architecture to be non-Armenian.

Frasson believed that the issue of the origins of the dome could not be limited to the relation between Armenia and Byzantium but that it was necessary to expand the horizon from the far East to Rome. He gave credit to Strzygowski for expanding the horizon of Christian archeology, previously confined to the Mediterranean, and for creating a new method in comparative art, which involved studying monuments themselves rather than just reading books.

Finally, Frasson defended the nationalistic approach to art history and affirmed Italy's and Italian Renaissance's role in art history. He criticized Strzygowski and his theory, but in doing so, he weakened the theories related to Aryan architecture, which were elaborated in the first volume of HIM. Indeed, while Strzygowski's views were accepted for political reasons because of his Aryan theory on architecture, they were strongly rejected by Italian nationalists and fascists, who wanted to affirm 'Italian' elements in Roman art (Frantova 2018, 93).

If we examine Frasson's article in the context of Italian nationalist art historians and consider Strzygowski as an anti-Italian, it is easier to understand the criticisms of his theory. This approach, both ideological and technical, created a wildly unstable, nearly schizophrenic interpretation in Italian historiography.

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14   Strzygowski found the origins for the Mastara type in Iran and Central Asia.

3 The Sixth Volume: *Armenian Art*

The sixth volume of HIM, entitled *L'arte armena* (The Armenian Art),[15] is mostly dedicated to music and literature and less to figurative art and architecture. The introduction by Teresio Rovere, a text from the *Storia universale dell'arte*, shows the link between the spirituality of Armenia and Italy, because the two peoples had "constant relations of friendship" (Rovere 1939, 6), in accordance with the 'mission' of the HIM. The text contains several errors, such as its incorrect telling of the history of the bronze horses on the façade of St. Mark's in Venice, which were related, according to Rovere, to an indirect exchange of gifts between Armenia and Venice, more precisely, between Rome and Armenia, and then between Rome and Venice.

Armenian architecture is depicted as a revival of Syriac forms, which were, in turn, oriental elaborations of Roman architecture with Byzantine and Muslim stylistic elements. This architecture, during the seventh century, shows a "strong independent spiritual unity", and during the Bagratid Kingdom enjoyed its Golden Age in the city of Ani, which today is reduced to ruins. Rovere used several quotations from *Armenia. Travels and study*, written by the English businessman and traveller Henry F.B. Lynch (1901). Among these quotations is the description of Ani's cathedral (989-1001), built by Trdat, who later repaired the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (Maranci 2003).

The text uses quotations to emphasize topics such as spirituality and the connection with Roman antiquity. On the other hand, the descriptions of Armenian monuments, such as those in the city of Ani, are quotations taken from Lynch's suggestive descriptions. Rovere gave little consideration to sculpture, which he considered "closely connected to the provincial forms of Byzantine art" and even less to painting. Few notes are dedicated to illuminated books, which he recognized, to be a properly Armenian decorative style that began in the twelfth century and was characterized by Islamic influences.

The introduction ends with brief accounts of artists who lived between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, including some who lived outside Armenian territory, such as Hovhannes Aivasian (1817-1900), known as Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky, Russian Romantic marine painter, and Edgar Chahine (1874-1947), French painter and engraver. In this volume, the only work on architecture is Djevahir's contribution mentioned above.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, the short life of the HIM shows the political and cultural strategy of the Fascist party regarding the Caucasian question. The support given to the Armenians was intended to counteract French, English, and Turkish interests in the Caucasus. On the other hand, this position strengthened Russia, another potential enemy. The Armenians, for their part, who were crushed between the still vivid memory of the genocide they escaped and the impending war with its horrors, tried to develop a strategy to protect themselves.

HIM's history, therefore, even if it did not produce scientific results in the field of art history, played a significant role in the cultural history of Italy and its relations with Armenians and their culture, revealing affinities and interests that have been rooted in the historiography well before the wicked period of Fascism, and continue even now.

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Una fortunata metafora di Cesare Brandi: le «chiese di cristallo» degli Armeni

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Abstract   The expression 'chiese di cristallo' (crystal churches) appeared in the title of an article written by Cesare Brandi in 1968 for the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, which reviewed a photo exhibition on Armenian architecture. This definition for Armenian churches met some success in critical studies and it is often used in non-academic literature. The aim of this brief essay is to explain Brandi's metaphor of crystal in light of earlier theoretical considerations – such as the ones of Alois Riegl and Wilhelm Worringer – and in relation to additional examples of this expression found in Italian art critics of the first half the 20th century.

