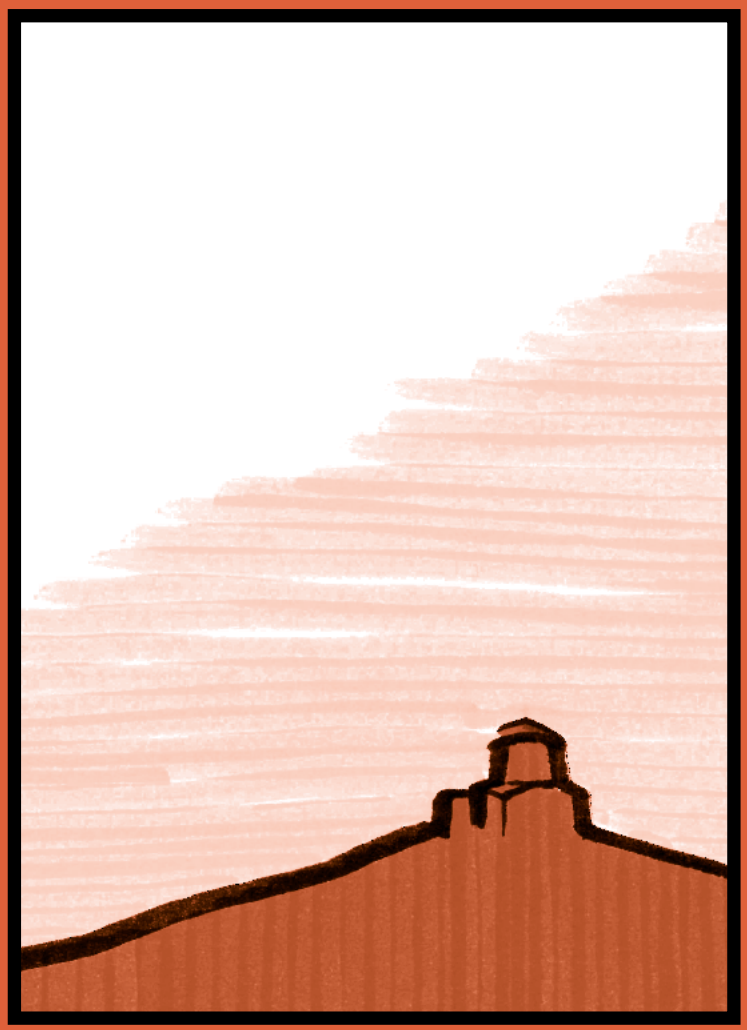
CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN THE MEDIEVAL SUBCAUCASIAN REGION:
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND ART-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES VOL. I

THE OTHERING GAZE:
IMPERIALISM, COLONIALISM, AND ORIENTALISM IN STUDIES ON MEDIEVAL ART IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS (1801–1991)



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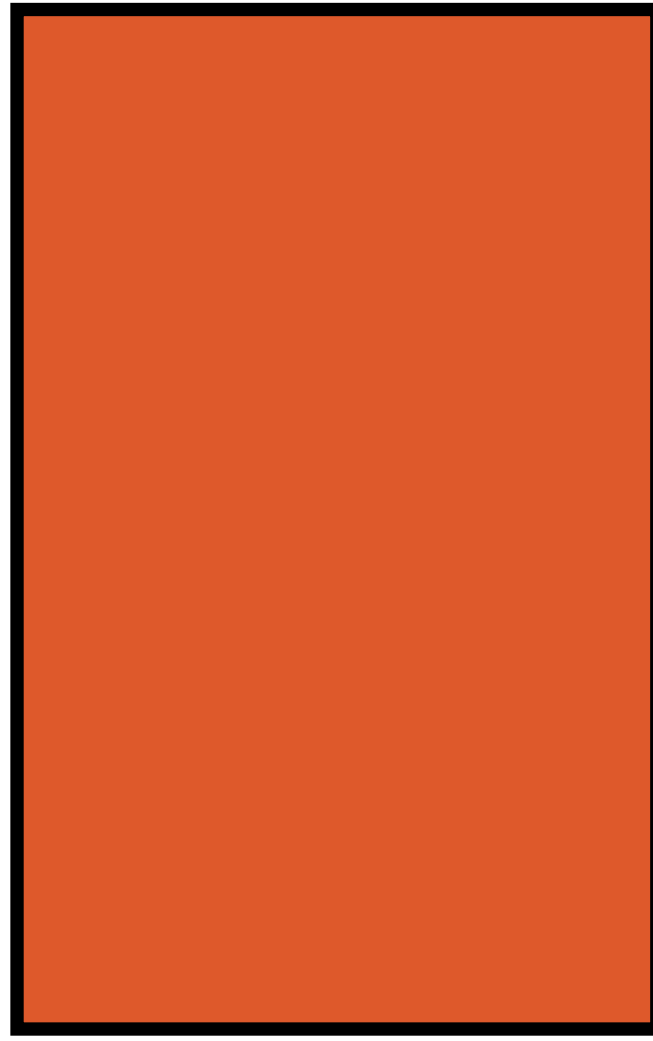

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The transliteration system for converting Armenian and Georgian to the Latin alphabet in the text follows the Library of Congress system, with exception for common spellings in English and cited works using other transliterations in the bibliography.

PREFACE

Michele Bacci, Ivan Foletti

The two-volume set that the gentle reader has just opened is the outcome of a joint effort originating from the collaborative project Cultural Interactions in the Medieval Subcaucasian Region: Historiographical and Art-Historical Perspectives (GF21-01706L). Funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the research that led to the conception and realization of this book brought together scholars from the Universities of Fribourg and Brno under the joint supervision of the two principal investigators Michele Bacci and Ivan Foletti. For three years, scholars from both research groups gathered regularly and exchanged knowledge, methodological inputs, and scholarly drafts at various stages of completion. Naturally, this also meant that we confronted each other's ideas in an open and stimulating critical debate. Field research in Georgia and Armenia and regular meetings fostering numerous exchanges of insights have thus brought about a truly valuable international symbiosis that aims here to propose an innovative look at medieval art from one of the most interesting (and still often neglected) geographic areas on the border between Asia and Europe.

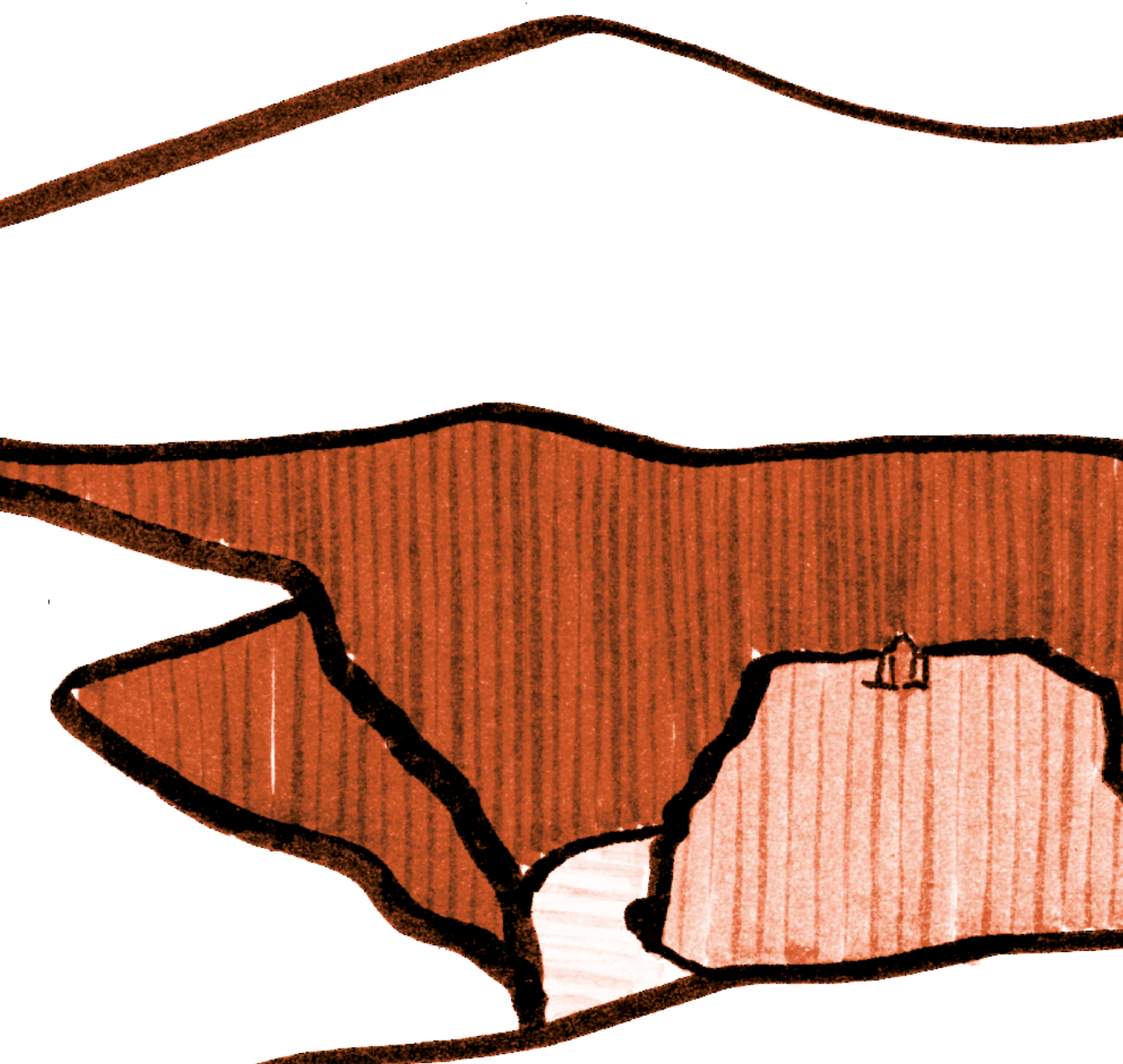
The first volume aims to presents a first, long-overdue overview of the mechanisms through which the history of the last two centuries has contributed (sometimes devastatingly) to the marginalization of what were major centers of pre-modern culture. It takes a sharp look at the influence of the social and political climate on those figures writing histories and shaping current events. The second volume aims, starting from relevant case studies from Armenian and Georgian contexts, to provide a fresh interpretive framework to medieval sacred space as a dynamic experiential environment that structures both individual and collective approaches to the "metahuman" sphere.

With this work, we aim to follow in the steps of such scholars – to cite only a few of our dear colleagues – as Patrick Donabédian, Antony Eastmond, Timothy Greenwood, Armen Kazarjan, Dickran Kouymijan, Christina Maranci, Annegret Plontke-Lüning, Ioanna Rapti, Stefano Riccioni, Zaza Skhirtladze, and Gerhard Wolf, who are so strongly engaged in giving an international dimension to the investigation of the visual cultures of the Southern Caucasus and in fostering deeper knowledge of one of the most significant regions in the history of human culture.

At the end of this long journey, we would like to express our gratitude to all those who made this project possible. First, the members of the Fribourg and Brno teams, who are also the authors of the essays published in this work. Second, the institutions that offered their collaboration and helped us in many circumstances, such as the Giorgi Chubinashvili Institute for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation in Tbilisi, the Georgian National Museum in its different branches, the Matenadaran Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, and the Embassies of the Republics of Armenia and Georgia in Switzerland and in the Czech Republic. Third, special thanks go to Jaś Elsner who graciously agreed to read the entire first volume and to provide his broader insights on the many steps which are still ahead toward a critical historiography of our field of art history. Lastly, but certainly not least, we thank the many colleagues in both countries who assisted us especially in our fieldwork activities, in particular Nazénie Garibian, Ekaterine Gedevanishvili, Ciciane and Mzia Guledani, Zaruhi Hakobyan and Mariam Japaridze, and the many more who, with their discussions and suggestions, contributed to the constant checking of our working hypotheses and research objectives.

DE-COLONIZING THE "SOUTHERN CAUCASUS": FROM ROMANTICISM TO RACE THEORY TO THE COLD WAR

Ivan Foletti, Adrien Palladino



The geographical area of the Southern Caucasus today encompasses modern Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, ranging from the Caucasian Mountains to the Black Sea coast of Anatolia in the West, through the Armenian highlands, and finally to the Caspian Sea on the coast of Iran to the East. Medieval Southern Caucasia was originally composed of the kingdom of Caucasian Albania (which mainly existed on the territory of the present-day republic of Azerbaijan), Greater and Lesser Armenia, and western and eastern Georgia, i.e., the kingdoms of Lazica (Egrisi) and Iberia (Kartli). The region, despite the quality and importance of preserved monuments confirming its place as one of the major centers of medieval culture and creativity, has remained until recently on the margins of art historical studies and its canon.[1] The purpose of this book is to uncover the grounds for such a paradoxical positioning in the historiography of the last two centuries. During this period which also corresponds to the birth and maturing of modern art history, studies on the South Caucasus were – as is the case for other geographical and thematic areas of what came to be called "world art history" – heavily conditioned by geopolitical stakes and by the social and cultural perception of the modern regions.[2]

Previous research on this issue had convinced us that the marginalization of Southern Caucasian cultures could be attributed to the gaze that the great world empires turned to the region and by the political games played there – from the early nineteenth century through the turbulences of the fin-de-siècle, the First World War and the heritage of its devastating treatises, and to the Second World War's aftermath.[3] In essence, this volume aims to outline how, from the first annexation of the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom in 1801, until the end of the Cold War in 1991, medieval art of the region was rediscovered, studied, and presented. In doing so, we would like to actively participate in demarginalizing this region by contributing to urgent historiographical debates.

IMPERIALISM, COLONIALISM, ORIENTALISM

The basic question that we address in the following pages is the way in which historical disciplines and in particular art history have been used, over nearly two centuries, by various actors that have been entangled in the region's political and cultural affairs. Conversely, we aim to understand how these same historical disciplines have been shaped by political and cultural circumstances. This is by no means a unique dialectic since entanglements between scholarship, politics, and culture have been outlined in many other contexts. These entanglements are particulary important to understand in the frame of what can be termed changes in regime, such as the transformations

1 On the issues around the canon of art history, see already the groundbreaking collective reflection Camille *et al*. 1996. Therein especially the contribution by Zeynep Çelik, pp. 202–205. On these issues, see also, with pertinence chiefly to Byzantine studies, Nelson 1996; *Idem* 1997. For similar issues within Islamic studies, Flood 2007; Shalem 2012, both with a rich bibliography.

2 On the issues and challenges around the birth of "world art history" and its more recent avatar, "global art history", the bibliography is exponential. See, e.g., Below/Von Bismarck 2005; Pfisterer 2008; Mersmann 2014. More bibliography throughout this volume.

3 Foletti/Thunø 2016; Foletti 2016; Foletti/Riccioni 2018a; Foletti/Rakitin 2018; *Idem* 2020; Foletti 2021; Palladino 2021; Palladino *et al*. 2023; Foletti/Rakitin 2023; Moraschi 2023; Palladino 2023.

of art history with the birth of modern nationalisms, and the discipline's reactions to broader intellectual and historiographical trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4]

A notable aspect of the region at the center of this volume is that it lies at the convergence point of three perspectives which shaped the region's historiography: colonialism, orientalist imperialism, and emergent racial theories (as addressed in the following section). Firstly, for most of the period studied (1801 to 1991), the South Caucasian area was largely integrated into the Russian cultural world, first the Empire of the Czars and then the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics **[1–2]** – with the dramatic results that we know it had on modern conflicts in the region.[5] The Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, one of the ancestors of present-day Georgia, became part of the Russian empire in 1801, while Eastern Armenia would follow in 1828. Following this moment, Georgia (1918–1921) and Armenia (1918–1920) founded states which, while short-lived, embodied a crucial moment of hopes for the future. After being occupied by Soviet Russia, these two states would have no autonomy but were always subjected to dominant rule as the province of a centralized and powerful state. This status, while radically changing in nature over nearly two centuries, carefully limited the autonomy of its provinces as much as possible. Thus, the South Caucasus endured a colonial relationship throughout this period.[6]

During the nineteenth century, the region was thus forcefully Russified. Saint Petersburg sought to limit (or drastically control) local religious and cultural institutions, while art and science were called upon, with increasing insistence, to demonstrate the inferiority of the region. In the years after the birth of the Soviet Union, at least rhetorically, this changed, as the policy promoted by Lenin explicitly made room for diverse national cultures.[7] The subsequent "Sovietization" desired by Stalin and presented as a step toward modernity had all the features of colonialism.[8] This included the marginalization of local languages, as these were tied to "provincial" and "religious" culture and were abandoned in favor of Russian – which Stalinists viewed as a rational, scientific language devoid of "superstitions". This time the colonizer-colonized model was built on the alleged scientific grounding of Marxist doctrine, but in substance little or nothing changed: it was Moscow, the center, that dominated the colony-like regions of the empire. During and after the Second World War, this model was relativized to some extent, but the substance of relations between the center (Saint Petersburg followed by Moscow) and the non-Russian-speaking peripheralized colonies remained ontologically colonial throughout the period studied. A further aspect is essential here:

[1] Map of the Caucasus made in Tbilisi by Russian officer Tomkiev, 1801

4 On history, art history, and nationalisms, see, e.g., Geary 2002; Passini 2012; Elsner 2020a.

5 Mahé/Mahé 2012; Rayfield 2012.

6 On the issue of Russian colonialism and internal colonization, two broadly discussed issues, see Gutmeyr 2002; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010; Etkind 2011; Tolz 2011.

7 Suny 1993, p. 146; Plokhy 2017, pp. 350–421.

8 Plokhy 2017.

art and scholarship were actively integrated into this process through which the empire wanted to demonstrate the goodness, rationality, and scientific acuity of its actions.

However, the Russian (and Soviet) imperial perspective is not the only one that determined the perception of medieval Caucasian art within art history and beyond. Imperialism and one of its most insidious tools, orientalism, affected all populations from West to Central to East Asia from a "Western" European perspective. Such perception of the Caucasus framed it as a place still savage and exotic. This view infected not only Western travelers but also the imagination of Russian soldiers and colonists, especially through the second half of the nineteenth century.[9] The Southern Caucasus has been variously

9 In general, see, amongst a vast bibliography, Barthold 1947; Said 1978; *Idem* 1985; Nochlin 1986; Lockmann 2010; Schnepel/Brands/Schönig 2011; Dubost/Gasquet 2013. For selected perspectives focused on case studies, see Scotto 1992; Gutmeyr 2002; Marchand 2009; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye 2010; Tolz 2011.

[2] Administrative map of the Caucasus in the USSR, 1957–1991

tied to West Asia, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe according to political and ideological necessity, which has generally been untethered from scientific definition by the continental geography of the tectonic plates. In this broader conception, most inhabitants of West Asia, including the Southern Caucasian populations, were considered unprepared for, or rather incapable, of independence. From the imperialist and orientalist perspective, they were thus viewed as ill-equipped for self-government, an ideological position opposing the principle of self-determination. Such aspects emerged with strength at each appearance of the hope for regional independence. Added to this is the diffused idea of the "Orient's" fundamental otherness and supposed irrationality, which contributed to the assessment of the populations (and their cultures) as somehow "backward" when compared to European nations. As we shall see, the prevailing conception throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century was of the Caucasus as incapable of self-governance, uncreative, unoriginal, and unself-determined. In parallel, throughout the nineteenth century, the idea of an Armenian and Georgian cultural world – close to that of Western Asia – that remained mysterious, savage, and noble was omnipresent. The volume by one of the best-selling authors of the nineteenth century, Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870), is emblematic of this attitude. After a trip to the region in 1858, Dumas wrote

of a violent, wild, yet wonderful land where pre-Christian memories, Christianity, the Eurasian Steppes, and Islamic history mingled somewhat harmoniously.[10]

In sum, large-scale political systems such as imperialism, colonialism, and the multifaceted instrument that is Western orientalism have shaped the history of the South Caucasus and its perception. We will see how these systems likewise affected, modeled, and determined the history of art historical studies on the region's monuments.

FROM ROMANTICISM TO RACE THEORY AND THE COLD WAR: THE TIMEFRAME

Beginning our studies with the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti to Russia might seem, at first glance, an overly pragmatic choice only loosely related to the history of studies. In reality, the year 1801 corresponds to the beginning of a profound transformation in the way the region was perceived by intellectuals and scholars in Russia and abroad.

Only scarce texts describe the South Caucasus and its monuments before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Besides a few early modern pilgrim accounts, from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the eighteenth century, some important accounts were recorded by the travelers Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689) and Jean Chardin (1643–1713), who were both traders in precious stones, and by the botanist Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656–1708).[11] The taxonomic collecting practices of these three travelers, and others, impacted the vision of the material "East" in Europe from the eighteenth century onward. They share the fact that they were sent on missions by order of the King of France Louis XIV, who had special interests in trade relations and politics with eastern regions, specifically with the Ottoman and Persian Empires. The main purpose of these journeys was not to visit Armenia or Georgia, but these regions often only consisted of stopovers on the way to Persia, or even to India. Travelers were, in this time, as much scholars as they were spies, bringing back a deformed vision of the "East". What emerged in this early period was the conception of the Caucasus as a borderland region, a buffer zone for neighboring and occupant powers. However sparse in monument descriptions, these texts retain considerable historical interest and served as valuable guides for later travelers and acted as a source for encyclopedic descriptions and atlases. They were also sources of inspiration for thinkers such as Montesquieu (1689–1755) who, in the spirit of early orientalism, looked to the Caucasus as part of the mythical and mistily dreamt Orient.[12]

10 Dumas 1859.
11 Tavernier 1676; Chardin 1686; *Idem* 1711; Tournefort 1717.
12 On Louis XIV and the Orient, see Dew 2009.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, these texts on the Caucasus frequently retained the same recurrent themes devoted to Antiquity or the supposed origins of Christianity, accompanied by references to ancient and Christian authors. Chardin notably used the ancient name of *Colchide*, i.e., Colchis, for the eastern coast of the Black Sea and Mingrelia. The mythical Colchis was the destination of Jason and the Argonauts. Two other central stories were that of Noah's Ark landing on Mount Ararat and the myth of Prometheus, located by the ancient Greeks in the Caucasian mountains. These were themes that remained the object of almost mystical fascination for European travelers up until the twentieth century. These early texts also contained innumerable considerations of the local populations, their manners, customs, costumes, and physical aspects, as well as their activities. Such proto-etnographic descriptions were not free of prejudices: they reflected the European conviction of the economic, technical, scientific, and intellectual superiority of European civilization over the rest of the world.

In contrast, with the seizure of power by the Russian empire, things changed: from the years immediately following the annexation of the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti by the Czars, volumes of Georgian history were published to explain the deep-rooted reasons – religious and cultural – for this union. These are, as we shall see in the first chapter, partly propagandistic texts that were generally not written by specialists in the region.[13] Nevertheless, they synthesized the historical knowledge about the region. In the first half of the nineteenth century, next to these volumes, we find mainly accounts of amateur travelers, but it must noted that the historical and artistic attention to the region became more and more important for Russian, French, and German interests.[14] This situation must also be seen in parallel to broader geopolitical games. In the context of the rivalry between Russia, England, and France, Napoleon's gaze on the entirety of West Asia, Persia, and the Caucasus will prompt travels, studies, and even, as a side effect, the creation of the first Chair of Armenian language in Paris, starting from 1812.[15]

In those same years and independent of "field research", a second essential perspective emerged: in the German Empire, in one of the earliest comprehensive attempts to write a universal history of art, the art historian Carl Schnaase (1798–1875), discussed in some detail the art of the Caucasus as an integral part of this great history. In Schnaase's art history, questions of self-determination and the local populations – intimately linked with their capacity to produce "innovative" and "creative" art – first enter the art historical sphere with full force.[16]

13 Bolkhovitinov 1802; Glinka 1833.

14 Muraviov 1848; Gagarin 1856. On travelers to the South Caucasus chiefly in the nineteenth century, see Vinson 2000; Niederl-Garber 2013; Sanikidze 2014; Doloukhanian 2018; Badalyan Riegg 2019; Ferrari/Haroutyunian/Lucca 2021.

15 See Amini 1995; for the Chair of Armenian, see Macler 1912.

16 Schnaase 1844.

The choice to begin our volume in 1801 is thus justified in our view precisely because it is a real watershed moment in the history of the region. For political reasons, but also because of the emergence of art history as an academic discipline, the first half of the nineteenth century is a constitutive period for studies on the region, but above all for the construction of the origin myths on which later analyses were based.

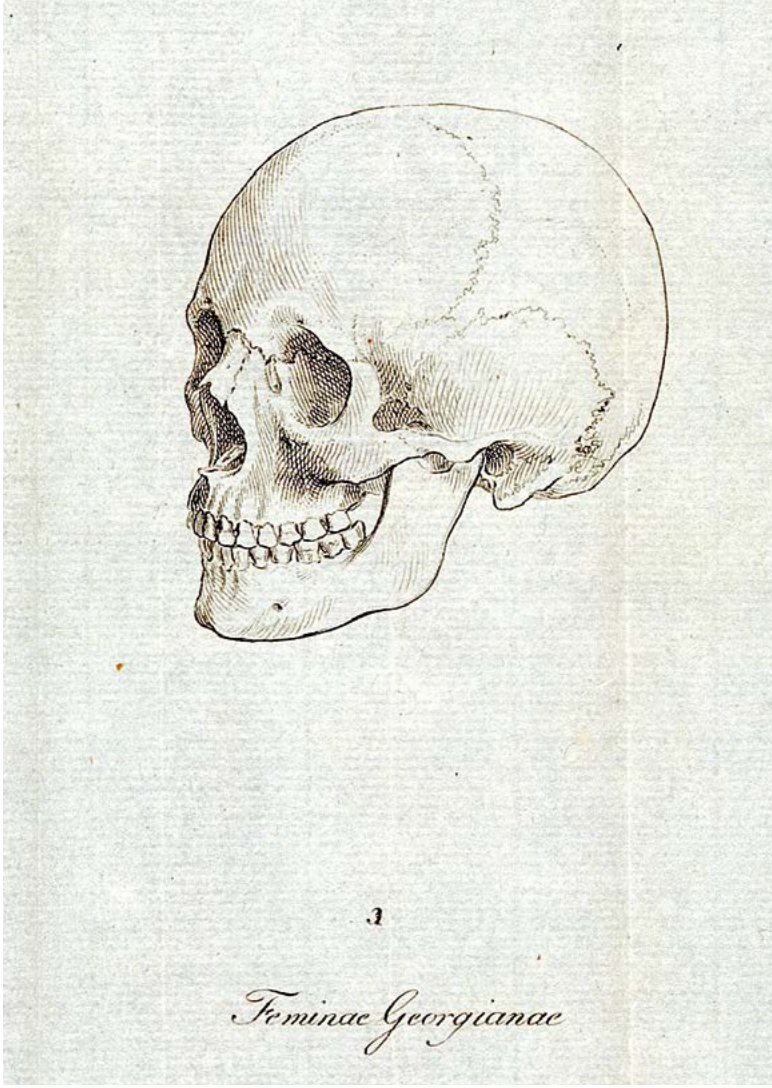
These myths enter into resonance with yet another crucial aspect for the Southern Caucasus and the inclusion of art history within the humanities as a scientific discipline: race theory. Indeed, the populations of the Caucasus and the idea of a "Caucasian race" – one of the three main racial classifications defined in the eighteenth century – are profoundly intertwined, a fact that runs throughout the narratives on the region's culture and art. With reference to Mount Caucasus and the myths located in the Caucasus – including the previously discussed belief in the region as the place of Prometheus' suffering and of the landing of Noah's Ark – figures such as the anatomist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) defined the umbrella term "Caucasian" as a racial phenotype based on cranial morphology. Blumenbach used the skull of a nineteenth-century Georgian woman to define the ideal cranial form for the "Caucasian" race, concretizing and cementing early forms of "scientific racism" **[3]**.[17] The outdated term "Caucasian" has a long history and, especially in the United States, is still inappropriately used as a synonym for "white", "European", or "Western".[18] In such a way, as early as the seventeenth century but especially in the eighteenth century with the formulation of the notion of race that was quickly applied and integrated into science and scholarship, the practices of marginalization and exclusion that had existed since Antiquity continued to be fostered by imperialist policies through a supposedly scientific basis.

Starting from the mid-nineteenth century and building on the long history of Indo-European languages and cultures, a distinctive sub-category of the Caucasian race emerged with the definition of the "Aryan race" – introducing a division between the "Semitic", "Hamitic", and "Aryan" races.[19] The earliest theory maintained that Indo-European peoples – Aryans – originated in India, then descended to Europe in successive waves, without ever indicating the periods or modalities of this alleged migration and conquest. With the parallel Indo-Germanic theory, chiefly Nordic and Germanic researchers maintained that the Aryans originated from the North. Throughout the nineteenth century, a whole branch of science was thus committed to these theories,

17 Blumenbach 1795.

18 For the problems related to the term and its application, see, amongst a vast bibliography, Baum 2006.

19 On the ideological construction of Aryanism, see Poliakov 1971; Arvidsson 2006; Demoule 2017 [2014].



[3] "Feminae Georgianae", detail of the classification of human skulls by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *De generis humani varietate nativa*, Göttingen 1795, pl. II

which, coupled with Social Darwinism and through the mediation of figures such as Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882), Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), Madison Grant (1865–1937) and later Gustaf Kossinna (1858–1931) and Hans Günther (1891–1968), formed the slippery slope on which the Nazi and Fascist regimes would embark in the twentieth century.[20]

The modern populations of the Caucasus found themselves caught up in these anthropological ravings, with the conclusion, initially on linguistic grounds, that Armenians were a distinct branch of the Indo-Europeans or Aryans.[21] As in the case of the theory of racial discontinuity from ancient Greeks to modern Greeks promoted in

20 Amongst an immense bibliography, see Poliakov 1974; Conte/Essner 1995; Hutton 2005; Weikart 2013; Chapoutot 2014.

21 A fact chiefly confirmed by Hübschmann 1875.

the same years by Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861), often considered one of the founding figures of German-speaking Byzantine studies, a tension between modern and historical populations of the Caucasus was thus clearly emerging.[22] The culture and art of the historic Caucasus became one of the realities studied to understand the migratory movements of Indo-European populations – a major challenge for the formation of modern ethnonational and supremacist discourses. Once again, notions of self-determination were central: in the same years, for example, figures as influential as Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879), familiar with Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853–1855), used the notion of "Aryan" race to include Russian art (and thus the whole country's culture) in the family of European nations capable, in the words of the French architect, of "development", following a general path of progress.[23] Art History, as a field, was and still is entirely infused with such notions.[24] Later, as well analyzed by Enrico Ferri, the Armenians' "Aryanity" would play a crucial role in the racial legislations of the 1930s in Germany and Italy.[25]

In art history, this linking of race and culture climaxed with the studies of Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), one of the most influential scholars working around 1900.[26] Author of the first monographic volume on Armenian art written in a "Western" language, *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa,* published in 1918, Strzygowski – a recurring figure in chapters two to four – contributed to cementing a link between Armenian architecture and racial theories that became inextricable throughout the early twentieth century.[27]

Racism, coupled with the birth of modern nationalism, also played a central role in one of the most dramatic events of the early twentieth century, the Armenian genocide.[28] The facts, which will be discussed below in the third chapter, corresponded to one of the first moments in European history when racial theories, extreme nationalism, and an unstable political situation combined, leading to a modern genocide – as it was later defined by Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959).[29]

Studying Armenian art and culture is thus indissociably linked with these histories. In Turkey, the genocidal facts were progressively denied. This was a country born from the ashes of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire but which gradually desired an ethnically homogeneous state and which became responsible for the genocide. Such dynamics ultimately contribute, until today, to the destruction of Armenian monuments remaining in the territories belonging to Turkey and Azerbaijan. This is, among other things, a burning topical

22 Fallmerayer 1830–1836.

23 "[…] *pourvus du génie particulier aux Aryens, c'est-à-dire susceptibles de progrès, disposés à s'assimiler tout ce qui peut les faire avancer dans la voie du progrès*", Viollet-le-Duc 1877, p. 99; Ouzof 1965; Savarenskaja 1982.

24 On race in art history, see, e.g., Jarrassé 2004; Michaud 2019 [2015], with a rich bibliography.

25 Ferri 2016.

26 On Strzygowski and race, see Marchand 1994; Maranci 1998a; *Eadem* 1998b; *Eadem* 2001–2002; *Eadem* 2001; Kite 2003; Grigor 2007; Labrusse 2009; more bibliography on him throughout this book.

27 Strzygowski 1918.

28 Bloxham 2005; Bobelian 2009; Bozarslan/Duclert/Kévorkian 2015; Akçam 2018; Morris/Ze'evi 2019.

29 Rabinbach 2005; Balakian 2013; Mamigonian 2020.

issue even today in 2023, as outstanding monuments – such as the seventh-century basilica in Mren or the Hoṛomos monastery – are threatened with collapse as there are no local authorities interested in saving them.[30] Sadly, throughout the pages of this book, we will also encounter monuments that are now lost forever. Conversely, the very large Armenian diaspora that was born in the aftermath of these genocidal events has supported Armenian studies with great constancy, contributing over the decades to their considerable development. Finally, from the 1960s onward, the genocide issue has been one of the catalysts of Armenian identity within the Soviet Union. The last years of the USSR were inhabited by the question of the Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaijani nations, an issue that incidentally was among the elements responsible for the collapse of the Soviet giant. Over the longue durée, the question of race slipped progressively into one of national identity, certainly constituting one of the elements that united the period under investigation.[31]

The final, crucial aspect historically framing our reflection is certainly the Cold War (1947–1991) and its ideology. The antagonism that arose between the USSR and the Western bloc –which had deep roots in the first half of the twentieth century – opposed, as we shall see in detail in chapter five, two different worldviews. At least in simplified theory, a Marxist worldview was pitted against a capitalist one. The impact on human sciences of these two systems' opposition was dramatic: the Soviet Union promoted, at least in rhetoric, a view free of nationalist concepts and barriers, but also a method centered on the social sciences. Moreover, Marxism was, by definition, hostile to religion and interested instead in social history – in what was often termed (and problematically often is still termed) the art and craftsmanship of the "little people". In contrast, the capitalist world was – in theory – interested in much more traditional issues in art historiography such as iconology or the history of political patronage. After the Nazi storm, studies in the "West" had also distanced themselves from openly nationalist historiography.

Nevertheless, the two blocs faced each other on all fronts – except the overtly military one – and artistic historiography was no exception. Complicating these seemingly straightforward dynamics was the fact that the ideology of Marxism (the "other" in "Western" conception), had deeply penetrated intellectual and academic circles. The Cold War thus corresponded to a period of ideological clashes between the two blocs, but also within different local historiographies. This period, in which politics had an obvious impact on the daily lives of millions of

30 Maranci 2009; *Eadem* 2013–2014; Vardanyan 2015. On the notion of cultural genocide, see, e.g., Balakian 2013; Kouymjian 2015.

31 Carrère d'Encausse 1978; Plokhy 2017, pp. 481–507.

individuals, thus concludes the course of this volume. Dealing with it seemed essential to us because – although close chronologically to the present day – it was an exemplary moment for understanding the mechanisms of interaction between art historical studies (not only on the South Caucasus) and broad socio-political phenomena.

To synthetize thus, 1801 corresponds not only to the beginning of dramatic transformations in the South Caucasus but was also a moment that inaugurated the first real season of critical studies on the history and the artistic culture of the South Caucasus in the Middle Ages. The racial and national theme seems to unite the studies of the nineteenth century with those of the first half of the twentieth century. The year 1991, conversely, marked the conclusion of an era – Francis Fukuyama's celebrated end of history – an era where public ideologies determined critical history in a more or less covert way.[32] The purpose of this volume is thus to show how deeply indebted the various narratives – eastern or western – of medieval art history about the Caucasus are to the histories of countries and continents in the centuries dominated by "great ideologies".

THE OTHERING GAZE: STRUCTURE, PERSPECTIVES, AND EMIGRATION

As these few historical and chronological issues highlight, dealing with such a broad subject is no simple matter. To better unravel the essential mechanisms, the chapters of the volume follow the chronological stages that roughly correspond to the middle of each century. The only exception is the period from 1915 – the moment of the Armenian Genocide – and 1921 with the annexation of Armenia and Georgia to Soviet Russia. The events of this historical period, which range from the Genocide to the end of the First World War and the treatises that forever altered the geopolitical chessboard, seemed so important to us that they deserved a whole chapter. Besides politics, these six years also saw the first professional journals and institutions dealing with studies on the South Caucasus and the publication of Strzygowski's *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, a volume that would change the face and the fate of Armenian studies.[33]

The question of a spatial structure, on the other hand, proved much more complex given the geopolitical transformations of the chosen period: empires collapsed, nation-states and totalitarian regimes were born, thrived, and vanished. Moreover, as we shall see in the following pages, scholars and publications were, as today, highly mobile: a scholar like Marie-Félicité Brosset (1802–1880), French by birth and training, published his most important works in Saint Petersburg. More than a century later, the Constantinople-born Armenian exile

32 Fukuyama 1992.
33 Maranci 1998a; *Eadem* 2001.

Sirarpie Der Nersessian (1896–1989) divided her life between Paris and Harvard's center of Byzantine studies, Dumbarton Oaks, publishing freely in French and English.

Examples in this regard are manifold, and we have therefore decided to divide the various chapters into five main language zones as "spheres of (scholarly) influence": the Russian-speaking, the French-speaking, the German-speaking, the English-speaking, and, finally, the Italian-speaking. Highlighting the language used for publication seemed to be a rational approach to dividing the chapters, although of course with its complications, as the reader will discover. This allowed us to overcome a major factor in the transformations of studies on the medieval South Caucasus: the act of emigration. Lots of the protagonists in this book were in fact shaped by emigration, and, in turn, shaped their place of emigration: some were born in Armenian communities in the Ottoman Empire and left the country in the wake of the genocide, while others were born in the Czar's empire and left in the wake of the revolution. Others left Germany or other countries of Central Europe to escape Nazism and still others to the various communist regimes. Some decided for various reasons, in Brosset's image, to spend part of their lives in the Russian Empire – Brosset remained in the empire of the last Romanovs for almost forty years. Still, others, as is the case of Patrick Donabédian, decided for multiple reasons to train in the USSR during the Cold War. Hence, the choice to follow the linguistic criteria seemed an appropriate path to approach such a dense historiographic terrain.

At the outset of this work, one additional and essential element must be explained: it is not only the choice of the languages of publication but more importantly also the omission of others – Armenian and Georgian *in primis*. In the introduction to the volume *Empires of Faith in Late Antiquity*, Jaś Elsner reminds us, speaking of the artificial construction of the pivotal moment that is Late Antiquity around the Mediterranean, that art history is a deeply Eurocentric discipline, rooted in the nineteenth century, the century of thriving imperialism and colonialism.[34] Whether one likes it or not, French, German, English, and Italian were thus the dominant languages for international art history for roughly the entire period under consideration. Since one of our intentions is to understand how the Eurocentric (and orientalist) view of South Caucasian studies was formed and how it impacted those studies, our decision to focus on the aforementioned languages seems rational. The fifth language, Russian, was the official language of the Russian Empire and the USSR, but it was

34 Elsner 2020a. On the issues around Eurocentrism in art history and beyond, see, amongst a broad bibliography, Amin 1988; Dussel 1993; DaCosta Kaufmann 1999.

also for almost the entire period considered the *lingua franca* of the border between Europe and Asia. It is in Russian, therefore, that the highest number of publications on the region originate; moreover, precisely because of the importance of Russian culture and language – studied just about everywhere in the world – it is these same publications that are often the most viable bridge for art historians who want to venture into the terrain of South Caucasian studies. The five chosen languages are thus considered here as essential instruments of the cultural colonization of medieval (and other) art in the region. It is therefore through these five channels that one must begin the process of the "decolonization" of studies on the region.

Our choice not to include studies published in Georgian and Armenian in this volume is threefold. First, scholars active in the region published – out of necessity but also out of ideological virtues – as much as possible in the five languages just listed. Only in this way could they guarantee their studies' international reception. More importantly, the purpose of this volume is not to study the phenomenon of self-colonization – i.e., the issue of the internal voices claiming to speak indigenously and autochthonously for their community in ways determined by dominant external scholarship – an aspect that deserves individual study and which we hope will be studied soon. Finally, to study the situation of nations within the Russian Empire and the USSR would mean opening a very different chapter, that of the role of art history in the birth and development of the national identities in the region. However fundamental, it is a subject that is beyond the scope of this volume.

Other historiographies are also missing – texts on the art of the region have also appeared, for example, in Turkish, Czech, or Spanish – but their impact was lesser internationally, both in numbers and consistency. Especially the Turkish perception of South Caucasian – in particular Armenian – monuments alone would require an entire book devoted to its individual investigation. Therefore, in this first overview focused on dominant historiographies – namely the Russian and "Western" ones – we have chosen to lay the groundwork for future systematic studies.

RESEARCH METHOD

While research on the history of art history is naturally indebted to the philosophy of science and epistemology of history, as it has developed over the last forty years, our methodological approach was simultaneously based on two critical perspectives. The first approach focuses on imperialistic and colonial attitudes. It draws on post-colonial studies,

going beyond simple interactions between subaltern and dominant societies.[35] This critical approach was used to address one of the main issues in the historiography of South Caucasian studies, namely, their role in the stereotypical representation of the superiority of "Western" culture over others. This aspect has been questioned for example in Byzantine studies in recent years in a variety of ways, often drawing on the broader framework of orientalism and post-colonial studies, as they were developed, challenged, and remodeled in past decades. Scholars have, in such a way, unveiled not only the ways in which not only Byzantium is a constructed entity and the ways in which it was shaped and marginalized by Eurocentric canons, but also the degree of methodological issues that can arise from scholarly attempts to de-marginalize Byzantium which in turn foster new historiographical myths.[36] From a methodological point of view, postcolonial discourse thus compels the involved scholars to systematically reflect on their own perspectives, attempting to avoid biased or restricted viewpoints. In other words, one methodological basis of this volume consists of a self-reflective epistemology, where scholars critically scrutinize the research of previous generations, as well as their own perspectives and potential biases.

Secondly, emigration significantly impacted the formation of South Caucasian studies, chiefly from the first half of the twentieth century onwards, by shifting existing viewpoints on Eastern Christian art toward a more international perspective. More concretely, the scholarship produced, for example, by Byzantinists who left Russia after the 1917 revolutions, or emigrated across Europe or to the United States before and during the Second World War, opened new horizons on Byzantine and Caucasian art as a transnational and "global" phenomenon.[37] The long-term effects of intellectual emigration are, we believe, fundamental and played a decisive role in shaping the field.

To reveal how much the two selected perspectives have impacted discourse in South Caucasian studies, the research team has chiefly worked on authoritative sources. By "authoritative", we mean printed sources that had a certain diffusion across academia and sometimes beyond. For Russia (especially in the Soviet period), this includes dictionaries and encyclopedias such as the Great Soviet Encyclopedia which were authorized by the regime and thus offer a compendium of knowledge at a given historical moment. In France, Germany, and Italy, the panorama is more heteroclite. In certain cases, we aimed to find and deconstruct what can be called "intentional fallacies", i.e., manifestations of personal prejudices, biases, and propagandistic aims, as well as the invisible workings of the intellectual, moral, and

35 E.g., Chaturvedi 1999.

36 For some intellectually provocative and challenging examples, see, e.g., Spieser 1991; Nelson 1996; *Idem* 1997; Cameron 2003; Spieser 2007; Marciniak/Smythe 2016; Marciniak 2018; Kaldellis 2019a; *Idem* 2019b; Aschenbrenner/Ransohoff 2021; Stouraitis 2022; most recently, see Anderson/Ivanova 2023.

37 See, e.g., Raeff 1990; Foletti/Palladino 2020.

cultural climate of an era in scholarly discourse. The conscious and subconscious mechanisms at play stem from a variety of factors, as already highlighted, from colonial gazes to nationalist beliefs, personal and religious commitments, and general cultural trends to personal experiences of emigration and longing.

CONCLUSION

In the pages that follow and that we offer to the interested reader, we would like, as far as possible, to lay an initial foundation for the systematic study of how the medieval art history in the South Caucasian region has been shaped (and warped) by nearly two centuries of intellectual, social, and political history. With our research, we contribute more broadly to the debate on the history of art history.[38] This is a field that has been growing rapidly in recent decades but for reasons in our view related to the colonial and orientalist problems outlined above, has never actually fully integrated the field of South Caucasian studies. Problems such as the initial assessment of Caucasian materials as belonging either to Byzantine or Persian studies or, for certain historical epochs, to Islamic art history writ large, are grazed here but not fully explored – scholars of Persian and Islamic art too are still plumbing the deep and murky waters of Eurocentric historiography.[39] The lack of complex perspectives on the history of art history in the region by scholars studying materials from the Southern Caucasus is all the more paradoxical when we consider – as the second volume of this joint endeavor hopes to show – the immeasurable importance and quality of premodern artistic production in the region.