Keywords   Cesare Brandi. Armenian architecture. Metaphor of the crystal. Alois Riegl. Wilhelm Worringer.

In un articolo apparso sul *Corriere della Sera* del 5 luglio 1968, intitolato «Le chiese di cristallo», Cesare Brandi istituiva una metafora destinata a una buona ricezione critica e a un largo uso in sede divulgativa. Intervenendo nel dibattito allora assai vivo sul rapporto tra l'architettura armena e quella occidentale, considerate nei loro principali elementi di confronto (tecnica costruttiva, volumi architettonici, decorazione), Brandi scriveva:

> Ma la tettonica (la tecnica della costruzione) non è la struttura spaziale dell'architettura, e questo fatto accertato della muratura a concrezione non implica un giudizio negativo sull'architettura armena, né riduce arcatelle, pilastri, cupole ad una scenografia vuota di significato architettonico. Non solo le arcatelle ricollegano il duomo di Pisa ad Ani, ma anche la grandiosa limpida scansione dei volumi, questo suo presentarsi come un enorme cristallo. E come un cristallo si offrono le Chiese [*sic*] armene, isolate, luminose e dure, più dure della pietra in cui son fatte. (Brandi 1968, 3)

L'articolo di Brandi recensiva la mostra fotografica *Architettura medievale armena* (Roma, Palazzo Venezia, 10-30 giugno 1968) – volta a documentare i risultati della missione in Armenia dell'Università La Sapienza, diretta da Géza de Francovich – insieme al relativo catalogo con i contributi di Fernanda De Maffei, Herman Vahramian, Tommaso Breccia Fratadocchi, Enrico Costa e Paolo Cuneo. Non c'è bisogno di rilevare quanto quell'intera stagione di studî abbia contribuito a diffondere la conoscenza dell'architettura armena, sia tra gli storici dell'arte e dell'architettura, sia tra il pubblico più generale; fra i medievalisti, inoltre, non poteva non porsi il problema del confronto, e di un'eventuale, più stretta, relazione storica, tra l'architettura armena e quella europea: in merito, il volume esibiva una grande cautela nell'esame di qualunque rapporto di derivazione, influsso o contatto, tema sul quale Josef Strzygowski aveva invece costruito un'intera prospettiva critica, e quasi una filosofia della storia (Strzygowski 1918; una complessiva analisi del saggio in discorso, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, e del suo rilievo storiografico, è in Maranci 2001, 79-175). Cesare Brandi si esprimeva nettamente contro il ridimensionamento di queste relazioni:

> Queste assonanze sono state scoperte da tempo e lo Strzygowski, già dal 1918, ne fu il più illuminato assertore. Ma ora si tende a diminuirle, a contrastarle passo passo: e in questo, in questo catalogo, tutti sono d'accordo.
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> Invece mi dispiace di non essere affatto d'accordo. Non si dirime la somiglianza fra l'architettura romanica pisana e quella che trionfa ad Ani, nella stupenda cattedrale del grande architetto Trdat (989-1001), quando il motivo delle colonnine e arcatelle cieche è tipico armeno e si trova, assai prima che ad Ani, nell'abside della cattedrale di Talinn [Թալին T'alin, n.d.A.] (sec. VII), e soprattutto rientra in quella struttura architettonica che fu gloria

armena, di concepire cioè l'esterno in modo assolutamente indipendente dall'interno.

[…] A questo stupendo aggregato di parallelepipedi e di cilindri che offre l'architettura armena, la teoria di arcatelle cieche è elemento ritmico e non strutturale, in senso di «costruzione». All'interno le intersezioni della croce vengono date in una mirabile purezza di volumi trasparenti e comunicanti.

[…] Ma ecco i negatori di un rapporto, che anche storicamente ci fu all'epoca delle Crociate, quando l'Armenia era l'unico stato cristiano che sovvenisse ai crociati; ecco i negatori dei rapporti diretti – che dovrebbero essere tutte «convergenze» – che osservano, ed è giusto, che la struttura muraria dell'architettura armena non ha niente in comune col romanico e col gotico […]. (Brandi 1968, 3)

La questione del rapporto tra l'architettura armena e quella italiana medievale – che periodicamente si pone soprattutto in relazione ad alcuni monumenti toscani e pugliesi, o a singolari strutture come l'atrio della cattedrale di Sant'Evasio a Casale Monferrato – non ha mai perso il suo interesse,[1] ma offre anche larghi margini di arbitrio e indecidibilità, a fronte dei quali le cautele degli studiosi italiani citati da Brandi appaiono oggi, al contrario, del tutto comprensibili.[2] Di là da questo dibattito entro il quale nasce, è però indubbio che la metafora brandiana del cristallo abbia assunto una particolare forza esplicativa, che ne giustifica il successivo, largo uso, oggi anche in chiave pubblicitaria e turistica; essa rende ragione della particolare volumetria delle chiese armene – meno forse della loro impressione di robusta solidità – e sicuramente possiede un pregio evocativo tale da richiamare subito l'accuratezza della struttura e la perfezione delle forme.[3]

Occorre dire però che la similitudine del cristallo non è nuova alla storia dell'arte e alla riflessione teorica sui fenomeni stilistici, ma può anzi vantare una genealogia critica di grande prestigio: autori quali Alois Riegl e Wilhelm Worringer, che se ne sono serviti, hanno contribuito con la loro autorevolezza alla costruzione di un lessico intellettuale destinato ad entrare, in alcuni casi quasi inavvertitamente, nella prosa della critica d'arte. Naturalmente la metafora del cristallo ha attestazioni più antiche, in filosofia e in letteratura, e non ne sono mancate fini applicazioni psicologiche, come quella che ne diede Stendhal nel suo saggio sull'amore (*De l'amour*, 1822), dove la *crystallisation* indica il processo mentale che porta alla scoperta di sempre nuove perfezioni nell'oggetto amato (Singer [1984] 2009, 360-75). Si trattava tuttavia, per esplicita dichiarazione dello scrittore, di una metafora che molto doveva alla chimica, ai processi di formazione dei cristalli nelle miniere di sale, suggestiva nel suo significato di 'sublimazione', 'idealizzazione', ma lontana dall'immagine del cristallo considerato in senso strettamente geometrico, nelle sue proprietà formali, quale invece appare in séguito, gradualmente, nella filosofia dell'arte.

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1 Si vedano, ad esempio di questo filone di ricerca, i saggi di De Bernardi Ferrero sul Sant'Evasio di Casale Monferrato, Calò Mariani e Pepe sulla relazione tra l'architettura pugliese e quella d'area caucasica, Rocchi sul confronto tra architettura medievale lombarda e armena, tutti in Ieni, Zekiyan 1978; in generale sul rapporto tra architettura armena e architettura sacra italiana vedi Alpago Novello 1990; e ancora Tosco 2013 su possibili modelli architettonici armeni a Milano, Testi Cristiani 2013 sull'elemento decorativo della losanga in area pisana e armeno-georgiana.

2 Decisa ma articolata appare in proposito la posizione di Pietro Toesca (1927, 484): «Ora, di tali somiglianze alcune poterono anche essere fortuite, o si possono spiegare in altri modi che per rapporti diretti; ma il loro complesso è così rilevante da dovere ammettere che le costruzioni armene abbiano avuto una propria influenza sull'architettura occidentale. Questa, dalle sue precedenti tradizioni, era bensì avviata a creare le forme romaniche, da cui poi ricavò le gotiche in una successione di stadi concatenati logicamente insieme, ma nel suo operare poté trarre dalle costruzioni armene, in cui già erano forme tanto consimili alle romaniche e alle gotiche, idee e incitamenti». Una piccola serie di giudizî critici di storici dell'arte italiani (tra cui Brandi) sull'architettura armena raccoglie Alpago Novello 1990, 70. Sulla storiografia italiana relativa fino agli anni '50 del Novecento si veda Lala Comneno 1996. Dà conto delle missioni italiane che portarono alla mostra di Roma anche il recentissimo Bevilacqua, Gasbarri 2018.

3 Un'introduzione generale a Cesare Brandi è Carboni [1992] 2003. L'articolo del 1968 è ripubblicato in Roncai 1974. In sede critica la metafora brandiana è menzionata, per portare alcuni esempî, in Alpago Novello 1981 sin nel titolo del contributo e riproposta, come già accennato, nella breve antologia dello stesso 1990, 70; appare poi in Piemontese 1997, 56; ricorre ancora di recente nella lettura che fornisce Zekiyan (2016, 372) dell'architettura del popolo armeno alla luce dei suoi fondamenti metafisici: «L'architettura armena, con le sue 'chiese di cristallo' dalle forme rigorosamente pure, dagli spazi geometricamente definiti, dalla cupola unica, offre una delle espressioni plastiche più felici della spiritualità dell'Armenia cristiana. Architettura restia ad ogni 'retorica' tonale e stilistica, sobria, lineare, essenziale, dominata da una tensione vertiginosa di verticalità trascendentale». In contesto letterario occorre in Arslan 2016, 11; in ambito documentaristico, pubblicistico e giornalistico, si trova per esempio in Grana 2005, 150; Kuciukian 2006, 32 e 2007, 127; Arslan 2010, 10 e 2012; Ferri 2017; Brugioni 2017.