With this volume, finally, we also enter a much more topical debate: as these lines are being writen, medieval Armenian and Georgian monuments are being systematically damaged and destroyed in eastern Turkey, and in the region of Artsakh, or Nagorno-Karabakh.[40] At least since the 1950s when Jean-Michel (1916–2011) and Nicole Thierry – two later protagonists of this book – thoroughly documented and photographed these regions, it is possible to trace, monument by monument, the vanishing of entire parts of our worldwide cultural heritage. Before our eyes, therefore, the reality of the region's medieval art history is being destroyed while it remains on the margins of the specialist's outlook. The prevailing indifference of the European and wider world public is partly determined by the orientalist (and colonial) gaze towards the region and its arts that we have outlined above. Discussing the last two centuries of studies is therefore also a means of holding up a mirror to the present.

38 See, e.g. Recht *et al*. 2008; Passini 2012; *Eadem* 2017; Elsner 2017.

39 Since Blair/Bloom 2003, see Flood 2007; Shalem 2012. On Persia, most recently Kadoi/Barati 2023.

40 Denécé/Yégavian 2022.

CHAPTER I

COLONIZING THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS, WESTERN ORIENTALISM AND THE "GREAT GAME" (1801–1856)

In 1801, the Kingdom of Kartli-Khaketi was officially annexed to the empire of the Russian tsars; this represented a pivotal moment in the history of the entire region which would, throughout the nineteenth century, be progressively colonized by the Romanov Empire. Political annexation immediately caused an increase in texts produced on the region in Russian. Following a slew of initial works of an essentially propagandistic and historical nature, studies on visual and architectural culture were progressively published on the Russian market. In the same period, mainly for political, scientific, and scholarly reasons, Western travelers crossed Georgia and Armenia, frequently reaching Persia through Trebizond and Ērzurum. Some did so as spies, part of political (and economic) projects pitting great Eurasian empires against each other. Such covert operations occurred over the course of the Napoleonic wars into the beginning of what was eventually called the "Great Game", that is, the rivalry between the British and Russian empires for control of Central Asia. Others traveled at the behest of various scientific and scholarly associations, and others traveled in search of the mythical "Orient".

These travelers, adventurers, soldiers, and scholars, with their writings in Russian, French, English, and German, began to introduce the region to a circle of amateurs across the European continent, provoking a variety of reactions to the newly gained knowledge of the region. Progressively and on this basis, the first critical studies began to appear, intrinsically linked both to the development of Oriental studies in Europe and to the emergence of Art History as a discipline, especially in the German-speaking world. The first professional scholars, in the image of Carl Schnaase (1798–1875), did not personally visit the region. Instead, data collected by amateur travelers served as a basis for attempting to tell a "universal" art history based on the accumulated sense of a history of styles, systematically linked with the history of different cultures and races' individual traits, thus connecting the discipline intrinsically to the bird of scientific racial theories. Western travelers and scholars fabulated stylistic links between Armenian architecture's common roots with European production and especially with the "Romanesque" and "Gothic" styles, terms which emerged conjointly in Europe at this very moment.

Two essential elements clarify this picture of the first half of the century: Orientalism and colonialism. The scrim of the Orientalist perspective forms a clearly visible aspect of all "Western" studies. This perspective was reinforced by the racial theories increasingly in

vogue in the intellectual circles of those years. The second noteworthy characteristic of this time is the colonial attitude promoted by the Romanov empire: local cultures were intentionally marginalized in the collective imagination, partially through the systematic Russification of the region. This context shaped a series of studies – presented in detail below – in which the art and cultures of medieval Armenia and Iberia are presented as products of an artistic periphery. This periphery was perhaps fascinating and splendid to some but considered by most to be on the edges of the "civilized" world.

At this time, more than ever before, the circle of scholars between Russia and the West was very small and composed entirely of polyglot figures with multidisciplinary training. They were thus (almost exclusively) men who read each other without language barriers. Moreover, their output was sometimes published in a foreign country: this is the case with Brosset, who wrote in French but published his research in Saint Petersburg, or the Georgian scholars and erudites who published in Russian in the capitals of the empire. Moreover, this is a period in which soldiers (and intellectuals) from various nations served the Romanov empire, encapsulating their often-biased perspectives in later publications. Naturally, these academic networks' diverse language zones formed a closely intertwined dialogue with one another, a fact that will be brought sharply into focus throughout the following pages.

RUSSOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *IVAN FOLETTI*

It is difficult to comprehend the Russian-speaking view of Armenian and Georgian art in the first half of the nineteenth century, as no concomitant studies exist. However, these were the years when the two cultural zones were gradually being annexed to the Russian Empire. The Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, one of the ancestors of present-day Georgia, entered the Russian sphere of influence in 1783 with the Treaty of Georgievsk, to be officially annexed to the tsars' empire in 1801.[1] Armenia, for its part, would be annexed in 1828. The two transactions must be understood in the context of what was then called the "Great Game" – the colonial competition that occurred in Central Asia between the Russian and British empires.[2] Such a complex issue cannot be clearly summarized, but to draw the broadest contours of the events one can say that the two empires exploited the situation to justify their own colonial and imperialist policies by pretending to fear each other's aggression, by creating constant ordeals, and by trying to thwart the other nations' plans, all while engaging in these acts by territorial proxy. The annexation of the Caucasus states was one

1 Gvosdev 2000, pp. 77, 127.
2 Hopkirk 2001 [1990].

[1] Evgeniy Bolkhovitinov, Voronez, ca. 1850

of the earliest acts in this tense and convoluted period – stymied by the Napoleonic wars – demonstrating that Russia's "strategic interests" in the region had not only economic motives but international political desires.

If we focus instead on the Russian-speaking perspective – published uncensored in Russian – the early, almost entirely historical studies on the region have a very clear agenda: history was a tool to justify the present. This is visible, for example, in the studies of Evgenij Bolkhovitinov **[1]**.[3] Russian by birth and upbringing, he wrote, from (and with the perspective of) Saint Petersburg a volume with the evocative title, "A Historical Representation of Georgia in its Political, Ecclesiastical and Academic State" in the first months after annexation to the empire. Its very dedication was a manifesto: "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".[4] The intent of the whole volume was to tell the story of Georgia as if a natural path had led it to become part of the empire of the tsars. This is an aspect emphasized right from the introduction where he specifies:

> "Since the Tatar yoke had been cast down, in slightly more than three hundred years, Russia has welcomed more peoples and tribes into 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".[5]

3 Zelenina/Lopuxina 2002.
4 Bolkhovitinov 1802, p. I.
5 *Ibidem*, pp. II–III.

In his volume Bolkhovitinov justifies this position based on one essential element: he proposes that such "subjection" was a "natural communion" between Russia and Georgia, due to their shared Orthodoxy. The narrative of Georgian history, from the time of Christianization at the hands of Saint Nino, was thus built on the idea that Georgia had from the beginning been part of a Christian world, where Emperor Constantine would be replaced by the Romanovs.[6] In this sense, Bolkhovitinov applies a concept directly developed by Alexander I and articulated already in the manifesto, published in 1801 during the time of annexation, to Georgian history.[7]

In 1828 Armenia became part of the Russian Empire. As is well known, most Armenians fervently hoped to be annexed to the empire of the tsars, as they were divided between the Persian and Ottoman Empires.[8] In this context, a poorly written volume written by Sergej Glinka appeared in 1833, which nevertheless bore a significant title: "Review of the History of the Armenian People from the Beginning of its Existence to the Revival of the Armenian Region in the Russian Empire". There can be no doubt about the perspective adopted as the millennia-long history of the Armenian people is told as a predestined narrative which Glinka represents as being fulfilled by its annexation to the tsars' empire. Glinka insists heavily both on the fact that Armenians supported Russian military operations and on the warm welcome given to the liberators.[9] The author thus consistently repeated the concepts of brotherhood between the two peoples, but especially emphasizes a kind of divine protection, since both peoples are Christians, as opposed to "infidels." Another key concept from Glinka's text is the idea that, in order to become part of the Russian Empire (and leave the Persian one), the Armenians were ready for anything.[10] The author tells of the many waves of emigration by Armenians to the Russian empire and concludes his volume with the tragic history of the Armenian people, who have always fought for their "national" independence. He concludes this gloomy story presenting the framework of a bright future, which he believes awaits the subjected nation. After centuries of struggle, he writes that this future is guaranteed by the new fraternal alliance with the Russian people. [11]

The reality was very different from what we read in these manifestos and volumes: the whole region became a colony of the empire. In Georgia, the spiritual union mentioned in texts was used to justify religious colonization, which was followed by violent Russification: even the Georgian liturgical language was replaced with Slavonic, in

6 *Ibidem*, p. 49.
7 Manifest 1830, pp. 786–787
8 Mahé/Mahé 2012, pp. 416–426.
9 Glinka 1833, pp. 254–256
10 *Ibidem*, pp. 258–259.
11 *Ibidem*, pp. 272–274.

[2] Pyotr Zakharov-Chechenets, *Portrait of Andrej Murav'ev*, Saint Petersburg, 1838

a country where only five percent of the population understood Russian.[12] As for the Armenians, once they entered the empire, their expectations of freedom were frustrated: not only did the Russians also apply a strict policy of colony and Russification, but in an unprecedented act, the empire decided to control the religious sphere by intervening in the appointment of the katholikos. Completing these invasive operations was the creation, in 1840, of the South Caucasus Viceroyalty, an entity conglomerating the two countries, implicitly trying to deny their particularities.[13]

The first text to deal with artistic culture in any interesting way was the travelogue of Andrej Murav'ev (1806–1874) – a Russian writer, historian, and traveler **[2]**.[14] In 1847 he made an eight-month journey to Armenia and Georgia, later publishing a volume entitled *Gruzija i Armenija*. Recounting his trip Murav'ev also dwells on artistic monuments, demonstrating his knowledge of inscriptions and history.[15] He is less attentive to architectural aspects. Of interest for this book

12 Rayfield 2012, pp. 260–261.
13 Mahé/Mahé 2012, pp. 416–426.
14 Khokhlova 1999.
15 Murav'ev 1848.

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

is his writing about the church of At'eni Sioni a building that stands a few kilometers from Gori in present-day Georgia:

> "Two versts from At'eni, further into the depth of the gorge, on the precipice of a cliff, above the noisy stream, in all its poetic beauty, stands the ancient desolate monastery of Sioni which reminds the best times of Georgia, when its tsars, due to their family relations with emperors, could prescribe architects from Constantinople [...] Queen Rusudan, daughter of Tamara, famous for her troubles, renewed the church; her face is carved, as well as the faces of Bagrat and his wife, on the outer walls, dressed in oriental robes, with other unknown faces,

> perhaps from the royal court, for they are represented standing reverently, with hands lowered. There are also some scenes from the Old Testament: Samson Tearing the Lion's Mouth, and from the Lives of the Saints, Eustace the Deer Catcher, and some Greek, Georgian, and Armenian inscriptions. [...] The Armenian Church names a certain Paul as architect, perhaps he was in the royal court, because there is no doubt, that this church could never belong to the Armenians, both in its inner structure and because their domain did not reach there".[16]

Murav'ev therefore is convinced that the church – which was regarded as "typically Armenian" or "typically Georgian" in later decades – belongs to a tradition that is emphatically not Armenian.[17] He also addresses the question of the building's patrons, its restorations, and its decorations. Most importantly, he does not hesitate a moment in explaining the quality of this artistic monument, writing that the best Georgian architectural production is the result of a "cultural transfer," from Constantinople. In other words, for Murav'ev, quality in a peripheral area like the South Caucasus can only be granted by cultural inputs from the center.

The second early art historical research is a document one might more properly call a visual culture text. This work was published in 1856 by Grigorij Gagarin (1810–1893), partially touching on the Caucasus but mostly devoted to Byzantine art.[18] A cosmopolitan personality and talented artist, Gagarin lived his entire childhood in Rome and then in Paris before returning to Russia in 1932.[19] At home, he frequented artists and poets and was even invited by Pushkin to illustrate some of his poems.[20] In 1932 he accepted an assignment for the "Asiatic Department" thus entering the service of the Tsar and was then sent, in 1834, on a mission to Constantinople where he became ambassador. In the years 1840–1841, he visited the Caucasus for the first time and was seduced by its culture, its inhabitants, and the monuments, which he delighted in drawing.[21] During his second sojourn in the Caucasus, from 1848 to 1855 – this time vested by the government with official duties in the field of the fine arts of the Caucasus – Gagarin undertook the task of restoring frescoes of monumental buildings in Georgia. In this capacity, he also contributed to the construction of Neo-Russian and Neo-Byzantine churches for troops stationed in the region.

His most interesting work corresponds to the volume devoted to the history of "Byzantine" architecture, which ranges, in his perspective, from the late antique world to imperial Russia **[3]**. A critic of Peter

16 *Ibidem*, pp. 101–102.
17 Foletti/Khakhanova 2023.
18 Gagarin 1856.
19 Kornilova 2004, p. 4.
20 *Ibidem*, pp. 8–13.
21 Gagarin 1847.

the Great's Occidentalist reforms, Gagarin believed – as did some of his contemporaries who were led by Nicholas I (1825–1855) to promote Neo-Byzantine as the official style of the empire – that the true Russian national art was formed in a Byzantine matrix.[22] A key role is played by his work on the Caucasus and in particular on Georgian art, which represents, for him, the place of transit between the ancient Christian tradition and the empire of the tsars. The volume reads:

> "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, *Akht'ala* and *Nekresi*, which are exceptionally adorned with iconographical samples".[23]

For Gagarin, then, the continuity between the Empire of Constantinople and that of the Romanovs "passes" through Georgia, becoming part of the Byzantine and then the Russian world. Implicitly, the cultural production of the Caucasus – as exceptional as it was for Gagarin – plays a secondary role in the grand history of empires.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Georgia and Armenia were annexed to the Romanov empire. In official rhetoric, this was framed as a liberation through the union of fraternal Christian cultures. In reality, soon after annexation, the Russian Empire began to treat the two cultures colonially, attempting to limit their cultural identity. This was enshrined politically with the creation of the South Caucasus Viceroyalty. In the middle of the century, art and culture also began to present the region as a place where ancient cultures preserved the memory of the great Byzantine Orthodoxy, understood as an ancestor of the Romanov empire. Murav'ev presented a concept that was crucial in the following years: the idea that the art of the region was culturally inferior and dependent on Constantinople.

FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the French view of the Caucuses was wrought by the many scholarly travelers visiting what was once termed the "Orient" writ large.[24] At the very beginning of the nineteenth century, Pierre-Amédée Jaubert (1779–1847) was sent by Napoleon on a diplomatic mission to visit the region, bringing back

22 Gagarin 1856, pp. I–II.
23 *Ibidem*, pp. II–III.
24 Early travelers in the age of Louis XIV included also Chardin 1676; *Idem* 1686; Tournefort 1717.

an exhaustive description.[25] He is one of many figures who contributed, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to the promotion of "oriental erudition" among French researchers against the backdrop of major military campaigns and diplomatic missions conducted by European powers in the East. Indeed, the wake of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798–1801) stirred up an extended moment of "Orientomania" which saturated the texture of the entire nineteenth century. In his trips during the campaign and then to Syria, Jaubert became one of Bonaparte's privileged dragomans, and his journey to Armenia and Persia between 1805 and 1806 was conducted as part of a secret mission. The purpose of the latter was to establish diplomatic relations favorable to France by wooing the Persian sovereign Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (1772–1834). This was an attempt to counter the English and the Russians and it occurred in the years just before the beginning of the "Great Game".[26] Twenty years after this trip Jaubert published *Voyage* as a professor at the *École des Langues Orientales*, a text which recounted his perilous route from Trebizond to Ērzurum, through Kurdistan and then to Tehran. The secret nature of this mission had forced Jaubert, who left from Constantinople, to carefully avoid English and Russian agents, but also to cross countries in a state of revolt, to escape from the captivity of the "cruel pasha" of Bayazid, and to cross, often by night, regions with nearly impassable geography. Considerations of visual and material culture are thus, not surprisingly, scarce. Yet, the work is still important for our consideration as it offers the reader insight into the background of a real political situation and a spectacular adventure narrative that shaped Orientalizing thought over subsequent decades. Jaubert's travel was one of the characteristic adventures that extensively fed Orientalist literature of the entire nineteenth century. Some thirty years later, *Voyage au Caucase* was published by the already successful Alexandre Dumas following his 1858 trip; the narrative follows Jaubert's established pattern: it is a journey sprinkled with epic stories about the landscapes and inhabitants of the Caucasus, creating a literary space out of the real which flitted between a wild and poetic Russia (that of Pushkin and later of Tolstoy's *Hadji-Murat*) and a dream-like Orient **[4]**.[27]

Two notable aspects of more academic explorations of the Caucasus should be noted, which also affected studies in art history. First of all, the *École des Langues Orientales* in Paris was given a chair in Armenian in 1812, making it the oldest Armenian language school in Europe outside Russia.[28] The first occupant was the Armenian Yakob Shahan Jrpetean, whose Gallicized name was Jacques Chahan de Cirbied (1772–1834) and as we shall see, many of the later incumbents were

25 Jaubert 1821.
26 Amini 1995.
27 Dumas 1859.
28 Macler 1912.

key figures in the development of French-speaking Caucasian studies. All renowned French-speaking Armenists have been involved, in some way, with the activities of the members of the *École des langues orientales*.[29] The other major occurrence was the foundation of the *Société Asiatique* in 1822, under the reign of Louis XVIII.[30] The founding of a society to provide a more formal setting for Orientalist scholars is situated in what might be called the "golden age" of learned societies. The Royal Asiatic Society was founded a year later in London, and the *Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft* somewhat later, in 1845. The same year, the last volume of the *Description de l'Égypte* was published, crowned by the famous *Lettre à M. Dacier* in which Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832) decoded Egyptian hieroglyphs, while key discoveries in the decipherment of Old Persian cuneiform also happened. A revived curiosity in a conflated "Orient" writ large thus characterized these years.

Among the founding members of the *Société Asiatique* were figures such as Champollion himself, but also personalities such as Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758–1838) and one of the founding figures of Armenian studies in Europe, Antoine-Jean Saint-Martin (1791–1832).[31] He was the first editor of the *Journal asiatique*, the *Société*'s publication organ, and had published two volumes of *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l'Arménie* (1818–1819) a few years earlier.[32] The first volume presented the inaugural accessible translations of the geographies attributed to Movses Khorenatsi and Vartan as well as a series of other crucial texts, at a time when the Mekhitarists in Venice and later Vienna had not yet produced modern dictionaries or printed the Armenian authors of the Middle Ages. Although Saint-Martin died of cholera too young to have a greater impact on both this field of study and that of his other field of interest, Mesopotamian studies – which were also blooming in these years –, his translations were fundamental to all those who studied Armenia and its history throughout the nineteenth century.[33] His work was foundational to key figures such as Édouard Dulaurier (1807–1881), Victor Langlois (1829–1869), and Marie-Félicité Brosset (1802–1880).

Outside of strictly "oriental studies", the field of art history – or what was then called "medieval archaeology" – was still in its infancy in the 1830s. Following founding figures such as Arcisse de Caumont (1801–1873), it focused on developing a taxonomy that classified the knowledge of beings and historical objects according to identical modalities within a single system of representation and designation.[34] Discussions flourished on the origins and diffusions of architectural

29 Doloukhanian 2018, *passim*. One must also note that the *Fonds des manuscrits arméniens* of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France goes back to the sixteenth century, with some manuscripts acquired in the seventeenth and then increasingly in the eighteenth century. These formed a strong basis for teaching and translations at the École des langues orientales.

30 On the *Société asiatique*, see Finot 1922; Mouton/Grimal 2022. Not only French scholars were involved: the German linguist von Klaproth, mentioned elsewhere in this book, also participated in the founding of the *Société*.

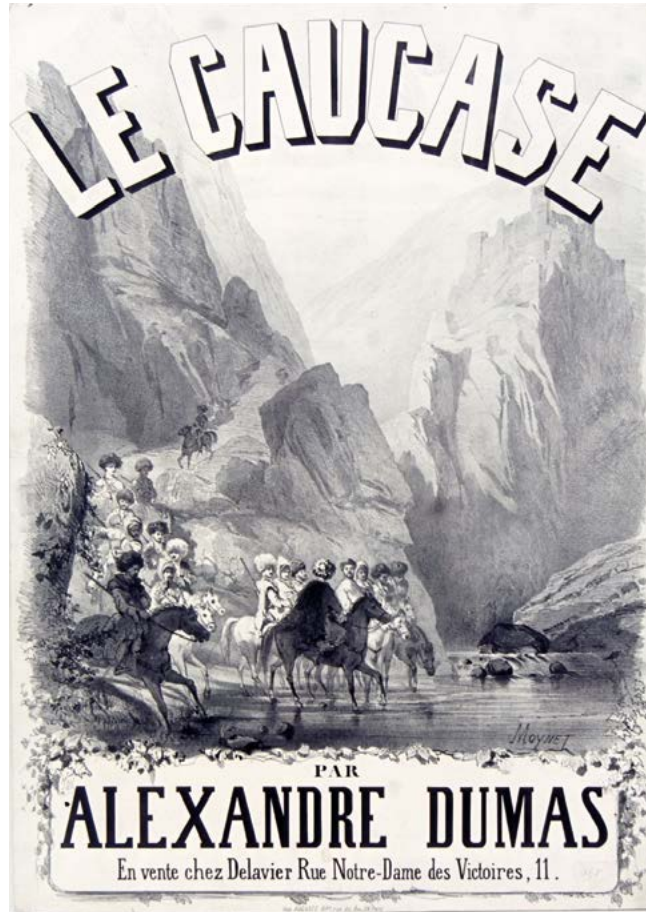
31 On Saint-Martin, see Brosset 1833; De Sacy 1839.

32 Saint-Martin 1818–1819.

33 On the impact of the field of Mesopotamian studies, including the Urartu civilization, on the study of Asia Minor and the Middle East more broadly, see Charpin 2022.