A conferire un significato teorico alla metafora del cristallo entro la storia dell'arte è soprattutto la *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (vol. 1, 1901; vol. 2, 1923) di Alois Riegl, per esempio nelle pagine dedicate alla rivalutazione qualitativa dei rilievi dell'arco di Costantino a Roma. Riegl muoveva dal comune giudizio negativo che connotava all'epoca i rilievi scultorei del monumento, per contrastare, com'è noto, quello ch'egli riteneva un pregiudizio storiografico. Questo consisteva soprattutto nel «metro dell'antichità classica», unico vero criterio con il quale essi erano stati valutati e, di conseguenza, destituiti di ogni pregio artistico. Le caratteristiche di questa opinione negativa sono riassunte da Riegl, e consisterebbero nella pesantezza e carenza di movimento delle figure, e nella mancanza di adeguate proporzioni, tanto da aver indotto gli storici a evocare maestranze barbare; Riegl al contrario rilevava, come caratteristica emergente e significativa, la disposizione dell'immagine e, in particolare, la sua simmetria:

in compenso si ha un'altra forma di bellezza, quella che si esprime nella rigida composizione simmetrica e che noi chiameremo *cristallina*, perché rappresenta la prima ed eterna legge formale della materia senza vita. Essa è proporzionata al bello assoluto (individualità materiale), che naturalmente può essere soltanto pensato. I barbari avrebbero riprodotto questa legge della bellezza proporzionale, tramandata dall'arte antica, con espressioni da essi fraintese e involgarite; gli autori dei rilievi di Costantino, invece, hanno dimostrato una nuova legge e quindi un *Kunstwollen* indipendente. (Riegl [1901] 1953, 83 s.; cf. Riegl [1901] 1959, 78)

Il concetto di 'cristallino' in Riegl, applicato dallo studioso ai contesti nei quali frontalità, assenza di movimento, mancanza di realismo nella restituzione anatomica erano tratti evidenti dello stile (arte egizia, arte bizantina), assumeva in ogni caso un

valore positivo, consistente proprio nella sua «massima bellezza regolare». Al ritmo simmetrico della composizione e ai profondi chiaroscuri era affidata per Riegl la vitalità delle figure, che perdevano così in realismo, ma non in pregio. Se prima la forza vitale delle figure era affidata a un equilibrio, o fusione, tra 'bellezza' e realismo stesso, ora quelli che, secondo il pensiero di Riegl, sono i due scopi fondamentali della scultura, venivano a divergere, pur rimanendo entrambi presenti:

da una parte la massima bellezza regolata da leggi, nella più rigida forma della «cristallinità»; dall'altra parte il realismo nella forma più spinta dell'effetto ottico momentaneo. (Riegl [1901] 1953, 84; cf. Riegl [1903] 1959, 79)[4]

Il 'cristallino' emergeva dunque come metafora di simmetria e ordine; ma più ancora, esso era riconosciuto da Riegl come una norma assoluta, eterna (e perciò immutabile nella sua validità) della natura. In questo agiva in lui la tradizione scientifica ottocentesca, e l'idea di una natura creativa anche nella sua dimensione inorganica: una concezione nella quale era ancora vivo un sentimento tipicamente romantico e ruskiniano, se è vero che John Ruskin scorgeva nel cristallo un elemento simbolico della creatività della natura (Pinotti 2001b, 21 ss.; la passione di Ruskin per i minerali è ben documentata dai suoi biografi: Tyas Cook [1911] 2009, 521 ss.). Ruskin però guardava al cristallo come alla pianta e all'animale, alla foglia (goethianamente) e alla pietra; allo stesso modo leggeva nello stile gotico una dinamica organica. Eppure, se queste suggestioni erano ancora attive in Riegl, la metafora del cristallo quale immagine di rigoroso ordine strutturale cominciava lentamente, nelle sue pagine, a prescindere dalle sue origini fisiche, che rimanevano sullo sfondo a ricordare la forza necessitante della natura.