34 See Nayrolles 2005, pp. 81–103.

[4] "Le Caucase par Alexandre Dumas", commercial print by Jean-Pierre Moynet, 1845



styles such as the "Romanesque", the "Gothic", or the later but crucial notion of "Byzantine". For example, Ludovic Vitet (1802–1873), the first *Inspecteur général des monuments historiques* in France, was one of the earliest scholars in the 1830s to introduce the notion of "Byzantine" (or "*néo-grec*") influence. He even went so far as to consider that influences coming from the Byzantine world were the driving force behind Western architectural development until the invention of a genuinely European style, the "Gothic".[35] Such discussions span the entire nineteenth century and are fundamental if we are to understand the thoughts that were projected on the monuments of the Caucasus. Different positioning towards the origins of the "Romanesque" or "Gothic" created diverging attitudes amongst scholars and scholarly communities rooted in this foundational moment for "medieval archaeology" in the 1830s.

35 Vitet 1830. See also Brownlee 1991.

In these years, figures such as Caumont or Vitet had only a vague idea of what "Byzantine" architecture meant. French "Byzantinism" had existed since the times of Du Cange (1610–1688), but there were few materials presenting the "Byzantine" churches of Greece, Anatolia, and beyond. Furthermore, most travelers to Greece were interested in the antique and not in medieval heritage. It was only the Treaty of Adrianople signed in 1829 between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, that effectively marked the end of the conflict between these two powers, permitting a broader opening of the Bosporus Strait to Western fleets and travelers and thus easy access into Asia Minor.[36] Admittedly, some publications already made "Byzantine Greek" architecture available to scholars in the 1830s following the Morea expedition of 1828–1833 during the Greek War of Independence, but this endeavor was still predominantly focused on antique heritage.[37] The nature of "Byzantine" Christian architecture was only made more widely known with the studies of Albert Lenoir (1801–1891) after his trip to the East in 1836, with the publication in 1842 of André Couchaud's (1813–1849) important volume *Choix d'églises bysantines en Grèce*, and with the famous studies of Adolphe-Napoléon Didron (1806–1867).[38] These studies began, in the 1840s, a long-lasting tradition of "Byzantine studies" which would have a profound impact on the ways in which the Christian East would later be studied.

The formulation of "Byzantine" and "medieval" as stylistic categories frame the careers of two figures of scholar-travelers who bear special importance for the francophone history of the art history of the Southern Caucasus in the first half of the nineteenth century. These are, on the one hand, the Swiss Frédéric DuBois de Montperreux (1798–1850) and the Frenchman Charles Félix Marie Texier (1802–1871). Both traveled in 1833 in the wake of the Treaty of Adrianople and brought back fundamental materials for the future of studies on the Caucasus.

Frédéric DuBois de Montperreux, born in Môtiers in Switzerland, was among the first researchers to travel extensively in the Caucasus between 1831 and 1834.[39] He brought back exceptional documentation from his trip. Due both to his exhaustiveness and to the quality of the reproductions of monuments, published a few years later in six volumes, these had a profound impact on later studies.[40] In addition to excellent reproductions and suggestions for reconstruction, his hypothetical reconstruction of Etchmiadzin is noteworthy and was still used years later by scholars such as Toros T'oramanean (1864–1934) and Armen Khatchatrian (1909–1967). DuBois is amongst the first to demonstrate a proper art historical interest in the materials of

36 Ciachir 2017.
37 Blouet *et al.* 1831–1838.
38 See chiefly Lenoir 1836; *Idem* 1840; Couchaud 1842; Didron 1845.
39 On DuBois, see Knoepfler 1998; Maranci 2000, pp. 8–18; *Eadem* 2001; Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 44–71.
40 DuBois de Montperreux 1839–1849.

the Caucasus and to outline a comprehensive system of development centered on Armenian architecture. DuBois began his trip in Georgia, in Kutaisi, and subsequently considered Georgian architecture to be dependent on both Byzantine and Armenian architecture, which he judged superior. From the outset, he thus makes a clear distinction between "Georgian" and "Armenian" architecture, leading to a controversy that would endure through generations of later art historians. In particular, Georgian scholars Rusudan Mepisashvili (1913–2002) and Vakhtang Tsintsadze (1915–1993) attribute to DuBois the error of judging Georgian art to be dependent on that of Armenia.[41] DuBois tried to demonstrate the superiority of Armenian architecture with a comparative approach, for example, with the cathedral of Bagrati (then in a ruined state), or with the church of At'eni Sioni **[5]**, which he judged to be dependent on the Armenian architects and on the prototypes of Saint Hṛipsimē and Gayanē in Vagharshapat, an idea that continued to be broadly discussed in later historiography.[42] In doing so, DuBois identifies Armenian art as an individual "style" as early as the first half of the nineteenth century. For DuBois, the particularity of the Armenian style can only be explained in relation to the proximity of the ancient Near East but also with some impositions, without much success, of Greek architecture, as for example at Gaṛni:

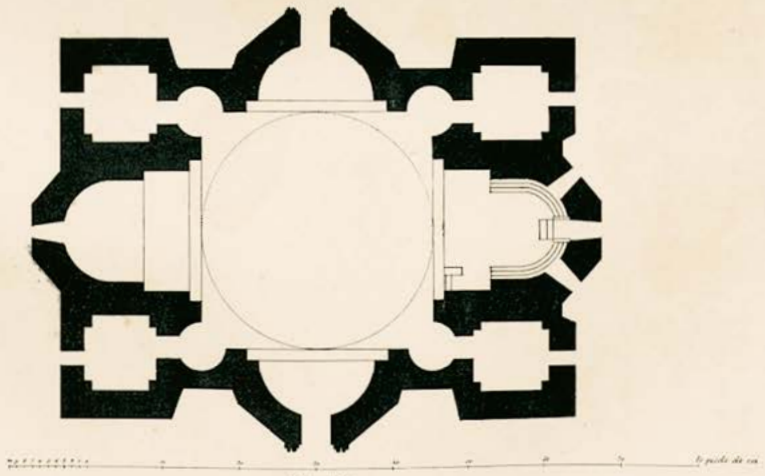
> "In Georgia, the oldest church, founded in about 300 by Mirian, was made of wood. It was only in 370 that a stone one was substituted; for a long time, the Georgians followed the Armenian style in their constructions, for the Armenians were their masters. The first church of Armenia, also built under Trdat, when Saint Gregory the Illuminator converted him to Christianity after the year 275, had its pediments and cornices decorated with coffering. [...] The Armenians remained faithful to this ancient oriental style, to this luxury of ornaments and carvings, to these massive forms which one notices in the porticoes of Persepolis, in the tombs of the kings, and which were perhaps only the echo of the monuments of Egypt... Combining this style with the needs and with the shape of their churches, they created a sacred architecture of their own. The churches of Saint Hṛipsimē and Saint Gayanē in Vagharshapat, which are supposed to be from the sixth century, are the prototype".[43]

41 Mepisaschwili/Zinzadse 1977, pp. 8–9.

42 On At'eni Sioni, see Foletti/Khakhanova 2023 in vol. II.

43 DuBois de Montperreux 1839–1849, vol. I, pp. 406–407.

VUE PRISE DE L'OUEST.



PLAN

ÉGLISE EPISCOPALE DE SION, DANS LA VALLÉE D'ATÈNE.

(Karthli)

[5] View of the Church of At'eni Sioni, from Frédéric DuBois de Montperreux, *Voyage autour du Caucase*, 1838–1849

In sum, DuBois can be seen as one of the founders of art historical studies on Armenia. He underlined some of the questions that were central to later research (francophone and beyond) including the question of the relationship between Armenian and Georgian architecture and that of ornament as one of the key elements of this architecture, considered here as "oriental". DuBois' journey is also striking in its scope: in addition to the territories of Georgia, he traveled through Armenia in the vicinity of Yerevan and even further, from Vagharshapat to Geghard – where he reproduced the splendid "chapel of the lions" – moving on to Dvin, Khor Virap, up to the foot of Mount Ararat, where he saw the church of Saint Hakob of Ak'ori, destroyed only a few years later by an earthquake. He then pursued south to the cemetery of Julfa, and many other places. Notable absent are the ruins of Ani. Due to problems related to sanitary laws, DuBois does not manage to reach the old capital, on the Turkish territory, and does not hide his immense disappointment when he is denied seeing these "magnificent ruins".[44]

However, this is not the case for the next traveler, Charles Texier, who built a whole interpretative system for the art of the Caucasus based on his considerations of the ruins of the ancient capital. Texier, trained as an architect at the École des Beaux-Arts before becoming Inspector of Public Works, was sent on an official mission by the French Minister of Public Instruction in 1833 to explore monumental heritage in various regions of Asia Minor. In the first work brought back from his travels, *Descriptions de l'Asie Mineure*, Texier – not being specially trained in medieval archaeology – deals first with the ancient monuments which were then the object of rivalries between Germans, English, and French in the region. In 1834, he discovered the ruins of the ancient Hittite capital, Hattusa.[45] A second expedition, this time privately financed, took him as far as Persia and is more interesting for our purpose: on his way to Persia from Constantinople, Texier stopped in Trebizond, providing one of the first representations of the Church of Saint Sophia, and then he made his way across Armenia.[46] He brought back exceptional drawings of the buildings and ruins of Ani, the historical capital of the Bagratid Armenian kingdom in the tenth and eleventh centuries **[6]**. From his considerations on the monuments of Ani, a sketch of the scholar's thought on the art of eleventh-century Armenia emerges. What struck Texier at Ani was immediately the impression of a style which "[...] has no comparison in the West, and seems to be particular to Armenia: to give an idea, one could say that it is a mixture of Byzantine and Arabic".[47] Trained in the methods and criteria of Western architecture as described above,

44 *Ibidem*, vol. III , p. 437.

45 Texier 1839–1849. See Portnoff 2008; on Texier's contribution to the study of the Byzantine and Ottoman monuments of Constantinople and on the early study of Islamic architecture, see Pedone 2012; *Eadem* 2013.

46 Texier 1842–1852. As the author explains in the introduction, while the second expedition started as a state-financed trip, the travel was then paid for by the Marquis de La Guiche and the Comte de la Bourdonnaye. On Texier's travel to the Caucasus, see Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 72–87.

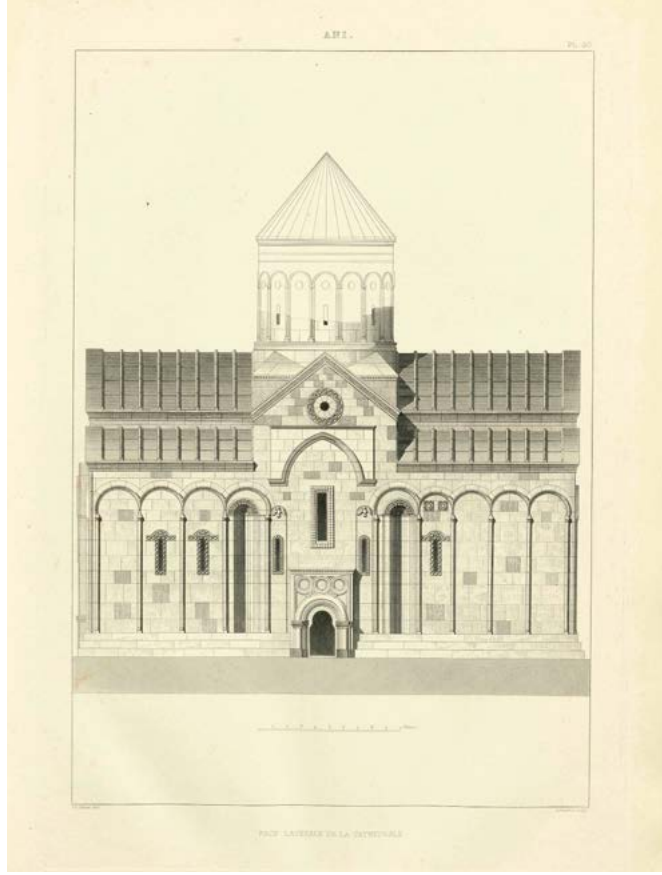
47 Texier 1842–1852, vol. I, p. IX: "*Le style de ses monuments n'a pas d'analogue connu en Occident, et semble être particulier à l'Arménie : pour en donner une idée, on pourrait dire que c'est un mélange de byzantin et d'arabe*".

Texier could not hide his surprise when talking about the cathedral of Ani, which was built between 989 and 1001. In it, he discovers the disruption of the evolutionary order that led from Romanesque to Gothic architecture, from the semicircular arch to the pointed arch **[7]**:

> "Any man who has studied the progress of medieval art in Europe will be inclined to regard this building as a work of the thirteenth century; indeed, it bears all the hallmarks of that period; but the date inscribed on the portal proves that it is much older, and that the pointed arch was in use in Armenia at a time when the Romanesque style was the only one in use in Europe".[48]

We find here, for one of the first times, the genealogy of an idea that was formulated some years later in Austen Henry Layard's (1817–1894) studies: the Eastern – Persian and possibly Armenian – origin of one of the most characteristic shapes of "Gothic" architecture, the pointed arch. This question goes far beyond Francophone academia

48 Texier 1842–1852, vol. I, p. 112.



[6] View of the fortifications of Ani, from Charles Texier, *Description de l'Arménie, la Perse et la Mésopotamie*, 1842–1852

[7] Side view of Ani Cathedral, from Charles Texier, *Description de l'Arménie, la Perse et la Mésopotamie*, 1842–1852

and will be widely discussed in the first half of the twentieth century by researchers such as Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) or Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1903–1988), in particular in light of new discoveries made in the Middle East by Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969) and Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948).[49] In the period immediately following, this question enters into an enduring dialogue with debates on national style and architecture, with the emerging field of non-Western art history (notably Islamic), and within the broad debate on the Eurocentric versus non-Eurocentric origins of Western medieval architecture. In this question, the Caucasus as a mediator of forms played a central role.

ANGLOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

In Britain, the search for the ancient East became, over the nineteenth century, a matter of imperialist pride. The same figures responsible for the development of the field of Near Eastern archaeology are also those who crossed the regions of Greater Armenia and Georgia. In

49 On Layard's perspective, see pp. 52–54 in this volume. For the twentieth-century fortune of this idea, see, e.g., Baltrušaitis 1936; a topic still discussed by Bettini 1961. For an opposed view seeing the pointed arch already as a key-component of Roman architecture, see the influential text of Rivoira 1914. See also Briggs 1933 and the response by Pope 1933.

doing so, they often highlighted the links between materials from the Near East and the visual and material culture of the Southern Caucasus. Yet, neither Georgia nor Armenia apparently had anything remotely ancient enough to fully fascinate British archaeologists and travelers of the first half of the nineteenth century. Most figures traveling at this time took on the same orientalist attitude towards these regions as that adopted toward the third of the world broadly termed the "East" by other Europeans.

Two of the earliest scholar-travelers who reached the Caucasus on their way to Persia were James Morier (1780–1849) and Sir Robert Ker Porter (1777–1842). Morier, who carried the middle name "Justinian", was to a certain extent predisposed to travels in the East: he was born in 1780 in Smyrna, then part of the Ottoman Empire, to a mercantile family, and as a young man entered British diplomatic services. He published travelogues as a British envoy to Persia where he resided for nearly six years (1808–1809, 1810–1814) and, a bit later, became a successful writer of Orientalist novels such as his bestselling *Adventures of Haji Baba of Ispahan*.[50] Unsurprisingly, the novel portrays Persians (and "Orientals" more generally) as "rascals, cowards, puerile villains, and downright fools, depicting their culture as scandalously dishonest and decadent, and their society as violent" and served more as "a reassurance of Europe's cultural and moral superiority and the civilizing mission of the imperial powers".[51] The books from Morier's two journeys crossing the Caucasus, filled with condescendence and cynicism, contain little to no valuable information regarding material and visual culture: while he mentions the solidity and sturdiness of Armenian stone constructions, he judges them barely worthy of notice – with exception of the classical architecture at Gaṛni. Morier's view is more focused on Persia, the place where he conducted excavations, but also where he finds – as many of his contemporaries – a living repertoire for much sought-after orientalist writings.[52]

The second, more noteworthy figure, Robert Ker Porter, a native of Scotland, spent three years traveling in Georgia, Armenia, and Persia between 1817 and 1820.[53] A painter and traveler, Ker Porter cuts a fascinating figure: appointed "historical painter" of Tsar Alexander I in 1804, he fell in love with Princess Maria Scherbatova but had to leave before arrangements could be concluded due to Russia's newly concluded alliance with Napoleon's France in 1807. Finally managing to marry the Princess in 1811, he witnessed the 1812 campaign against Napoleon and was knighted in 1813. Through contact with scholars at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg – in particular through the president, his friend and cousin Aleksej Nikolaevich

50 Morier 1824.
51 Amanat 2003.
52 Morier 1812; *Idem* 1818. See Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 39–43.
53 Ker Porter 1821–1822. On Ker Porter, see Barnett 1972; Kaniuth 2007.

Olenin (1763–1843) – and because of the boom that the field of Near Eastern archaeology was experiencing in the first half of the nineteenth century, Ker Porter became interested in the study and reproduction of the antiquities of ancient Mesopotamia.[54] The expeditions he led between 1817 and 1820, from the banks of the Dnepr to the heart of Mesopotamia, must be placed against this specific backdrop. Since Ker Porter was a highly gifted artist – having been urged by Olenin to employ the greatest scientific accuracy (and thus naturalism) in the reproduction of monuments on the way – his drawings and watercolors are invaluable.[55] His choice to travel to Persia through the Caucasus happened, paradoxically, by a twist of fate: in Odessa, news reached him of an outbreak of plague and a corresponding quarantine in Constantinople, forcing his route to go through the Caucasus. There he saw not only Geghard, Garni, Haghpat and Sanahin but also the old capital, Ani. On the way to Yerevan, "aware that Anni [sic], one of the ancient capitals of Armenia, lay not far within the Turkish frontier", Ker Porter insisted on visiting its ruins.[56] He indulged in a lengthy description much indebted to the Romantic idea of the ruin stirring melancholic feelings of past splendor:

> "Over the center gate was sculptured a leopard or lion passant; and near it, on the flanking towers, several large crosses were carved in the stone, and richly decorated with exquisite fretwork. On entering the city, I found the whole surface of the ground covered with hewn stones, broken capitals, columns, shattered, but highly ornamented friezes; and other remains of ancient magnificence. Several churches, still existing in different parts of the place, retain something more than ruins of their former dignity; but they are as solitary as all the other structures [...]. In the western extremity of this great town, in which no living beings, except ourselves, seemed breathing, we saw the palace, once of the kings of Armenia [...] the masterly workmanship of the capitals of pillars, the nice carvings of the intricate ornaments, and arabesque friezes, surpassed anything of the kind I had ever seen, whether abroad, or in the most celebrated cathedrals of England. I particularly observed a religious edifice, of less dimensions than some of the others, but of exquisite architecture. It stood very near the octagon towers; and its high arched roof was a beautiful specimen of mosaic work, enriched with

54 On the role of Olenin, see Vasil'eva 2005.

55 Ker Porter was one of the first travelers to bring back drawings of the ancient Achaemenid and Sasanian necropolis of Naqsh-e Rostam as well as of Persepolis.

56 Ker Porter 1821–1822, vol. I, p. 169.

> borders of the pure Etruscan, formed in red, black, and yellow stone. [...] Fine, and even brilliant mosaic, executed with more or less precision, spreads itself over the city; and, in general, the form of the cross appears to be the root whence all the various patterns spring".[57]

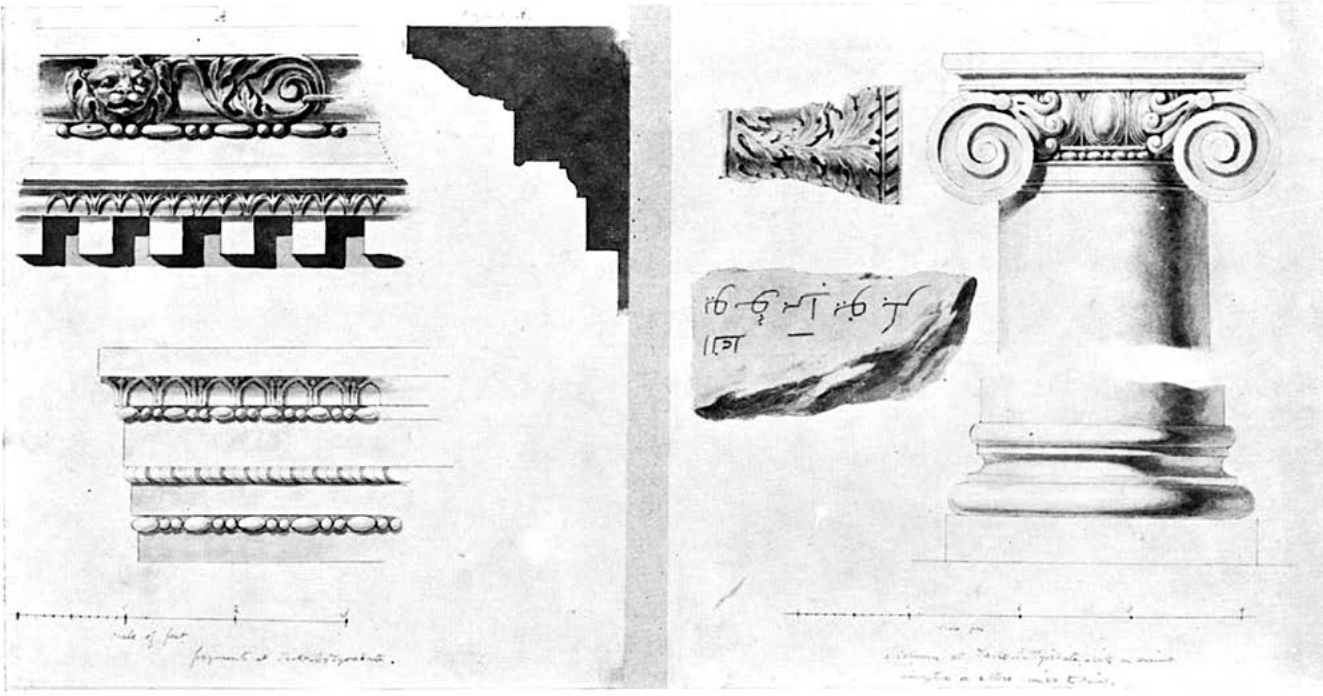
[8] Robert Ker Porter, *Drawing of fragments from Tackt-i-Tigridata*, modern Garni / British Library, Add MS 14758

While a general disinterest in medieval monuments pervades his account, Ker Porter's comments also reveal a certain underlying uneasiness toward their description: at this moment within the development of the field of art history, he had access only to limited comparative material. Ker Porter described the church and decoration but made no attempt at dating them or comparing them with other monuments. Occasionally, he hinted at the richness of the ornaments, mentioning how they reminded him of the "Gothic" architecture of England – although here "Gothic" was used synonymously with "old". Similarly vague considerations of Ani's heritage are found later in the travel accounts of figures such as Richard Wilbraham (1811–1900) or K. E. Abbott.[58] Furthermore, as far as we know, Ker Porter does not sketch even a building from Ani or Etchmiadzin. Yet, when he crosses the ruins of the "temple" at Gaṛni, which he recognizes as the site of the palace of King Trdat (Tiridates), his knowledge of classical architecture prompts him to a series of detailed drawings, which are amongst the first which use a "scientific" cross-section to represent an archaeological monument **[8]**.[59] Ultimately, the medieval art of the Southern Caucasus was considered marginal in comparison to Persia by Ker Porter and his contemporaries, where discoveries of classical or pre-classical antiquities – judged much more important than medieval architecture – were much sought after by British travelers.

Further, it is worth mentioning the British geologist William J. Hamilton (1805–1867), who visited the ruins at Ani at a later date, in 1836, and introduced considerations on style into the travelogue archive, hitherto mostly absent from such British traveling accounts. Notably, while speaking of the Ani Cathedral, Hamilton – in a manner resembling Charles Texier who traveled in the same years – hinted at the mixture of "Byzantine" and "Saracenic" (or "Moorish") "styles" that, according to him, are characteristic of Armenian art:

> "The style might be called Byzantine, with a mixture of Saracenic; the round arches are raised upon lofty pilasters, which give them a very different character from the real Byzantine or low Saxon arch. This style we found prevailing universally in Anni [sic], but in

57 *Ibidem*, pp. 172–174.
58 See Wilbraham 1839; Abbott 1842.
59 On these drawings, today at the British Library (MS 14758, opposite f. 31), see Barnett 1972, p. 21; Kéfélian 2021.



some instances with a greater variety of ornament and sculpture, and gradually approaching the rich Arabic or Moorish style".[60]

Like other of his contemporaries, he is fascinated by the character of Armenian architecture at the crossroads of different styles: "Byzantine", and "Arabic", but also "Gothic". Given his formation as a geologist, Hamilton believed – as many did after him – in the possibility of organically tracing the origins of these stylistic forms through systematic study:

> "The arches supporting the roof are circular, but pointed arches are produced by their intersections, and various other ornaments commonly called Gothic are occasionally introduced; and I could not avoid indulging in the conjecture that the origin of those rich styles called Gothic and Saracenic might by satisfactorily traces by studying the ornaments of the capitals, and of the numerous angles or recesses between the arches, in which a regular gradation may be observed from perfect simplicity to florid exuberance".[61]

60 Hamilton 1842, vol. I, p. 199.
61 *Ibidem*, pp. 200–201.

Recall here that besides the "Romanesque" and the "Gothic", racially defined ethnic characterizations for styles such as "Byzantine", "Moorish", "Mohammedan" or "Saracenic" were, in these years of frenetic orientalism, experiencing particular success amongst learned audiences and within artistic and architectural practice.[62] Similarly, the idea of the predominance of ornament within "Eastern" styles is a trope that can be encountered time and again in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature.[63]

A similar framework accompanies the travels of Austen Henry Layard (1817–1894) some years later. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Near East was thrown into a war between the colonial powers (France, England, and Russia). One of the main disputes formed over access to archaeological discoveries from pre-classical antiquity and the search for the almost mythical remains of ancient Mesopotamia. This occurred within an imperialistic framework that

62 See, e.g., Mateo 2018; more broadly on the question of race and architecture in the nineteenth century, see, e.g., Davis 2019, sp. pp. 3–28.

63 On the framework, see, e.g., Varela Braga 2017.

[9] Frederick Charles Cooper, *Ancient Armenian church at Varzahan*, ca. 1849 / Victoria & Albert Museum, Acc. No. SD.253

viewed the material heritage of this region, often considered the "cradle of civilization", as the rightful ownership of the "West".[64] Ker Porter made drawings of monuments as they were visible aboveground, and some years later Layard, possibly the most famous British Near Eastern archaeologist – often characterized as an inspiration for Indiana Jones – made excavations at Nimrud and Nineveh which led to the discovery of some of the greatest archaeological sensations of the entire nineteenth century. Layard was also one of the first scholars interested in formalist methods from an early age, keenly focused on the method developed by Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891). During his second expedition to excavate the ruins of Nineveh in 1849–1851, Layard crossed the Southern Caucasus, providing some fascinating perspectives that were profoundly shaped by his interest in both stylistic approach and in Near Eastern archaeology.[65] While traveling through Armenia, Layard became particularly interested in the remains of three early Christian edifices. A drawing of one of the churches at Varzahan – in Upper historical Armenia, although today destroyed – is preserved in the collection of the V&A Museum **[9]**.[66] His description reveals a profound knowledge of coeval publications in French and German on the Christian East, and he made similar considerations as Texier, whose studies he cited, on the relationship between "Gothic" architecture and that peculiar to the eastern districts of Asia Minor, anticipating Strzygowski's art history by some decades. Layard writes:

> "The one [building], of which I have given a sketch, is an octagon, and may have been a baptistery. The interior walls are still covered with the remains of elaborate frescoes representing scripture events and national saints. The colors are vivid, and the form, though rude, not inelegant or incorrect, resembling those of the frescoes of the Lower Empire still seen in the celebrated Byzantine church at Trebizond, and in the chapels of the convents of Mount Athos. [...] the decorations in general, call to mind the European Gothic of the middle ages. [...] there are many interesting questions connected with this Armenian architecture which deserve elucidation. From it was probably derived much that passed into the Gothic".[67]

Further on in the text, recalling Hamilton's racialized stylistic assessments, Layard clarified his thought about the specific branch of "Oriental" architecture that he claimed is characteristic of Armenian

64 See Malley 2008.
65 Layard 1853. See Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 96–100.
66 On Varzahan, destroyed between the 1920s and 1950s, see Thierry/Thierry 1965, p. 184.
67 Layard 1853, pp. 6–7.

architecture, concluding, unsurprisingly, in favor of the ancient Near East as the mediator of forms and styles in the Middle Ages:

> "The architect, or the traveller, interested in the history of that graceful and highly original branch of art, which attained its full perfection under the Arab rulers of Egypt and Spain, should extend his journey to the remains of ancient Armenian cities, far from high roads and mostly unexplored. He would then trace how that architecture, deriving its name from Byzantium, had taken the same development in the East as it did in the West, and how its subsequent combination with the elaborate decoration, the varied outline, and tasteful coloring of Persia had produced the style termed Saracenic, Arabic, and Moresque. He would discover almost daily, details, ornaments, and forms, recalling to his mind the various orders of architecture, which, at an early period, succeeded to each other in Western Europe and in England; modifications of style for which we are mainly indebted to the East during its close union with the West by the bond of Christianity. The Crusaders, too, brought back into Christendom, on their return from Asia, a taste for that rich and harmonious union of color and architecture [...]
>
> The union of early Christianity and Persian art and architecture produced a style too little known and studied, yet affording combinations of beauty and grandeur, of extreme delicacy of detail and of boldness of outline, worthy of the highest order of intellect".[68]

As we will see, despite Layard's invitation, this "mine of [...] materials unexplored and almost unknown" would for some time remain without eager prospectors mining their contents within the Anglophone milieu. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, the focus of traveler-scholars remained on Persia and Central Asia.

GERMANOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

During the first half of the nineteenth century, like in the rest of Europe, German-speaking scholars began to be interested in demonstrating the creativity and importance of the "Orient" in contrast to the dominant exaltation of classical civilizations – chiefly Greece and

68 *Ibidem*, p. 27.

Rome. This positive attitude towards the Orient had clear enemies among scholars who retained classicizing attitudes and conventional philhellenism. In the country of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), this movement partly decentered classical aesthetics but sometimes, as seen over the course of the subsequent chapters, also led to real cleavages between scholars.[69] Friedrich Schlegel, with his interest in the religious and mystic traditions of India, was amongst the first to initiate wide interest in the anticlassical "East", while at the same time being a Graecophile. Likewise influential were such texts as Goethe's (1749–1832) *West-östlicher Divan* (1819) or the writings of the Austrian Baron Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774–1856). In a century of emerging debates on the origins of Germanic identity, Oriental studies came progressively to be used both as a tool to search for origins – a topic to which I shall shortly return – but also to highlight the emergence of identities as the result of exchange and mixing. In this frame, the Caucasus was frequently seen either as linked with Persia, and thus the cradle of Indo-European and "Aryan" culture, or as the southernmost province of the Russian empire.

Yet, there is a darker side to the story of the de-marginalization of the Orient. The profound impact of the racialization of science in these decades is crucial to this shift in scholarly exploration.[70] For example, following the much controversial framework introduced, as by scholars like Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer (1790–1861), the question of modern vs. ancient populations became fundamental for scholars.[71] Fallmerayer postulated that Greece in the nineteenth century was not primarily populated by heirs of the ancient Hellenes, but had been gradually replaced by the heirs of nomadic populations stemming from Slavic Tribes. It is no surprise that Fallmerayer's ideas, like those of the French Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882) who wrote some years later on the "Inequality of Human Races", were later diffused and used to form the antisemite, supremacist, and genocidal racial policies of the Nazi regime.[72] This framework allying racialization and genetic-biological thought had a deep impact on the reception of the peoples of the Caucasus and their cultural production. While this is not limited to the German-speaking world, we will see how such thought led Armenians to be considered similar to Jews in the broader cultural imaginary. It is impossible not to consider nineteenth-century science as the root of the somber history of the twentieth century.

In this frame, it is a sad irony that at the end of the eighteenth century, the adjective Caucasian was introduced as a racial category to

69 E.g., Marchand 2009.

70 On the question of the racialization of art history, see, e.g., Jarrassé 2004; Michaud 2019.

71 Fallmerayer 1830–1836, sp. vol. I.

72 On this vast topic, see, e.g., Chapoutot 2014, with further bibliography.

designate people with light skin color in the wake of the studies of the German-speaking anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840).[73] In his *De Generis Humani Varietate*, the archetype of Caucasian racial characteristics is exemplified by a drawing of the skull of a Georgian woman **[10]**. He chose this name, linked with the Caucasian mountains,

> "both because its neighborhood, and especially its southern slope, produces the most beautiful race of men, I mean the Georgian; and because all physiological reasons converge to this, that in that region, if anywhere, it seems we ought with the greatest probability to place the autochthones of mankind".[74]

Indeed, since the Middle Ages the Caucasus was considered a key place of vision and prophecy, both as the landing point of Noah's Ark and the backdrop of Prometheus' myth. The region was thus directly linked with the origins of humankind.[75] Blumenbach, who never set foot in the Caucasus, relied on Jean Chardin's seventeenth-century travelogue, in which the Frenchman described the legends surrounding the Caucasus as well as the characteristics of the local population.[76] In this framework, a similar discussion to the one promoted by Fallmerayer on the modern and ancient Greeks was applied to the discussion on the populations of the Caucasus in the nineteenth century and those who populated this land in ancient times. Such interpretative biological and racial categories which proceeded by determining deviance gaps based on the European canon were applied to monumental and artistic heritage. This is crucial to understanding the framework presented in the following pages.

Besides these more general developments, there were few German-speaking travelers who reached the Caucasus with a profound interest in monuments in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most early travelers stopped at Constantinople or did not cross the Southern Caucasus at all, preferring other routes to Persia and the East. Three noteworthy exceptions are Heinrich Julius von Klaproth (1783–1835), Friedrich Parrot (1792–1841), and Heinrich Theodor Wehle (1778–1805). None of them were, however, strictly focused on monuments and art. Despite this, all three testify to different attitudes and interests towards Caucasian heritage.

Klaproth, born in Berlin, was one of the first scholars who spread the use of the term "Indo-Germanic" for languages across European

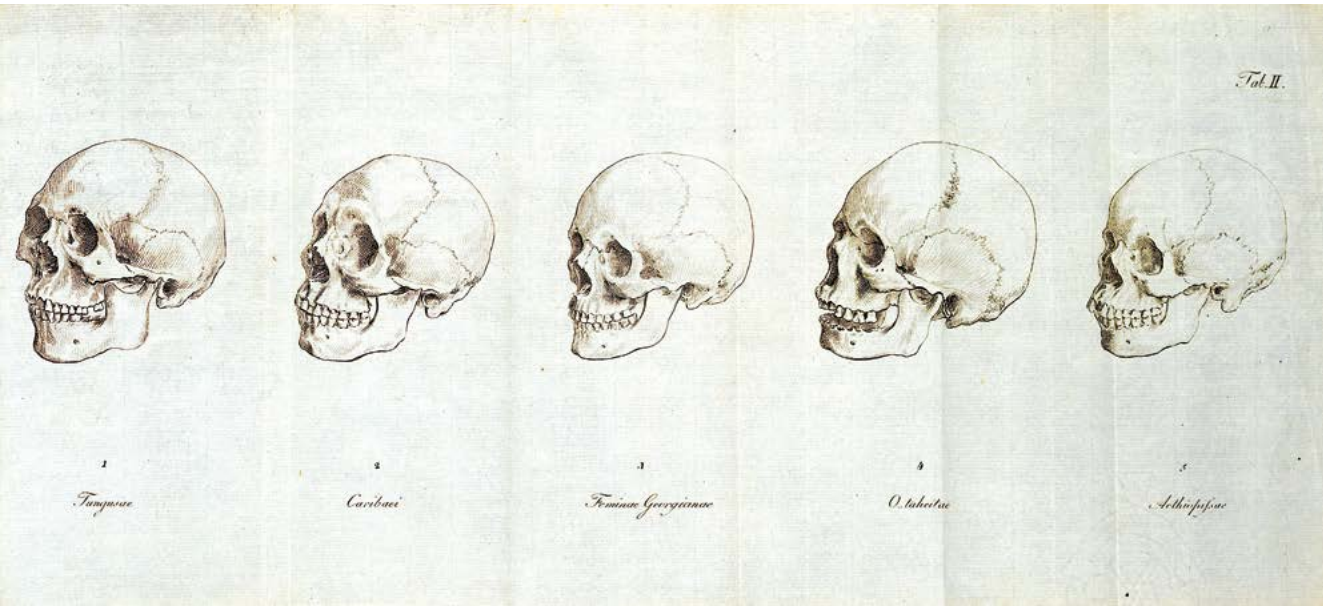
[10] Classification of human skulls by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *De generis humani varietate nativa*, Göttingen 1795, pl. II

73 Blumenbach 1795. See Baum 2006 on the broader framework.

74 Blumenbach 1865 [1795], p. 269.

75 On the early reception history of these myths through early modern artists such as Da Vinci or Dürer, see Matossian 2009. The influential geographer Carl Ritter (1779–1859), one of the founders of modern geography, had also touched on the topic in the early nineteenth century, see Ritter 1820, pp. 452–464. This double interest both in the Biblical past of the country and in the origin myths of mankind transformed the Caucasus into a place of particular interest for Biblical archaeology and linguists interested in the origins of Prometheus' myth, up until much later with figures such as the specialist of Indo-European languages Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) or the Georgian émigré Georges Charachidzé (1930–2010), see, e.g., Charachidzé 1986; Mahé 2017.

76 Chardin 1686.



scholarly circles in his *Asia polyglotta* (1823).[77] He postulated proximity in the roots of the European languages which he believed derived from ancient Sanskrit. In light of what we have just discussed, it is interesting to note that Klaproth, contrary to the prevailing opinion of the times, insisted that linguistic kinship and biological descent of speakers should be treated as two separate subjects. Such an idea was discussed at length within the emerging field of art history, where the life of forms likewise was a place to debate questions of biological descent. Even further, the notion of "Indo-Germanic" and the search for Aryan roots in the Caucasus informed the studies of art historians like Strzygowski.[78] Another noteworthy traveler is the Baltic German Johann Jakob Friedrich Wilhelm Parrot. In 1829, Parrot completed the first-ever documented ascension to the summit of Mount Ararat – the "Holy Mountain of Noah" (*Heiliger Noahberg*) – considered until then to be unreachable.[79] In his travel accounts, besides considerations of the habits and customs of Armenians, Parrot frequently compared his knowledge of biblical or ancient historical accounts (chiefly Strabo's *Geography*) to the reality he encountered. Parrot was, however, not particularly interested in the "beautiful fragments of old buildings" (*schöne Überreste alter Bauten*) he mentions here and there. Nevertheless, his travel account deserves mention as Parrot saw some of the edifices at the foot of Ararat still standing. These would crumble just a few years later. His account is also a good reminder that the Caucasian

77 Klaproth 1823. The term Indo-Germanic was coined by the Danish-French scholar Conrad Malte-Brun (1775–1826) in 1810.
78 See in this book pp. 79–81, 104–107.
79 Parrot 1834.

[11] Theodor Wehle, Akht'ala, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Nr.: 23876z-II

mountains, over the course of the nineteenth and especially in the twentieth century, were the territory of a game between nations, a genuine race to the top for political supremacy in the region and against other European powers.[80] The last figure, who was marginally interested in visual and material culture, is Theodor Wehle. A gifted landscape painter, the young Wehle – not unlike Sir Ker Porter – had been called by Russian Tsar Alexander I to Saint Petersburg's at the Imperial Academy of Arts in 1801. Shortly after, he was hired as part of an expedition to Georgia and Armenia.[81] Employed as a cartographer, Wehle produced a series of outstanding sketches of monuments. His romantic interest in ruined or partially ruined edifices led him to represent several ancient medieval churches such as the ruins of the monastery at Akht'ala **[11]** or the Svet'itskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta **[12]**.

Art historical reflections on the arts of the Southern Caucasus, however, did not occur until the 1840s. The arts of the Caucasus did not enter the canon of a field whose construction still mostly rested on the canon of classical Greek antiquity and the idea of art as a reflection of a nation. Few scholars, even amongst those who knew the works of DuBois, Texier, and other early scholars, were interested in the arts of regions beyond Constantinople.

A major exception is the monumental history of visual arts first published between 1843 and 1879 by Carl Schnaase. Schnaase was, along

80 On Parrot's travel, see Geus 2021; on the Caucasus mountains as a place of political games, see Hoesli 2022.

81 Krautz 1992; Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 173–177.

[12] Theodor Wehle, View of the east side of the church Svetitskhoveli in Mtskheta, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. Nr.: 23876i

with Franz Kugler, one of the first to attempt a "global art history" survey based on Europe as the center and canon.[82] Schnaase's *Geschichte* was focused on a Hegelian understanding of the development of styles and forms from a racialized perspective, adopting a philosophical attitude that was influential across the nascent field of art history. In the third volume of his series – with the first dedicated to the arts of the Middle Ages and dealing with "Early Christian and Mohammadan art" – a sizeable chapter is dedicated to the arts of Georgia and Armenia.[83] The chapter on the Caucasus is symptomatically situated between the chapters on the arts in the Sasanian Empire and that on the arts of Russia, all of which were located under the general category "Byzantine art". Schnaase, who also had not traveled to the Caucasus, used materials from Carl Ritter for the geography, and for the monuments relied mostly on the accounts and drawings of Texier and DuBois. His choices were thus also limited by the available reproductions and existing bibliography. His perspective, strongly based on the belief that certain peoples had the capacity to create proper artistic innovation and others only to passively receive the influence of dominant cultures, caused lasting prejudices toward the arts of the Caucasus.