Il riferimento di Riegl al cristallo non doveva sfuggire a un teorico destinato ad essere

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4 Le osservazioni di Riegl vanno lette, più in generale, nel quadro della dialettica fra 'tattile' e 'ottico', che aveva ormai un certo passato filosofico. Il ruolo della vista e del tatto nella fruizione delle opere d'arte era già stato posto da Johann Gottfried Herder nella sua *Plastik* (1778); si ritrova in séguito nell'*Allgemeine Ästhetik als Formwissenschaft* (1858-1865) di Robert von Zimmermann per poi conquistare, negli ultimi decenni dell'Ottocento, l'attenzione dei teorici interessati allo studio della percezione, generale e artistica, come Robert Vischer (*Über das optische Formgefühl*, 1873) e Adolf von Hildebrand (*Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst*, 1893), fino a Heinrich Wölfflin e alla sistematica trattazione dei *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915). Si veda Pinotti [1998] 2001a, 147-82 per una ricostruzione degli snodi fondamentali di questo percorso di ricerca; sulla vita e l'opera di Alois Riegl, anzitutto Scarrocchia 2006 (e Naginski 2001 sulla periodizzazione della cultura operata da Riegl); tra gli studî più recenti, appare interessante Ionescu 2013, che torna sui concetti di ottico e aptico entro un esame più generale dei rapporti tra estetica e storia dell'arte al volgere del XX secolo, con riferimento a Riegl, Wölfflin e Worringer; cf. anche Ruffilli (in corso di pubblicazione) sull'uso di questo lessico critico per la ritrattistica romana del III secolo d.C.

largamente ascoltato, Wilhelm Worringer, che attingeva a questo lessico nel suo noto saggio del 1908, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (già ultimato nel 1907 come dissertazione dottorale). Worringer trovava nella metafora di Riegl un'espressione adeguata a rendere il concetto di astrazione, ch'egli opponeva all'empatia nella sua nota formulazione teorica, assumendo così che l'intera storia degli stili potesse in ultimo collocarsi entro questa dualità. Entrambi i poli originavano per Worringer dal tentativo dell'uomo di 'uscire da se stesso' (*Selbstentäußerung*: 'autoalienazione'), cioè di sottrarsi all'angoscia originaria oggettivandola nella creazione artistica: non vi è dunque antitesi assoluta tra l'uno e l'altro polo, ma piuttosto una preferenza culturale che dipende dal grado di conciliazione di un'epoca, o di una civiltà, con il proprio mondo circostante (Worringer [1908] 2008, VIII-XXII). L'astrazione aveva nel pensiero di Worringer il compito primario di rappacificare l'uomo con la natura, facendosi criterio d'ordine, di sistemazione nello spazio, tale da non lasciare margini di inquietudine.[5] E in ambito armenistico non pare fuori luogo chiedersi se anche nel *xačkar* – dove elementi ricorrenti, con un alto grado di stilizzazione, sono ordinati intorno alla croce in uno spazio rigorosamente delimitato – non sia attivo questo principio psicologico.

In ogni caso, nell'illustrare il suo concetto di astrazione Worringer richiamava la «bellezza cristallina» di Riegl, e coglieva contemporaneamente l'opportunità per spostare il concetto di astrazione dal piano naturalistico a quello psicologico.

> Le forme astratte conformi a leggi sono dunque le uniche e le più elevate in cui l'uomo possa trovare quiete di fronte a quell'immane groviglio che è l'immagine del mondo [...]
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> Riegl parla di una bellezza cristallina, che «rappresenta la prima ed eterna legge formale della materia senza vita. Essa è proporzionata al bello assoluto (individuale materiale)».
>
> Ora, come si è detto, non possiamo ritenere che l'uomo abbia desunto queste leggi, cioè le leggi relative all'astrazione, dalla materia inanimata; al contrario, è per noi un'esigenza

intellettuale supporre che queste leggi siano implicite nell'organizzazione umana (Worringer [1908] 2008, 22 s.)

Va osservato che la posizione di Worringer non gli impediva affatto di continuare ad assumere il cristallo come un efficace termine di paragone: ancora commentando un brano di Riegl, in cui lo studioso viennese evocava «la spiccata tendenza» dell'arte egizia «a una composizione per quanto possibile rigidamente 'cristallina'» (44) dalla quale si sarebbe discostata solo dove inevitabile, Worringer sottolineava che:

> Altri popoli, dotati di una minore predisposizione all'astratto, non tardarono a rinunciare a una tanto coerente rappresentazione dell'individualità materiale; il loro impulso di astrazione non era tanto intenso da resistere alla seduzione di concedere qualcosa all'apparenza soggettiva, e perciò si accontentarono ben presto [...] di fondere la rappresentazione con elementi di ordine geometrico-cristallino. (Worringer [1908] 2008, 45)

Il paragone con il cristallo cambiava quindi in parte i suoi tratti, non più ispirato, com'era in Riegl, direttamente dalla realtà naturale 'inorganica': gli elementi di ordine geometrico-cristallino diventavano il simbolo di un impulso interiore, quello di astrazione, che serviva piuttosto a riordinare la natura e placarne il portato d'angoscia. Il cristallo era qui ormai oggetto mentale lontano dalle sue origini geologiche, ma la metafora non cessava di essere produttiva.

Nei primi decenni del Novecento evocare il cristallo era ormai ricorrente, specie in ambito architettonico. Si trattava però di una comparazione che non prescindeva dall'altra caratteristica che immediatamente il cristallo richiama alla mente: la trasparenza. Viveva qui una lunga tradizione che è stata esaminata da Rosemarie Haag Bettler in un dotto e vivace *excursus*, che va dai testi biblici all'antichità classica, dal Medioevo dei lapidarî alle simbologie umanistiche, fino al Romanticismo con i suoi revival leggendarî, medievali e neogotici, per approdare al simbolismo e a Paul Klee (Haag Bettler 1981, 22-

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[5]   Una presentazione del pensiero di Worringer è in Pinotti [1998] 2001a, 104-10; dello stesso autore l'«Introduzione» a Worringer [1908] 2008, VII-LI, con la principale bibliografia precedente; da ultimo, su numerosi aspetti del pensiero del teorico tedesco e sulla sua vasta fortuna, si veda la ricca miscellanea curata da Gramaccini, Rößler 2012.

32).[6] Si trattava però di immagini legate perlopiù ad ambiti letterarî o mistici (palazzi e giardini di cristallo appaiono talvolta in contesti leggendarî, a simboleggiare purezza e luminosità: ad es. 23, 29). Quando perciò, nel 1851, in piena epoca vittoriana, veniva eretto il Palazzo delle Esposizioni di Londra e il *Punch* lo battezzava scherzosamente 'Crystal Palace', era quella metafora, dell'ariosa trasparenza, a pesare nella coscienza comune.[7] Un equilibrio tra regolarità geometrica e studio della luce si sarebbe avuto invece nel Glass Pavilion (1914) di Bruno Taut, architetto che negli anni successivi avrebbe prodotto una serie di disegni nei quali paesaggi naturali e progetti architettonici erano restituiti con forme sempre più geometrizzanti e con schiette imitazioni di cristalli naturali. Questo genere di ricerca formale si moltiplicava insomma intorno al 1920, ed è attestata da una vasta produzione figurativa di grande interesse e di esuberante creatività (rappresentata, oltre che da Taut, da Lyonel Feininger, Wenzel Hablik, Carl Krayl, Wassili Luckhardt, Hans Scharoun...), sulla cui dimensione 'cristallina' conviene rimandare ancora allo studio della Haag Bettler (1981, 32-40), e alle pagine di Juan Antonio Ramírez: questi ha parlato esplicitamente di un «contesto formale e culturale dell'espressionismo 'cristallino'» (Ramírez 2002, 97), testimoniato anzitutto dalla lega di artisti che Taut aveva costituito, la *Gläserne Kette* ('Catena di cristallo').[8]

La metafora del cristallo è ben attestata anche nella critica d'arte italiana della prima metà del Novecento, benché uno spoglio sistematico delle sue occorrenze esuli dai limiti di questo contributo. Faceva ricorso al cristallo come immagine di nitida lucentezza già Aldolfo Venturi in un suo taccuino del 1904: a proposito della *Madonna col Bambino e due Angeli* (ca 1495) conservata alla Alte Pinakothek di Monaco di Baviera (inv. 1052) e attribuita a Francesco Francia, lo studioso notava come la pulitura ne avesse guastato lo spessore formale: «inaridito così il colore, manca di sostanza, del pigmento attraverso al quale si mostrava, del cristallo datogli dal Francia» (Riva 2013-14, 174); e ugualmente in tanti suoi altri contesti ecfrastici, su cui ora non vale soffermarsi («terso cristallo del corpo»,

Venturi 1911, 92; «il volto del Battista [...] nel cristallo verdazzurro del cielo», «limpida luce di cristallo», 1921, 56 e 59). Alla variante organica della metafora del cristallo Venturi ricorreva, piuttosto, quando voleva descrivere il mestiere della critica, assimilato a quello di certi naturalisti: le competenze dello studioso fanno sì che «la materia che pare bruta e grezza allo scavatore [brilli], anche prima di essere detersa dal terriccio, agli occhi dello studioso del minerale, che ne intravvede la forma dei cristalli e quasi il loro fulgore» (Venturi 1922; cf. Giovannini Luca 2015, 110).