Within the system he created, Schnaase considered Armenians the leading force in the region, believing that their architecture impacted even Georgian art. If Ani, thus, was seen as an ideal of Armenian architecture, then the cathedral in Kutaisi was seen as the ideal mix

82 Schwarzer 1995; Musto 2016.

83 Schnaase 1844, pp. 248–276, 312–318. In the other slightly earlier German survey of art history, Kugler's *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, the subject is entirely ignored, Kugler 1842.

of Armenian peppered with some Byzantine elements.[84] But for both Georgian and Armenian art, he contended that one should still not expect too much, as history had shown, according to Schnaase, that "in a nation [...] raw and weak, divided in itself, morally weakened by dependence from various foreign rulers, an independent art cannot be assumed. [...].[85] Even conceding that the Armenian nation clearly had a sense of the regularity and delicacy of form (*Formensinn*), and had been inventive enough to create a proper system of arts, it did not, according to the German writer, go beyond its own nature:

> "This corner of the earth at the foot of the Caucasus was made to absorb all the rays of foreign influences. They [Armenian peoples] had the perseverance, both religious and artistic, not to abandon the traditional system, but not the manly energy to carry it out with resistance, to bring it to light from within".[86]

It is important here to note Schnaase's hint at the lack of "manly energy" on the part of the Armenians. Here, he draws on an Orientalist topos of the "feminine" and submissive Orient, whilst the West was presented as "masculine" and active. Thus, according to Schnaase both the Armenians and the Germanic peoples received artistic stimuli from late antique Rome and Byzantium, but only the Germanic nation, through its spirit, managed to attain freedom and develop from this original input.[87] In the conclusion of the section on Byzantine art, Schnaase groups Armenian and Russian visual arts together as two different receptions manifesting negatively connotated Byzantine elements, displaying his slight preference for Armenian monuments:

> "Plasticity is almost completely absent in both [Russian and Armenian art], the painting of the Armenians, though not so dull and mummy-like, is nevertheless no more lively and vigorous than that of the Russians. But in architecture there is the greatest difference between the pure, clear, intelligible forms of the smaller nation and the desolate, confusing, multicolored buildings of the larger one".[88]

Finally, Schnaase offers his ideal conclusion to this part, touching on the mechanisms at work in the development of art history through racial and philosophical bases. He intends to put a holistic system in place, in which art occupies only one – albeit central – role in

84 Schnaase 1844, p. 269.
85 *Ibidem*, p. 255.
86 *Ibidem*, p. 275.
87 *Ibidem*, pp. 312–313.
88 *Ibidem*, p. 313.

understanding the strengths or weaknesses of a given nation. For Schnaase, the Germanic peoples were the capstone of the system's pyramid, and it was the military, political, and cultural weakness of an entire people that thus explained the weakness of its art:

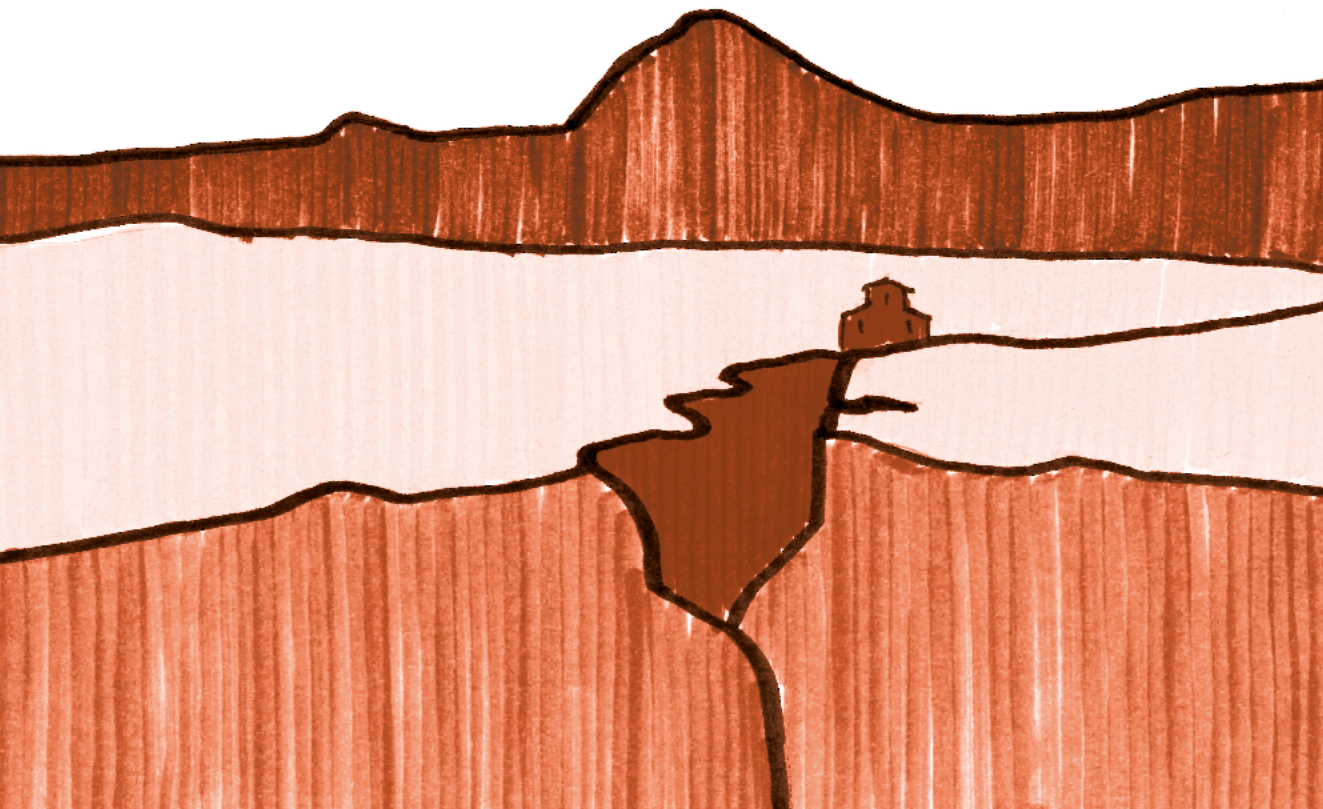
> "The tragic fate of the eventual defeat and scattering of the people may inspire us with pity, but it was not an innocent one. If they had been as enthusiastic and united as the Greeks were towards the Persian kings, they would have preserved themselves like them".[89]

Such an approach dominated the nascent field of art history, which was constructed on a series of notions including style, moments of decadence placed in contrast to artistic renaissances, and essentially racialized conceptions deriving from the natural sciences.

89 *Ibidem*, p. 316.

CHAPTER II

RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM AND WESTERN ORIENTALISM (1856–1915)



The period corresponding to the second half of the nineteenth century and the initial years of the twentieth century was marked by an increased interest in Armenian and Georgian art and by the development of fundamental theoretical systems regarding the region's artistic production. In the decades leading up to First World War, in parallel with the development of art history as an academic discipline, formative presuppositions were constructed and validated. These presumptuous hypotheticals have resonance even into the present day.

The macroscopic look proposed in this chapter is intended to demonstrate how clearly these reverberations are indebted to the context in which they were born. A majority of the chapter explores issues of national and international politics, but the development of other sciences – especially linguistics and biology – are discussed as well for their great impact on cultural and artistic studies.

The three major themes of international and cultural politics – imperialism, colonialism, and Orientalism – have an obvious and decisive impact on the situation of medieval art studies in the region, as discussed in Chapter One. Indeed, the studies promoted within the Russian empire increasingly proposed a strong view of the Southern Caucasus during the Middle Ages as a marginal province of the empire of Constantinople. Crucially, from critical studies to texts for the general public, attempted to deny local particularisms: Armenian and Georgian art was framed as almost indistinct due to their "provincial reality". All the evidence shows how such a view corresponds to the empire's interests in the region – whose past, through the image of the present, required "provincialization". Thus, scholars were consciously politically motivated and involved. These scholars, generally, worked to fulfill the agenda of the imperial state. We thus witness a striking symbiosis between the autocratic state and science.

International colonial politics were projected onto the region – and scholarly history – in a variety of ways. A penultimate and dramatic process of "provincialization" characterized the situation of the Armenians, divided between the Russian and Ottoman empires. In the logic of the "Great Game", wherein the British and Russian Empires were pitted against each other in the Conquest of Central Asia, the British supported Ottoman power in the region. It was thus under the eyes (and with the implicit complicity) of the colonial powers that the last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the first terrifying

massacres of the Armenian population in the region. These were, unfortunately, a prelude to the genocidal delirium that took place in 1915, yet these massacres are easily retrospectively classified as genocide from 1894 onwards.

The gaze of European scholars is also marked by an Orientalist fascination with the Southern Caucasus. Over the years this turned into a more scholarly and scientific interest yet retained the hegemonic and hierarchical perspective afforded to the region by an early Orientalist gaze. Linguistic research at this time molded the international belief that Armenian people, unlike their neighbors, spoke an Indo-European language. Such a hypothesis had a decisive impact in European scientific environments where evolutionary and racial theories assumed increasing importance for the systematic analysis of the past and present.

While politics and racial theories only polarized Eurasia in those years – while the First World War was brewing – the world of research and intellectual exchange was more united than ever. Scholars were familiar with each other's research across the continent and it became increasingly common to publish outside of a national context. The paradox is thus clear: while nationalist fever rose, research was solidly anchored in an international context with universalist ambitions, yet it still upheld nationalist beliefs or was manipulated to do so.

A noteworthy aspect of these decades is the emergence of the first women recognized as scholars. In a field dominated by unbridled chauvinism, it was from Great Britain and Imperial Russia that the first women's voices materialized. In this sense, it seems important to recall that – among the many paradoxes characterizing the Empire of the Tsars – gender equity surfaced as one of the central ideals of the culture. Women in the autocratic Russian state had decidedly more possibilities and freedoms than, for example, they did in the French Republic.

In summary, the mantra of the scholars presented below was positivism and "objective science". Over a century later one can clearly observe that, in the decades studied here, the dialogue of science with society is as intense as ever.

RUSSOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *IVAN FOLETTI*

After the Crimean War, lost in 1855, and the advent of the new Tsar Alexander II (1855–1881), the Russian Empire underwent a moment of profound transformation. The social reforms promoted by the Tsar – including the liberation of the serfs in 1861 – are generally presented as positive.[1] But at the level of international politics, an

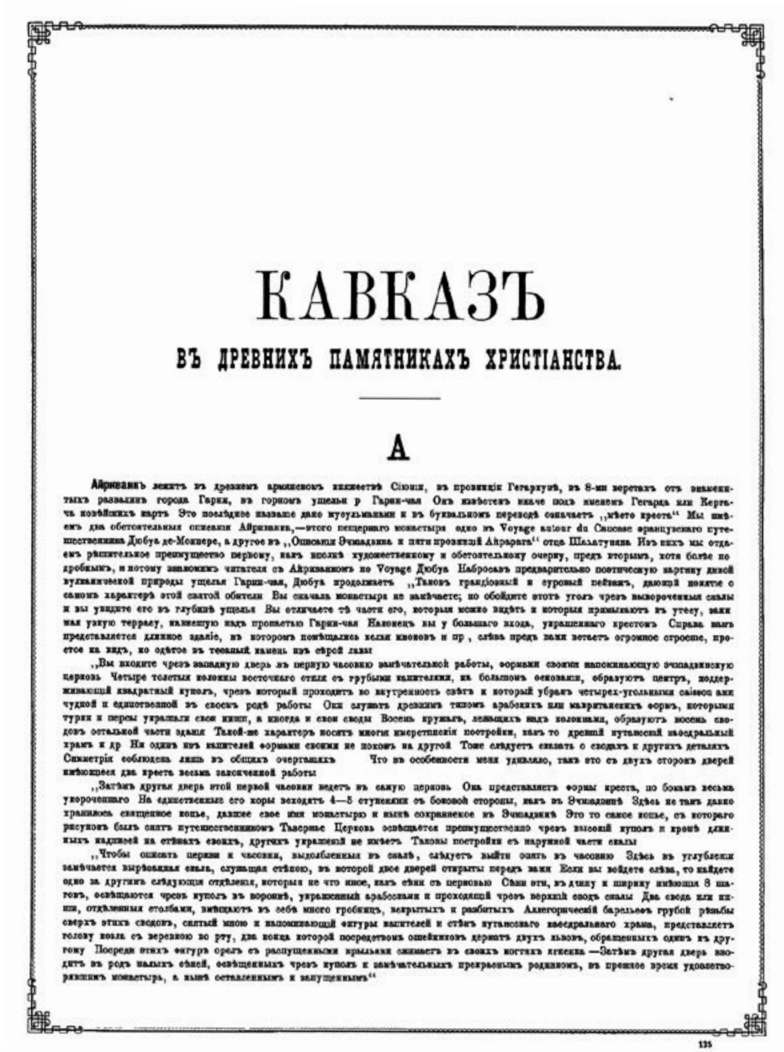
1 Carrère d'Encausse 2008.

unprecedented imperialist wave began with Alexander II. In the context of the "Great Game" mentioned already in the first chapter, competition with Great Britain for control of Central Asia continued, while within the empire a strong wave of Russification occurred. One of the greatest reactions to such imposition was certainly the Polish uprising of 1863, which was violently suppressed. In the South Caucasus similar uprisings occurred in response to deep Russification.[2]

The first professional art historical studies were born in this context, but the art of the region also found a place in monumental synthetic projects, such as great world encyclopedias. A text that is extremely revealing of the situation and the perspective that the official, Russian-speaking gaze adopts is a long article published in 1873 by the Georgian historian and archaeologist Dimitrij Bakradze (1826–1890), as an appendix to the Proceedings collected by the Archaeological Commission of the Caucasus, entitled *Kavkaz v drevnich pamjatnikach christianstva* [The Caucasus in Ancient Christian Monuments].[3] The list of monuments presented teleologically in this text was produced by the medieval (and modern) cultures of Armenia and Iberia **[1]**. They were presented in alphabetical order. The text specified to which culture each monument belonged, but presenting the art of the region in such an integrated way manifested a political position: following the creation of the Viceroyalty of the South Caucasus, the cultural production is also, at least from the perspective of the journal's editors, presented as a monolithic block. This is, in fact, what was to be the perspective put forth from Saint Petersburg: once the Viceroyalty was created, there was no longer any reason to distinguish its particularities. I am convinced, however, that the issue here is more complex. After the Polish insurrection, the empire perceived the danger of "national sentiment" and thus advanced a policy of cultural homogenization, a policy promoted even more virulently by Alexander II's successor, Alexander III (1881–1894).[4]

The author was trained partly in Moscow and thus was aware of the situation in the center of the empire. However, Bakradze's text still emphasized some local peculiarities.[5] Nikodim Kondakov's (1844–1925) approach was very different from Bakradze's. Kondakov could be called, without hesitation, the official art historian of the Saint Petersburg court **[2]**.[6] He devoted several years to the study of monuments in the region – with particular interest in Georgian enamels.[7] Since the late 1890s, however, he worked on an extremely ambitious project: proposing a synthesis of the ancient monuments of the Russian Empire. Symptomatically, the title of the six-volume work is "Russian Antiquities in Art Monuments". The fourth volume of the

2 Kieniewicz/Zahorski/Zajewski 1994; Rayfield 2012, pp. 306–310.
3 Bakradze 1873.
4 Rayfield 2012, pp. 284–305.
5 Surguladze 2017 [2004].
6 Foletti 2017; Kyzlasova 2018.
7 Kondakov 1890.



КАВКАЗЪ

ВЪ ДРЕВНИХЪ ПАМЯТНИКАХЪ ХРИСТІАНСТВА.

А

[1] Frontispiece of Dimitrij Bakradze, “Kavkaz v drevnix pam-jatnikax xristianstva” [The Caucasus in ancient monuments of Christianity]

series, which interests us most here, bore another eloquent subtitle: “Christian Antiquities of the Crimea, the Caucasus, and Kiev” **[3]**.[8] Already the title clarified the position that the Caucasus were simply considered part of Russian culture. Even more interesting are the contents of the volume by this Petersburg professor, who introduced the part devoted to the Caucasus with the statement

> “The art of Georgia and Armenia was born only in the Christian era and not before the seventh century. Until that time all monumental constructions in the Transcaucasian region are entirely dependent on Rome and Byzantium”.[9]

8 Kondakov/Tolstoy 1891.

9 *Ibidem*, p. 36.

[2] Nikodim Kondakov,
Saint Petersburg, ca. 1880

From his perspective from what will later be defined as the golden age of Armenian architecture – the Late Antique period – onward there was no real artistic autonomy in the region. He goes even further a few lines later, stating:

> "The churches of Etchmiadzin, even those preserved only in ruins, came into existence only in the years of Nerses III, a Catholicos († 661), [...] who brought from Byzantium a love of its architecture and art. The oldest temple of Abkhazia at Picunda, built by Justinian, has

Искусство Грузіи и Арменіи возникаетъ впервые уже въ христіанскую эпоху и не ранѣе VII столѣтія. Дотолѣ всѣ монументальныя постройки въ предѣлахъ Закавказья обязаны нѣкоимъ Риму и Византіи. Древность церквей Этміадзина, даже тѣхъ, которыя сохранились лишь въ развалинахъ, восходитъ только ко временамъ Нерзеса III, католикоса († 661), прозваннаго строителемъ и принесшаго съ собою изъ Византіи любовь къ ея архитектурѣ и искусству. Древнѣйшій храмъ Абхазіи въ Пицундѣ, построенный Юстиніаномъ, сохранился въ немногихъ плитахъ и кускахъ; тогда какъ сохранившаяся донынѣ церковь Пицунды по своимъ формамъ, по своему даже плану купольной церкви на четырехъ столбахъ съ прибавленіемъ нартекса, западными хорами и т. д., относится ко времени установки византійскаго канона, т. е. не ранѣе X столѣтія.

Далѣе, у Прокопія сохранились весьма точныя извѣстія о построенныхъ Юстиніаномъ церквахъ въ различныхъ городахъ Арменіи, которыя должны были

[3] Illustration from Nikodim P. Kondakov, Ivan Tolstoj, *Russkie Drevnosti v pamjatnikax iskusstva. Vypusk četvertyj. Xristianskie drevnosti Kryma, Kavkaza i Kieva* [Russian Antiquities in monuments of art. Issue four. Christian Antiquities of the Crimea, Caucasus and Kiev], Saint Petersburg 1891

been preserved only in fragments, while the church preserved at Picunda to this day [...] dates from the period of stabilization of the Byzantine canon, i.e., to a period not earlier than the tenth century. [...] Prior to the seventh century, one cannot even speak of an Armenian-Georgian architectural style, likewise, all assumptions about the seniority of the Armenian churches of St. Hṛipsimē (618?), Gayanē (630?) in Vagharshapat and the church in Uzunlar [Ōdzun] (718–729) must be rejected".[10]

Kondakov thus introduced an essential concept: the art of the entire region, undistinguished, must be considered integrally dependent in the medieval period on that of the Empire of Constantinople. It had no identity of its own and followed the production of the Eastern Roman Empire. The conclusions of this Petersburg professor are thus unequivocal:

> "The Armenian style that develops through these buildings [of the seventh and eighths centuries] can be dated only to a later period, to the 15th–16th centuries [...] More or less in the same way the Georgian issue must be understood, where the architecture has, still in the 10th–11th centuries, purely Byzantine features. The period of artistic independence comes only in the 12th–13th centuries.

10 *Ibidem.*

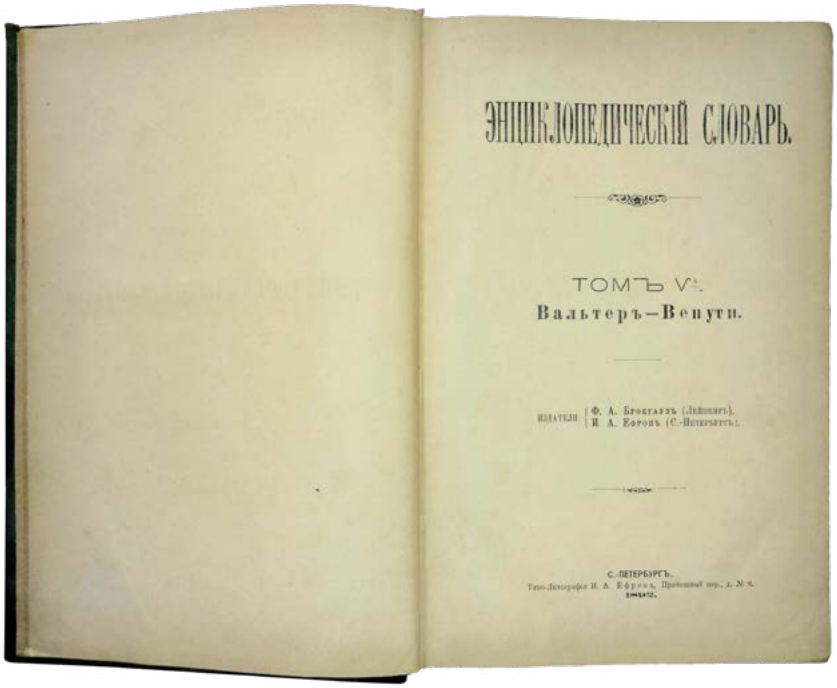
> It is also known that Georgian culture and art experienced a deep decline from the 15th century onward".[11]

From the "Byzantine" perspective adopted by Kondakov, there is no doubt: the art of the region was provincial and there were in fact no real regional particularities. Kondakov must have been aware of how problematic his theories were: even an untrained glance at Armenian architecture and that of medieval Iberia allows one to see substantial differences between the two and, above all, a great diversity from Constantinopolitan production. Executed in stone, and with exceptional skill, the buildings of the region can hardly be considered inferior to the coeval production of the Byzantine capital. Even less can they be considered as integrally dependent on such production. Kondakov was certainly not inexperienced, and thus his conclusions are clearly the result of a colonial perspective that presented the past of newly conquered regions of the empire as merely (and always) provincial and inferior even on an artistic level.[12]

What remains to be established is whether the perspective proposed by Kondakov was an individual or isolated phenomenon to academics in the capital or whether it corresponded to a broader design, desired by the empire's elites of those years. A partial answer to this question can be formulated by reading the Brokgauz and Efron dictionary, published in 1893 **[4]**. In this very widely circulated text, which standardized known knowledge, we read:

> "The art that developed during the Christian era in Transcaucasia constitutes a branch of Byzantine art, which, due to local conditions and external influences, took on a peculiar shape. These conditions and influences were almost the same for both Armenia and Georgia. The historical destiny of both countries was almost identical: both were ruled by their own sovereigns when Christianity penetrated them in the fourth century; both soon afterward became the theater of the struggle between Greeks and Persians, and then Saracens; both experienced a long period of terrible turmoil, rested for some time under the rule of national kings of the Bagratid family, and again saw troubled times. Therefore, the art of the first of these countries resembles or, more accurately, merges with the art of the second to such an extent that they can be considered inseparable, under one common name 'Armenian-Georgian' or 'Georgian-Armenian'

11 *Ibidem*, pp, 36–37.
12 Foletti 2016.



ЭНЦИКЛОПЕДИЧЕСКІЙ СЛОВАРЬ.

ТОМЪ V½.

Вальтеръ—Вепуги.

ИЗДАТЕЛИ { Ф. А. Брокгаузъ (Лейпцигъ).
И. А. Ефронъ (С.-Петербургъ).

С.-ПЕТЕРБУРГЪ.

art. The separateness of this art manifested itself mainly in the architecture and especially in the temple building. The Caucasus inherited Christianity from Byzantium and borrowed its ecclesiastical architecture from the latter. The first temples in Armenia were completely Byzantine in character, which began to change and take national features not earlier than the seventh century; in Georgia, this transformation of the style imported from outside into a local one should be attributed to a later time, namely to the eleventh century".[13]

The identity of the author of these lines is not known, but certainly, this was a person privy to ideas very close to Kondakov's, which were presented in an even more radical way in this text. The Brokgauz and Efron dictionary provides explicit evidence that Kondakov's ideas were not limited to academic circles. Therefore, it can be inferred that in the Romanov empire, medieval art history became a tool to justify the present: if science had proven that Armenia and Iberia were in the past provinces, colonies, of Byzantium, this text implicitly justified their situation in the present Romanov empire. In this context, it

13 Brokgauz/Èfron 1893, p. 788.

[4] Frontispiece of *Ènciklopedičeskij slovar' Brokgauza i Èfrona* [Brockhaus and Efron encyclopedic dictionary], Konstantin Arsen'ev ed., vol. x, Saint Petersburg 1893

is not surprising that to celebrate the final subjugation of the whole region, in Tbilisi, the capital of the Viceroyalty, the tsarist power erected an emblematic monument. It is the cathedral of Alexander Nevsky, Russia's national saint, which was, interestingly, executed in a neo-Byzantine style. The message in this monument is clear: the medieval past of Armenia and Iberia was manipulated to promote the colonial policy of the tsarist state.