Ad evocare la metafora del cristallo con un'intonazione, invece, profondamente worringeriana, era stato nel 1915 Giuseppe Galassi. Fornendo una lettura del noto ritratto dei Musei Capitolini di Roma (inv. S865) tradizionalmente ritenuto di Amalasunta (ma che egli, seguendo Richard Delbrück, già riteneva dell'imperatrice Ariadne), Galassi affermava che «la materia organica disfatta ha compiuto la rielaborazione inorganica: gli atomi liberi dalla energia vitale si sono assestati nelle armonie metriche di cristalli: la sfera del volto, l'anello del copricapo, i globetti delle perle» (1915, 286). E termine di paragone diventava anzitutto un altro ritratto dei Capitolini, la testa dell'allora Decenzio Magno (oggi anche Valente od Onorio, inv. MC494), che pure gli appariva «immota e rigida [...] ma senza la cristallina regolarità della prima» (286), allo stesso modo di altri ritratti muliebri del VI secolo, nei quali gli sembrava «meno solida la compagine cristallina» (288). Più oltre lo studioso, nell'esporre i presupposti teorici dell'arte dell'Antico Egitto, questo faceva dire ai suoi «Egiziani»: «Noi foggeremo una nuova natura di granito e di basalto, una umanità senza vita e senza morte; noi ridurremo il mondo a sola materia inorganica ed ogni oggetto avrà la perfezione di un cristallo» (292). L'aggettivo 'cristallino' (declinato al genere femminile: «regolarità cristallina» come «perfezione cristallina»; «testa [...] tagliente e cristallina come diamante») ricorre alcune altre volte nel testo del Galassi con la medesima connotazione worringeriana, o anche riegliana, ma pur sempre mediata da Worringer.

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6 Analizza l'immagine del cristallo come metafora dell'anima Poggi (2014) in relazione alla nascita dell'arte astratta; cf. anche Raimondi 2003, 92 s.

7 Sulla ricezione del Crystal Palace da parte dei contemporanei vedi Donati 2016, 18-41 (in part. 26 sull'origine del nome, 35-41 su Ruskin).

8 Su questi temi nel contesto dell'opposizione espressionistica cristallo/caverna cf. anche Noviello 2011, 47-53.

Vi è più di un registro nell'uso che Roberto Longhi fece di questa immagine. Entro il saggio su *Piero della Francesca*, da cui traiamo qualche esempio, la similitudine attinge addirittura a una dimensione scientifica e sperimentale: ovvero non più il cristallo, ma la cristallografia. Dalle ambizioni prospettiche di Paolo Uccello «vennero fuori in pochi anni quelle stupende battaglie dove tutto il mondo pareva còlto in una rete magica; dove la visione era inflessibile come una legge di cristallografia applicata al cosmo, e ad un tempo, fantastica come un sogno» (Longhi [1927] 1963, 11). Eppure questo non bastava, per Longhi ad evitare un certo ermetismo di Paolo Uccello, causato dall'«enorme quantità di apparenze» che Paolo volle nella sua «superbia» immettere «nel pugno di cristallo della prospettiva» (13), dove la metafora mostra quella splendente costrizione che Longhi esaltava nello stesso saggio parlando dell'*Incoronazione della Vergine* (ca 1434-35) del Beato Angelico al Museo del Louvre (inv. 314). A proposito di quella il critico puntualizzava che «la scatola del mondo è [...] ben chiusa e sospesa, probabilmente, nelle sfere più alte del cielo, ma quel che v'è dentro, si svolge con una perspicuità spaziale davvero inaudita, come se tutto fosse tagliato in un gran cristallo di rocca»: qui il senso della perfezione formale e quello della luminosa trasparenza si fondevano in una sola immagine (15).