In conclusion, it is important to remember one last aspect: the colonial idea that the Caucasus was a province of the Byzantine world. This was certainly present as a throughline throughout Russian-speaking research in the period under examination. Other biases were also projected into the research, along with, sometimes, a true passion for the region. This is clear from the introduction to the volume "Archaeological Materials of the Caucasus" edited by Countess Praskov'ja Uvarova. In this text, she wrote:

> "But I have been to the Caucasus too many times, traveled too many gorges, and too often lived and stayed in its most remote corners to have the strength and desire to treat the described monuments as separate units, made of stone and marble. And, so to speak, to detach them with my description from the region in which they were built, alienate them from the inhabitants who love and respect them, and finally from all that they have seen and experienced, from the legends that have developed about them and to which many of them owe their existence and preservation to our time."[14]

FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

In the turbulent years ranging from the Second to the Third French Republic, Francophone scholarship on the Caucasus continued to bloom based on the works of figures such as DuBois or Texier. As we have seen, their input was also felt in wider scholarly circles across France and Europe, and the discussion on the art of the "Christian East" would steadily continue over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This concerned, in particular, a series of long-lasting discussions engaging the question of the impact of "Byzantine" art and the forms said to be "imported" from the East as well as their influence on the development of primarily "French" Romanesque but also Gothic architecture. This caused a divide to emerge on French soil that was reflected by other countries, between

14 Uvarova 1894, p. 3; Khruškova 2014.

supporters of a "European" origin for the arts of the Middle Ages and those who saw the "East" as the cradle of civilization. New discoveries emerging in the second half of the century refocused the discussion on Syria, which was in close contact with the Caucasus. With Byzantinology emerging as a separate discipline, Constantinople and its empire took center stage, with the Caucasus frequently relegated to the periphery.

Several notable scholars bridge the first and second half of the nineteenth century, with probably Marie-Félicité Brosset (1802–1880) in first place.[15] A remarkable polymath, Brosset was frequently described as the most gifted of the pioneer Antoine-Jean Saint-Martin's students. He continued the work of his master after Saint-Martin's early demise. Brosset learned Armenian and then Georgian, creating the first Georgian dictionary and the first French translation of the epic Georgian poem *The Man with the Panther Skin* by the late twelfth-early thirteenth-century poet Shota Rustaveli as well as other crucial sources both in Armenian and Georgian. The books from his travels were published in 1851, as well as his study of Ani (1860–1861) which united representations and descriptions of all of Ani's important buildings – even though he had never set foot there! – were both printed in French in Saint Petersburg **[5]**.[16] Brosset had been invited in 1837 by Count Sergej Uvarov (1786–1855) to the Imperial Academy of Sciences and traveled through Georgia and Armenia with official Russian credentials in the 1840s. All of Brosset's work, whose scientific thoroughness is undeniable, was dedicated to the Imperial Academicians and the viceroy of the Caucasus, Mikhail Vorontsov (1783–1856) and thus must be viewed against the backdrop of the violent repressions happening at the same time in the Southern Caucasus.[17] Brosset's approach differs from that of Texier or DuBois in that he was slightly more focused on the monuments of Georgia, but also, as a philologist, towards recording epigraphic inscriptions. Brosset was also one of the first to rediscover and seriously study the manuscript library of the Armenian Catholicossate in Etchmiadzin. He published a catalog based on this rediscovery already in 1840.[18] In Brosset's meticulous perspective, he wished to "gather [...] supporting evidence [...] that can serve as a verification or demonstration of the assertions of historians that the contemptuous Europe hardly knows and appreciates as legendary".[19]

In the very same years, other European scholars were contributing to translating to European languages many of the texts stemming from the region, prompting more and more comparative research. As in the German context, ideas about the legends surrounding the

[5] Walls of Ani, from Marie-Félicité Brosset, *Les ruines d'Ani, capitale de l'Arménie*, 1860–1861

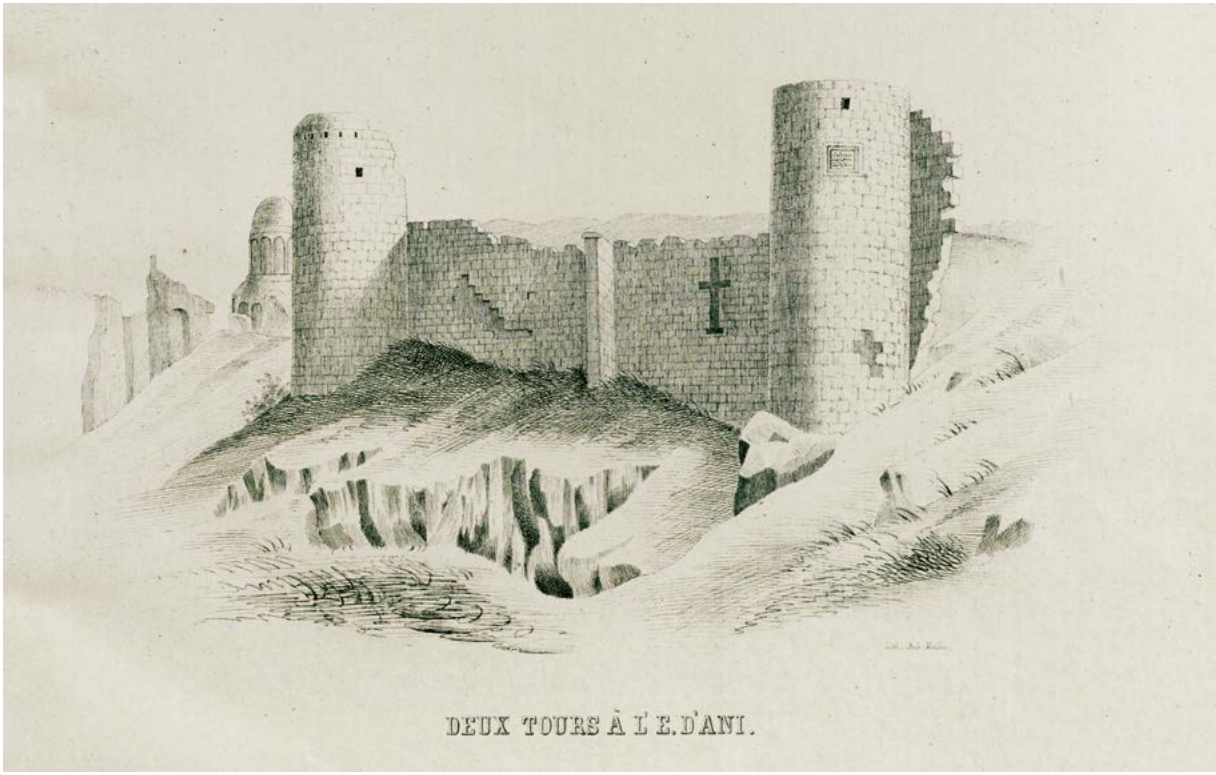
15 On Brosset, see Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 88–95.

16 Brosset 1851 [1849]; *Idem* 1860–1861. Brosset admits that he never has visited Ani and relies on earlier descriptions and maps by Abich, Texier, and Boré, as well as drawings made in 1844 by the Russian officer Julius Kästner, see *Idem* 1860, vol. I, p. 5. The drawings in Brosset's albums are thus revised versions of the drawings of Kästner.

17 See in this book, pp. 64–71.

18 Brosset 1840.

19 *Idem* 1851 [1849], pp. VIII–IX.



Armenian highlands and the Caucasian mountains developed in a joint ethnographic, mythographic, and anthropological perspective whose goal was to uncover, rediscover, or unearth the cradle of mankind and civilization. This is a recurrent topic that can be traced from the earliest work of linguists to anthropologists such as Ernest Chantre (1843–1924) who in the 1870s and 1880s produced a monumental anthropological history of the Caucasus from Prehistory to the present day, and whose continuity must be seen in the work of Georges Dumézil (1898–1986).[20]

In the incipient circles of professional art history, by the middle of the century, the diffusion of studies by DuBois, Texier, and Brosset generated important discussions about the origins of European Romanesque and Gothic architecture. This question was complicated by new insights into Syrian architecture, through the monumental studies of Charles-Jean-Melchior de Vogüé (1829–1916).[21] Both Syria and Armenia/Georgia, the Eastern Christian nations, were seen by French researchers as prime areas for understanding how Roman architecture transformed under "Eastern" impulses. Being

20 On the origins of these myths, see Matossian 2009. See Chantre 1885–1887; see also *Idem* 1896.

21 De Vogüé 1865–1877.

"Christian" nations, these works must also be seen as part of broader Christian missions which were promoted since the 1840s to all parts of the "Christian East".[22] Despite major advances in knowledge of the buildings when compared to that just decades before, the question of "origins" – both the origins of forms but also that of Christianity – resurfaced recurrently, tinged with ideology. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the influential art historian Jules Quicherat (1814–1882), well acquainted with the work of Texier and Brosset, raised the question in his course at the *École des Chartes*:

> "Does the idea of the new [Romanesque] architecture belong to Western Europe, or does it not come rather from the East, a region where the practice of vaulting was well known and where all the properties of this type of construction were known? [...] For the churches of Kumurdo, Mokvi, and Ani, we have dates that correspond to our years 964, 965, 1010; but what is especially surprising is that by their architectural characters, these same churches would belong, in France, to the eleventh century the first two, and to the advanced twelfth century for that of Ani. It would seem, therefore, that our Romanesque architecture not only originated in Armenia, but that it went through the same phases as in France, and this with a good century's advance in Europe. Before coming to this conclusion, it would be good to wait until the investigation has been carried out more thoroughly".[23]

Such a question, formulated somewhat neutrally by Quicherat, would become a battlefield of art history in the second half of the nineteenth and during the twentieth century. What formed in the first half of the nineteenth century as studies that prompted comparisons between "local" and "foreign" architectural styles of the Middle Ages crystallized when the field of art history gained a national component throughout Europe. Was the Eastern – possibly Caucasian – component of French medieval architecture a mere drop of water in the lake or was it something more consequential? Was it "un-nationalist" to study the "oriental" or "Byzantine" character of some French Romanesque buildings? These were the questions that scholars of the region had to answer, both for themselves and for broader scholarly circles across Europe. At the same time, under the impulse of figures born in the 1840s to 1860s, the field of Byzantine studies would be

22 See, e.g., Verdeil 2001.

23 Quicherat 1886, vol. II, pp. 432–433. On Quicherat's lectures and their impact, see Leniaud 2008.

completely reshaped from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, a matter that deeply impacted studies on the Caucasus.

In general, this moment questioning the very roots of the discipline and the art of the nation in the second half of the nineteenth century was not particularly fruitful for studies focused on art history and the visual culture of the Southern Caucasus. Even when scholars came to be interested, they generally had a rather negative idea of the arts of the Caucasus. This is the case, for example, with Jules Mourier (born 1846), a publicist who resided many years in Tbilisi first as French tutor of the children of the Grand Duke and Viceroy of the Caucasus Mikhail Nikolaevich Romanov (1861–1929). Mourier is an interesting figure since he started the publication of a French journal of popularization, *Le Caucase illustré* in 1889, dedicated to Caucasian culture, arts, ethnography, public affairs, political and economic interests in the region **[6]**.[24] This was in addition to dozens of his own publications, as, for example, one on the Etchmiadzin library. Besides an obvious interest in the local culture, the publication included photographic reproductions, which were mostly absent from former publications and thus touched a broader audience who were fascinated with these reproductions of the "Orient" – yet Mourier's judgment on the arts remained negative. His opinion recalled much more Schnaase's designation of the Caucasus as a place of foreign absorption without the capacity of original creation. He wrote: "Their architecture, like the country itself, has been perpetually influenced by foreign influences".[25]

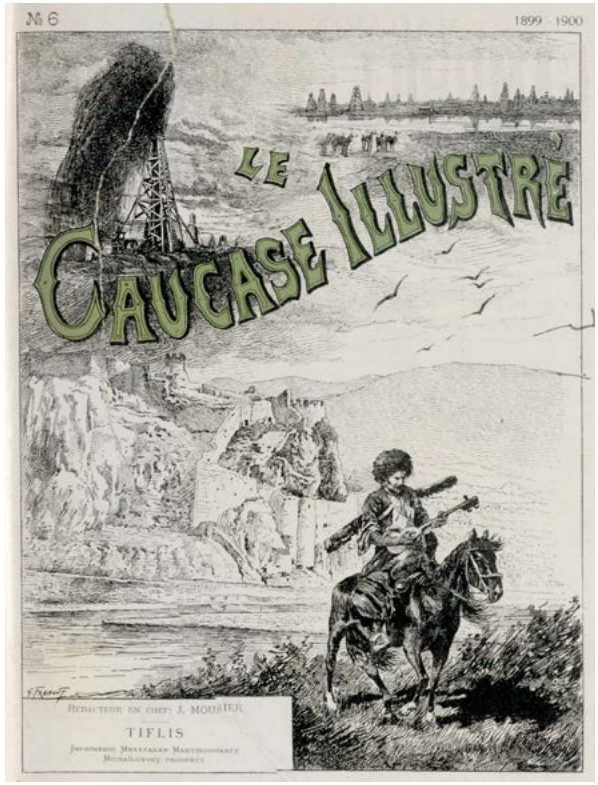
It is necessary to mention a remarkable study titled *La Souanétie libre* signed by Raphaël Edgar Bernoville, which, aside from the invaluable information it presented on the remote Svaneti region, helped to frame the perspective on Georgia and the Caucasus by learned French audiences in the second half of the nineteenth century.[26] Bernoville was a well-to-do Catholic bourgeois and amateur scholar, passionately devoted to archaeology. He traveled to Syria and to the Caucasus and was closely involved with the Catholic circles that contributed to the scholarly rediscovery of Eastern Christian art in the second half of the nineteenth century. Traveling in the 1870s, a few years after Bakradze, Bernoville was able to reproduce some floor plans and witness dozens of remarkable silver objects preserved in the churches and treasuries of the Svaneti mountains **[7]**. However, he had only an amateur and little-informed interest in them and thus described them vaguely as "byzantine".[27] Bernoville's text was imbued with a strong Catholic conservatism, extolling the virtues of Russia as a nation still untouched by the decadence and corruption of the nations of Europe. He was very

24 The journal was published from 1889 to 1902, available for subscription in the Russian Empire and in France. See Cheishvili 2013; Grigoryan Savary 2018, pp. 89–90. Other figures of photographers and travelers contributed, in these years, to make the Caucasus more widely known to foreign audiences in these years especially through the new medium. We can cite the Belgian photographer Carla Serena (Caroline Hartog Mergentheim, 1820–1884), the travels of the Florentines (but Francophones) Emile Levier (1838–1912) and Stephen Sommier (1848–1922) or those of the photographer Hugues Krafft (1853–1935). Another fascinating case, on which I do not have the space to enter here, is the figure of Joseph Berthelot, baron de Baye (1853–1931). In the late nineteenth century, having befriended the Russian historian and collector Sergej Cheremetiev, De Baye undertook several journeys to the Caucasus. He saw the pilgrimage to the Alaverdi monastery, visited Yerevan and Etchmiadzin, as well as Gori. In Alaverdi in particular, he brought fascinating pictures of the monastery, observing the Muslim and Christian pilgrimage to the site, still today of profound interest. On these figures, see notably the studies of Ana Cheishvili: Cheishvili 2017; *Eadem* 2021; *Eadem* 2023.

25 Mourier 1887, p. 23. See a longer quote, from the 1896 edition, in Grigoryan Savary 2018, pp. 89–90.

26 Bernoville 1875.

27 *Ibidem*, sp. pp. 133–141.



[6] *Le Caucase Illustré*, n°6, 1899–1900

clear about his perception of the Caucasus, echoing the colonial sentiment, he stated "[...] from a military point of view, the Caucasus is to Russia what India is to England, and what Algeria is to France."[28] However, he considers the colonization in the Caucasus by the Russians as an example of a "successful" colonization, unlike the policies implemented in Egypt or North Africa by France. In the landscapes and the vestiges of ancient Christianity in Svaneti, Bernoville seems to have found the myth of the "good savage" who was still uncorrupted by the decadence of the West.

With few exceptions, Caucasian studies were more productively developed under the quill of philologists, who were brought to the region to write about material culture in addition to their main focus on the study of manuscripts. Two central figures in this regard are the philologists Antoine Meillet (1866–1936) and Frédéric Macler (1868–1938). Meillet and Macler were from the younger generation of linguists who bridged the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were working within the already fertile ground which had been developed in France around the *École des Langues Orientales* but were also

28 *Ibidem*, p. 12.

[7] From Raphaël Edgar Bernoville, *La Souanétie libre*, 1875

expanding the scope of the field through international connections with figures such as Heinrich Hübschmann (1848–1908) or Yakovbos Tašean (1866–1933) and the Mekhitarists both in Venice and in Vienna. Meillet and Macler had a key role in the internationalization and professionalization of the field in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Meillet became one of the crucial figures in the development of comparative grammar and Indo-European studies, while Macler was remarkably well-informed on all aspects of Armenian literature, culture, and, through manuscripts, visual studies.[29] Macler was familiar with publications on Caucasian studies in all languages, even disagreeing with art historians on certain questions: this is famously the case for the Etchmiadzin Gospels. Macler disagreed with Josef Strzygowski on the dating of the illuminations – and his opinion is still valid today.[30] Caucasian studies thus experienced a boom in the early 1900s which coincided with some of the region's darkest pages.

Unlike the previous generation of scholars born in the early 1800s, those interested in the Caucasus born post-1840 were destined to directly or indirectly witness the horrors that were about to unfold in

29 On Meillet, see Palladino 2023, pp. 101–104, with bibliography. On Macler, see Grigoryan Savary 2018, pp. 90–91, with the most important contributions by Macler.

30 Macler 1920a. On the topic, see Palladino 2021.

the region. Since the mid-nineteenth century, indeed, the theme of the Ottoman oppression of the Armenians at the hands of state authorities and Kurds grew in prominence in travelogues by European travelers. A few years later, under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), one of the most dramatic waves of massacres against the Christian populations of Asia Minor took place. Considered by some scholars as the first phase of the Armenian genocide, the so-called Hamidian massacres claimed between 100,000 and 300,000 victims between 1894 and 1897.[31] Many French scholars, through their work, tried to raise public awareness of the situation of the Armenian nation. Often, they plead desperately for the cause, but the interwoven interests of international colonial politics caused any potentially willing politicians to turn only deaf ears to these cries. As we will see, by a dark twist of fate, it is nevertheless at this darkest hour that Armenian studies will receive a spotlight across French-learned audiences.

GERMANOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

Following Schnaase's studies and given the passive role attributed to the Southern Caucasus and Armenia, the field of art history took some time to address the region in its own right. There were many formative German travelers, notably the Berlin-formed geologist Otto Wilhelm Hermann Abich (1806–1886) who was sent on a mission by the Russian Count Sergej Uvarov (1786–1855). Besides such travelers, the Caucasus thus remained marginal in Germanophone historiography up until the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[32] Volumes of universal scope, such as Karl Woermann's *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker* (1905), still qualified the arts of the Caucasus and of Armenia as a "*Mischkunst*", an art of diversity (lit. art of "mixity") at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the early German perspective, then, Caucasian arts did not present original characteristics but would be composed only of a hybridization of different artistic trends – in other terms a "sub-culture".[33] Despite the presence and activities, since 1837, of a branch of the Mekhitarists in Vienna which had a considerable impact on scholarly interests in later years,[34] the first Germanophone book dedicated to Armenia by the Austrian Amand von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld (1846–1910) in 1878 also sums up a relative lack of serious interest:

> "Good [wine], ancient gray church buildings of Etchmiadzin, and several hundred old manuscripts in Mesrop's hieroglyph-like script, kept in the monastery library,

31 For the question of continuity between the Hamidian massacres and the genocide, see Morris/Ze'evi 2019. For the French and the Genocide, starting from the nineteenth century, see Duclert 2015. Specifically on the Hamidian atrocities, see *Études arméniennes contemporaines: Les massacres de l'époque hamidienne. I: récits globaux, approches locales*, x (2018) and *II: représentations et perspectives*, 11 (2018). Further bibliographical hints also in Palladino 2023, pp. 98–104.

32 As can be seen throughout various parts in this book, Uvarov was instrumental in electing foreign members to the Academy of Sciences, and several of the scholars who traveled to the Caucasus did so with money directly obtained through Uvarov's good relationships with the imperial court. In exchange, scholars were invited to publish results presenting chiefly the Russian parts of the Caucasus and Armenia and its links with the Empire. Most notably, Abich's work as a geologist led him to explore the Armenian Highlands in depth, climbing the Ararat volcano several times, see Abich 1878–1887; *Idem* 1896; Niederl-Garber 2013, pp. 107–117. The posthumously published letters from Abich's travels however also include descriptions and some sketches several monuments and places – including Ani, Hoṛomos, Etchmiadzin, or Geghard: most interesting perhaps is Abich's constant fascination with Ani's monuments, see Abich 1896.

33 Woermann 1905; Azatyan 2012.

34 On the Mekhitarsists in Vienna, see, e.g., Denscher 2012.

seem to be the only heritage that ancient Armenia has left to the living race".[35]

However, as in the French context, a notable exception to this dismissive attitude derives from fields exploring the languages of the region, which experienced a golden age in the second half of the nineteenth century. This interest in the origins of European languages through the Indo-European and Indo-Germanic "myth", already discussed with von Klaproth, found new ground around one of the founding figures of comparative linguistics, Johann Heinrich Hübschmann (1848–1908). In 1875, a few years after the formation of the German Empire (1871), Hübschmann turned the *communis opinio* of the time around by demonstrating that Armenian was not a branch of the Iranian languages, but an individual Indo-European branch.[36] Such discoveries must be placed in the international context of the development of Indo-European and Indo-Germanic studies in Europe, with all the ideological problems this entails – especially for later periods and, but not only, in the German empire. It is indisputable that the question of languages transforming or affecting one another, particularly between Persia and Armenia, had repercussions for the discipline of art history: it was progressively accepted that populations traveled with languages and with population ideologies and, therefore, "styles".[37] Precisely in the years of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), branching methods inspired by the phylogenetic tree diagram, inherited from the natural sciences, were used equally by scientists, philologists, and art historians.[38] The arts of the Caucasus were thus seen either as a new branch in their own right – Armenian became at least linguistically an individual branch – or, on the contrary, as an extension or as the bud of an existing branch. Such visual mapping shaped the future of art history.