In architettura, invece, muoveva da una prospettiva purovisibilista Matteo Marangoni, che in suo contributo già pubblicato su *Casabella* nel 1934, e riedito l'anno seguente in una miscellanea di studî e riflessioni a vent'anni dal *Manifesto dell'Architettura Futurista* di Antonio Sant'Elia, così rileggeva i più celebri interni classici e rinascimentali italiani: «Dal Panteon alla Basilica di Massenzio, dal Brunelleschi, all'Alberti, al Bramante, a Michelangelo è stata una costante assidua aspirazione ad esaltare e acuire il senso spaziale; a trasfigurare la naturale vacuità negativa nella positiva pienezza dello stile. Grande è il piacere estetico – per chi sia degno di provarlo – di trovarsi in uno di questi interni, dove pare veramente di viver dentro un cristallo e di partecipare al ritmo di un mondo di perfezione» (Marangoni 1935, 30). La cupola del Duomo di Firenze del Brunelleschi, poi, «è veramente un miracolo di naturalezza e di essenzialità; e, a riguardarla a lungo, sino a dimenticarne il suo

significato pratico, desta lo stesso stupore intraducibile e incontrollabile delle più belle e perfette forme naturali: un cristallo, un frutto» (25). E nel 1945 *L'architettura è un cristallo* sarebbe stato il titolo del libro nel quale Gio Ponti avrebbe espresso il suo concetto dell'architettura quale 'forma finita'.

Nel suo saggio su Giotto del 1941 Pietro Toesca ritrovava la metafora del cristallo come immagine di rigorosa costruzione, e l'applicava sì all'architettura, ma dipinta. «Entro la cerchia della città il folto di case e di torri è netto e chiaro, nelle sue forme limitate e precise, come un gruppo di cristalli» (1941, 46): questa la descrizione che lo studioso fornisce della città di Arezzo liberata dai diavoli, così come appare, negli ultimi anni del Duecento, nella basilica Superiore di Assisi entro il ciclo giottesco delle *Storie di San Francesco*.

Cesare Brandi pare dunque aver assunto la metafora del cristallo nel suo significato più profondamente teorico, legato soprattutto alle formulazioni che essa aveva avuto nella filosofia dell'arte del primo Novecento, dalla realtà naturale inorganica che ancora viveva nel 'cristallino' di Riegl all'astrazione del cristallo come polo della *Stilpsychologie* di Worringer. Sono tutti elementi di pura geometria – lo «stupendo aggregato di parallelepipedi e di cilindri che offre l'architettura armena», la «mirabile purezza di volumi trasparenti e comunicanti» nell'interno delle chiese, la «grandiosa, limpida scansione dei volumi» – a suggerire infine il cristallo come l'oggetto più adeguato a esprimere la pulizia formale che Brandi vuole sottolineare (per inciso, non ci sarà dato sapere se l'efficacissima sintesi del titolo «Chiese di cristallo» – cui la similitudine di Brandi deve tutta la sua fortuna pubblica – non sia infine puramente redazionale). Brandi si spinge poi fino a definire «luminose» le chiese armene, oltre che «isolate» e «dure», collegando qui la sua metafora ad immagini più comunemente suggerite dal cristallo, anche a fini ecfrastici.

Del resto a proposito di Castel del Monte, «nella sua pianta d'una regolarità geometrica che fa pensare più ai cristalli di neve che all'opera dell'uomo» ([1960] 2010, 51), Brandi si era servito di una similitudine analoga, che evocava l'inorganico, come in Riegl.[9] Ed è ancora al cristallo – e al corallo – che ripensa Brandi quando

9 E ancora, in contesto affatto diverso, a proposito della pittura di Cézanne e della sua consistenza volumetrica (Brandi [1979] 2013, 1000 s.): «Ma la tecnica trascendentale raggiunta con l'acquarello mostrò a Cézanne che la presentazione dei

annota le ferite che la guerra appena trascorsa ha inferto al tessuto urbano di Genova, dove «la distruzione improvvisa di una casa» produceva secondo Brandi una rovina dalle caratteristiche inattese rispetto a ciò che eventi analoghi creavano in altri luoghi italiani, come Firenze o Viterbo: «Aprire un vuoto in questo aggregato di cristalli opachi, dai colori teneri e accesi dei coralli, era ristabilire delle proporzioni eluse» (Brandi 1947, cit. in Mazzi 2006, 199). Per i suoi antecedenti, nei teorici d'inizio Novecento e nel-

le pagine dello stesso Brandi, la metafora del cristallo giungeva dunque alle chiese armene con una storia consolidata e un denso sostrato critico.

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volumi, resi addirittura prismatici dall'incontro di pennellate a tassello, trasparenti ma non fusi tra di loro, poteva aspirare al duplice scopo di inondare l'immagine di luce conservandole una straordinaria dimensionalità volumetrica, quasi di cristalli che si formano in un liquido e con la dinamicità in atto della cristallizzazione. I gruppi di cristalli delle pennellate trasparenti creano allora come una trama su un ordito di luce assicurato dalla carta [...]».

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