One of the key figures in art historical studies who bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is certainly Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) **[8]**, whose name is now strongly associated with Armenian studies and with the more problematic history of twentieth-century Germany. Stryzgowski's interest in the materials from the Southern Caucasus and Armenia seemed to originate with his early travels in the 1880s to Greece, Russia, Asia Minor, and Armenia (to which he traveled in 1889). At this time he became fascinated with the question of the origins of early Christian art, and during his trips to Egypt (1894/1895 and 1900/1901) he became more acquainted with artifacts from the "Christian East", Islamic objects, and those beyond in Persia.[39] Through these trips, and his teaching in Graz and later Vienna, as well

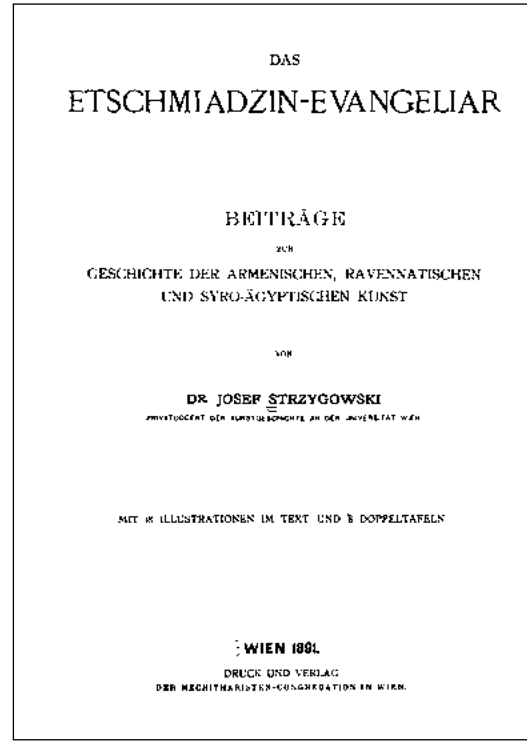
35 Schweiger-Lerchenfeld 1878, p. 42.

36 Hübschmann 1875. See Schmitt 1975.

37 On the question of the Indo-European myth over the late nineteenth century and during the twentieth century, with all its problematic implications, see chiefly Arvidsson 2006; Demoule 2017 [2014].

38 On the topic, see Bredekamp 2005.

39 On Strzygowski, amongst a vast bibliography, see e.g., Zäh 2012 and the various essays in Scholz/Długosz 2015 and Foletti/Lovino 2018. Most recently, important elements have emerged thanks to the archival studies of Polleroß 2021; *Idem* 2023.



DAS

ETSCHMIADZIN-EVANGELIAR

BEITRÄGE

ZUR

GESCHICHTE DER ARMENISCHEN, RAVENNATISCHEN UND SYRO-ÄGYPTISCHEN KUNST

VON

DR. JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI

PRIVATDOCENT DER KUNSTGESCHICHTE AN DER UNIVERSITÄT WIEN

MIT 18 ILLUSTRATIONEN IM TEXT UND 8 DOPPELTAFELN

WIEN 1891.

DRUCK UND VERLAG
DER MECHITHARISTEN-CONGREGATION IN WIEN.

as his involvement in the Berlin museums and with the Mekhitarists in Vienna, Strzygowski's knowledge of artifacts and monuments became extremely broad even by contemporary standards.[40] Already at the end of the nineteenth century and increasingly in the early twentieth century, Strzygowski engaged in the heated European-wide debate within art history concerning the question of the primacy of classical antiquity and humanism versus the visual and material cultures of the "East" – from the Eastern Roman Empire to Armenia and to Persia. This debate, which challenged traditional art history, would have a decisive and durable impact on the study of Early Christian, Byzantine, Islamic, and Persian art history in the following decades.[41]

It is within this broader frame that the first study properly on Armenian materials by Strzygowski must be placed: his book dedicated to the famous tenth-century Etchmiadzin Gospel (Matenadaran, no. 2374) published in 1891 **[9]**.[42] This book was published in the new series *Byzantinische Denkmäler* with the support of the Russian diplomat Alexandr Nelidov (1838–1910) and at the printing house of the Viennese Mekhitarists. The latter had facilitated the travels of Strzygowski to the Caucasus in the 1880s–1890s and his involvement can be

40 Mietke *et al*. 2012.

41 There is no space here to enter into the intricacies of the question, but useful texts to orientate oneself in the question are, e.g., Marchand 1994; Elsner 2002; *Idem* 2020b; Tonbul 2020.

42 Strzygowski 1891.

[8] Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), ca. 1910

[9] Frontispiece of Josef Strzygowski, *Das Etschmiadzin-Evangeliar*, 1891

explained by Russian interests in extending the borders of Byzantine art by including the Southern Caucasus and Armenia – an effort in line with the imperial/colonial policy.[43] As Strzygowski himself later admitted, in this study, he considered Armenian art not as an original art, but as a broader branch of Byzantine art – to the delight of his Russian patron.

He highlighted the manifold ties between Armenian book illumination and earlier sixth-century Syriac illumination, which he saw as the origin of Armenian manuscript art. He argued that there was no proper Armenian tradition of book illumination prior to the tenth century. In such a way, like in his later *Orient oder Rom*, Strzygowski made a broad claim about the primacy of the "Orient" over Rome in artistic innovation and creativity during the early Christian period.[44] It is also in the 1891 book that Strzygowski identified the early medieval church of Zvart'nots in the ruins close to Etchmiadzin, which would increasingly become – especially after its excavation in the early nineteenth century that was prompted by Strzygowski's identification – one of the most symbolic edifices of modern Armenia. It was also the subject of wide debates about the origin of centrally shaped edifices in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.[45] Strzygowski's own position on Armenian manuscript illumination and art more generally gradually shifted, as is evident first in Strzygowski's affirmation that the common root for Syrian and Armenian book decorations could be found in ancient Mesopotamia and Persia, which in turn fostered new ideas and aesthetic creativity in Byzantine art.[46] Later, following his 1913 expedition, Strzygowski's research turned to an unceasing search for architectures representing the missing link between the "Aryan" architecture of the ancient Indo-European peoples and that of Europe in Armenia.[47]

Besides Strzygowski, Caucasian and Armenian heritage was studied more sporadically by figures of art historians who became interested in the arts of the eastern Roman empire, either following the trends of Russophone historiography or marginally by those who were engaged in the study of Eastern archaeology; an area where Germans had many interests. Amongst these figures is the architectural historian Walter Bachmann (1883–1958), who in 1911 traveled through Eastern Anatolia, producing for his dissertation accurately planned drawings and photographs of Armenian churches and of mosques in eastern Turkey – notably of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar.[48]

On a broader scale, within the increasingly tense political and strategic situation, the people of the German Empire reacted to the massacres

43 On this question, see Grigoryan Savary 2018, sp. pp. 86–88.
44 Strzygowski 1901.
45 On this, see Maranci 2014; *Eadem* 2016.
46 Strzygowski 1907.
47 *Idem* 1918.
48 Bachmann 1913.

Armenien und Europa.

Eine Anklageschrift
wider
die christlichen Großmächte
und
ein Aufruf
an
das christliche Deutschland.

Von
Dr. Johannes Lepsius.

3. vermehrte Auflage. 6. und 7. Tausend.

Berlin-Westend.
Verlag der Akademischen Buchhandlung W. Faber & Co.
1897.

[10] Frontispiece of Johannes Lepsius, *Armenien und Europa*, 1897

of the 1890s and the early twentieth century – as the following chapter shall discuss. Within Germany's imperial ambitions, a strategic alliance with the Ottoman Empire and its progressive conquest – made possible through soft-power and land grabbing – had been envisaged as early as the late nineteenth century.[49] Such a situation made – as was the case for the British and to some extent the French – a direct political intervention to stop the massacres more difficult. As Stefan Ihrig aptly synthetizes the issue, in Wilhelmine and early twentieth-century Germany, "the Armenians continued to be the sacrificial lamb on the altar of intensifying German-Ottoman relations and German imperial policies".[50] Such a situation was not favorable to the Armenian populations and to Armenian studies, despite the fact that these were fellow Christians.

One of the key figures defending the cause of the Armenians precisely from the vantage point of the unity of Christians is the Protestant pastor Johannes Lepsius (1858–1926), whose fight later developed into a virtual humanitarian battle.[51] Son of a famous Prussian Egyptologist, Lepsius became a leading figure in the German Oriental Mission (*Deutsche Orientmission*), which later became his *Dr-Lepsius-Deutsche-Orient-Mission* because of his need to reject his

49 See Ihrig 2016, sp. pp. 31–89.
50 Ihrig 2016, p. 32.
51 On Lepsius, see e.g., Hosfeld 2013.

government's decisions. The goal of the mission was to help and save the Eastern Christians persecuted in the regions of Turkey, with the establishment of humanitarian camps, orphanages and escape efforts. His appeal to European aid, such as his pamphlet published in 1897, must be placed in the international appeals of intellectuals (not only Christians) from France, Britain, and the US to their kinsmen and governments to stop the massacres and to condemn the Ottomans for their crimes **[10]**.[52] While his efforts saved thousands of lives, the lasting engagement of Lepsius, also after 1915, had no profound effect on Germany's Realpolitik nor the position of the Caucasus in the field of art history.

ANGLOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

While studies on Mesopotamia and Persia flourished in the wake of the discoveries made in the first half of the nineteenth century, the same cannot be said about interest in the Caucasus. While several travelers continued to explore the region's geography and culture – amongst which we can include the notable travel accounts of John Ussher, John Buchan Telfer (1831–1907), and Henry Fanshawe Tozer (1829–1916) – the region remained not at the center of attention, but at best was perceived as a gateway to Persia and beyond.[53]

Perhaps the most important publication on Armenia for a learned audience in English in these years was the study of Henry Finnis Blosse Lynch (1862–1913). Son of a mother with Armenian ancestry and a British explorer of Mesopotamia, Lynch published, at the turn of the century, a two-volume study entitled *Armenia. Travels and Studies* which represents the most monumental travel report published before the First World War **[11]**.[54] In line with earlier travel accounts, Lynch's study is a precise account of all aspects of Russian and Turkish Armenia in the 1890s. Lynch's first contact had been with Baghdad and Persia, as a member of the Royal Geographical Society: he focused during these travels on social, military, commercial, geographic, and other specially British-aligned concerns. Whilst by no means a professional art historian, Lynch's study did consider local artistic manifestations. These, to some extent in line with earlier scholars such as Layard, focused on the character of Armenian sculpture and its connections with Assyria and ancient Mesopotamia. For Lynch, the sculptures at the church of the Holy Cross of Aght'amar "may constitute an important link between the art of the ancient Assyrians and the art of the Arabs and the Byzantines [...] the bulls' heads which adorned the ends of the arms of the king's throne at Nimrud are almost exactly

52 Lepsius 1897.
53 Ussher 1865; Telfer 1876; Tozer 1881
54 Lynch 1901. On Lynch, see Young 2008.

reproduced in some of the stone ornaments which project from the face of this church".[55] Once again and following the trend of most scholars writing on the issue, the art of Armenia was considered here not as a self-sufficient and creative entity, but as the missing piece in the evolution of architecture from the Ancient Near East to Arab and Byzantine arts, considered separate branches of the tree of architectural development.

Other important studies happened on the margins, as part of travels through Asia Minor resulting in studies by the archaeologist William Mitchell Ramsay (1851–1939) and the diplomat and adventurer Gertrude L. Bell (1868–1926) – one of the most remarkable British diplomats, explorers, and archaeologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century **[12]**. Against the backdrop of the complex history of Britain's involvement with the movements of Arab nationalisms spanning the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a topic extending beyond the limits of the present book, Ramsay and Bell wrote a classic account of early Christian and Byzantine churches in Asia Minor, carrying out some of the first archaeological excavations. This book, eloquently titled *The Thousand and One Churches*, refers to the ruins of the Binbirkilise region (whose name translates eponymously) in antique Lycaonia, modern-day Turkey. In this book bearing a dedication to Strzygowski, Bell and Ramsay discuss the origins of church architecture in the region, namely Armenian architecture's relationship to other cultural areas.[56] The broader conclusion regarded the "Oriental" character shared by the architecture of Syria, Armenia, and Asia Minor, all – once again – as due to their common roots in ancient Mesopotamia. However, most interestingly, Ramsay and Bell did not reject the possibility that Armenian architecture, and possibly Armenian architects, had been active in these regions of Asia Minor. They remained careful in their assessment, however:

> "Whether Armenia borrowed from Constantinople or Constantinople from Armenia I do not venture to decide [...] Until the very late period represented by Tchangli Klisse and Irkhala Dere, Central Asia Minor appears to be more closely linked to Inner Asia, to Armenia and Mesopotamia, than to Constantinople and the coast lands, and though I regard the cross-in-square as a scheme not indigenous to the plateau, I am tempted to see in such churches as Tchet Dagh and No. 35 the architectural genius of Inner Asia working on a plan known to the Hellenistic world and probably itself Asiatic".[57]

55 Lynch 1901, vol. II, pp. 132–133.

56 Ramsay/Bell 2008 [1909]. The publication draws heavily on Strzygowski 1903 but also, partly, on the studies of Hans Rott, see Rott 1908 and of course De Vogüé 1865–1877.

57 Ramsay/Bell 2008 [1909], pp. 422–427.

[11] Henry Finnis Blosse Lynch (1862–1913)

[12] Getrude Bell (1868–1926) in Babylon, Iraq, 1909

No matter the final conclusions, and despite the role of Armenia only as comparative material, Bell's knowledge of the Armenian monuments shows that amongst learned circles, real knowledge, informed by architectural drawings, plans, and more precise descriptions and even photographic materials was starting to make its way to Britain in the early twentieth century. The insistence on the primacy of buildings such as Etchmiadzin also showed the impact of Strzygowski's early studies on an international level, and which, according to Bell, "might in its present form rival any of the Carolingian plans".[58] While such background seems ideal for the development of studies on Caucasian heritage, the arts of Armenia and Georgia continued to be marginalized within the Anglophone world. The political situation was not helpful, as the next chapter will show.

Indeed, the British Government was deeply involved in Armenian life by the 1890s, and in the Hamidian massacres, with a consistent policy: on paper, Britain was opposed to the annexation of Armenia by Russia and in favor of the Turkish reforms in the province. Such a position must be seen as an attempt to balance Britain's relationship with Russia and with Germany, but also the Crown's interest in India and the Persian Gulf especially in the years of the slow disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. To maintain this delicate power balance little was done to help the Armenian population. The only significant push by the British authorities was a call from the 1890s onward for "reforms" of the Turkish territories in favor of the Christian populations, especially in the years leading to the First World War.[59] By 1913,

58 *Ibidem*, p. 459. The most impactful studies by Strzygowski are certainly Strzygowski 1903 and *Idem* 1904.

59 See Salt 1990 for the earlier period and Heller 1980 for 1912–1914.

the Ottomans and the Committee of Union and Progress of the Young Turks turned towards Germany, joining the war on the side of the Central Empires. Despite the outrage of public opinion and the calls for help by alarmed travelers and local officials who witnessed the massacres, little was done to prevent the situation from unfolding since Britain was now at war with the Ottoman Empire. In this context, the proposed formation of an Armenian armed legion trained by the British as support troops intended to fight in Cilicia was rejected in 1915 due to the fear that it would lead to massacres – though this was without knowledge of the massacres which were happening at that very moment. The French later copied this idea by creating the *Légion d'Orient*. The plan was to create a French protectorate over the Armenian-populated areas of Western Armenia in exchange for forming this legion and contributing to the Allied victory.[60] As such, due to the broader political questions and the involvement of the British empire in other areas of the globe, the Caucasus remained, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a place of great political and strategic importance, but not one intensively fostering studies on material and visual culture. In the early twentieth century, however, the United States developed art historical institutes, and Anglophone studies suddenly extended beyond the Atlantic, sometimes with very different parameters – especially due to the complex history of emigration in the United States.

ITALOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *RUBEN CAMPINI, ANNALISA MORASCHI*

While the study of medieval Armenian art and architecture became a formal part of the field of art history in Italy only from the 1960s onwards, there were sporadic mentions of Armenian monuments in contributions written in Italian even before the political unification of the country. Indeed, the first text to briefly examine an Armenian artifact from the Middle Ages dates, surprisingly, to 1828. This was the handwritten booklet entitled *Illustrazione d'alcune antichità armene esistenti in Piemonte* by Deodato Papasian (1808–1868), an Armenian diplomat at the service of the King of Sardinia.[61] Indeed, the booklet, which was dedicated to King Carlo Felice of Savoy (1765–1831), included in the list of Armenian antiquities preserved in Piedmont, the late thirteenth-century reliquary of Skevṛa **[13]**. This fascinating object is now exhibited at the Hermitage Museum but at that time was preserved in the monastery of Bosco Marengo, near Alessandria.[62] Notably, Papasian translated all the Armenian inscriptions into Italian and added five illustrations that were later published by Vincenzo

60 See Varnava 2015, sp. pp. 351–359.

61 Papasian 1828. Only three copies of the manuscript are known. They are preserved respectively at the Biblioteca Reale in Turin, in the Library of San Lazzaro, and the Fondo Papasian at the Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea in Ferrara. For the history of the manuscript, see Alishan 1899, pp. 114–115. For more information about the author, see Uluhogian 2006 and Bais 2010.

62 The reliquary later appeared in the Basilewsky collection and was purchased by the Hermitage State Museum in 1855.

Promis (1839–1889) in 1883, forming the earliest documentation of the Skevṛa reliquary.[63]

Papasian's contribution, however, is not strictly art-historical, since the author wished to familiarize King Carlo Felice – gifted with a copy of the manuscript – with the history of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia through his selection of objects. These objects included three privileges granted by the Armenian kings of Cilicia to the Genoese and some coins. Indeed, although the Mamluks had conquered the realm already in 1375, Papasian reminded the King that the Savoy royal family had inherited its formal sovereignty through Carlotta of Lusignan (1444–1487). In this sense, his contribution can be considered a prudent attempt to sensitize the king on the difficult condition of the Armenian people by exploiting this connection with the Sardinian crown.

The same intention is more explicit in the three volumes of *L'Armenia* **[14]**, an encyclopedic description of the historical country, its subsequent history, and culture published in 1841 by the Venetian priest and historian Giuseppe Cappelletti (1802–1876).[64] The book – dedicated to King Carlo Felice's successor, Carlo Alberto (1798–1849) – was the result of a synergic dialogue between the author and the Mekhitarist Congregation of San Lazzaro in Venice, with the aim of bestowing upon the King the formal and moral responsibility for safeguarding Armenian culture and, indirectly, Armenians, by virtue of his status as "King of Armenia".[65] To support this objective, Cappelletti decided to devote the last paragraph of his book to the description of the prevailing situation of the Armenian people.[66]

Interestingly, some Armenian monuments were, once again, included in the narrative to show the relevance and longevity of Armenian culture, and this time even in a dedicated section. However, the paragraph devoted to the *Belle Arti* in the second volume is brief and generic as the author limits himself to praising Armenian architecture by reporting the existence of "magnificent temples built to fake gods in the time of idolatry as well as to the real God in the time of Christianity" and mentioning in a couple of lines the ruins of Ani and the church of Aght'amar as the only Medieval examples, without any illustration.[67] Nonetheless, *L'Armenia* constitutes the only publication written in Italian before the twentieth century to dedicate even a paragraph to the Armenian visual heritage.

While modest in their art historical output, Papasian and Cappelletti's contributions reveal, more broadly, the Armenian communities' need for recognition and protection, as they were actively engaged in promoting knowledge of their history and culture to the intellectual and political Italophone elites.[68] Notably, the Mekhitarist fathers of

63 Promis 1883.

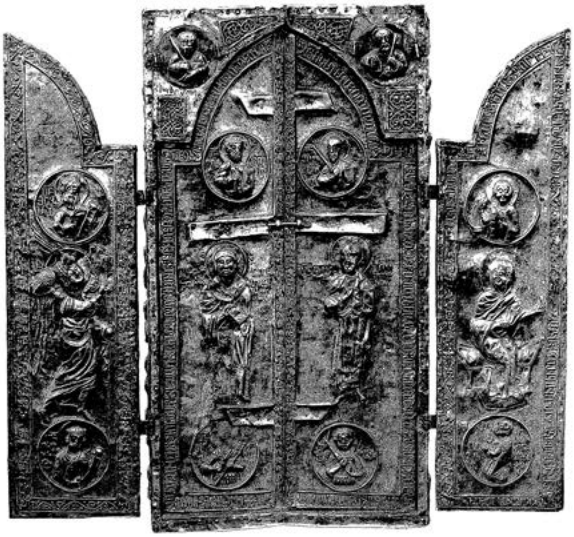
64 Cappelletti 1841. Cappelletti has never been the subject of scholarly attention (Haroutyunian 2018a). However, on March 26, 2009, in the frame of the III *Giornata di Studi Armeni e Caucasici* in Venice, Tamara De Valerio, at the time a Ph.D. student at the University of Rouen, delivered a paper titled "Cappelletti: un armenista veneziano dell'Ottocento". See Campini/Moraschi (unpublished).

65 Cappelletti 1841, vol. I, p. 1. Perhaps, the Mekhitarists even commissioned the book, as an anonymous derogatory pamphlet entitled *Il mechitarista di San-Lazzaro di Venezia* (1852) stated that Cappelletti was "a tool and even the direct voice of the Mekhitarists from Venice".

66 *Ibidem*, vol. III, pp. 163–167.

67 *Ibidem*, vol. II, pp. 227–231. The text mainly consists of the translation of the description of the buildings erected in the city of Van by the semi-legendary queen Semiramis found in the monumental *History of Armenians* by the fifth-century historian Movses Khorenatsi.

68 Uluhogian 2006, pp, 502–503. See also Manoukian 2004.



San Lazzaro had been publishing contributions related to Armenia since the previous century, including translations of historical sources. Moreover, in 1843, they founded the scientific journal *Bazmavēp* [Polyhistory], which became fundamental to Armenian studies in Western Europe, and, in 1881, they also seized the opportunity of the *Third International Geographical Congress*, hosted in Venice, to organize a *Mostra Veneto-Armena*, where different materials related to Armenia – drawings, travel diaries, and maps – were exhibited to present the country to a broader public.[69]

However, as is also evident in Papasian and Cappelletti's texts, art and architecture were still not exploited as powerful tools to stress the uniqueness of Armenian culture and the need to protect it. That was also because art history – particularly medieval art history – was established as an autonomous discipline only later in the century.[70] On the other hand, Armenia was also difficult to access, especially following the Crimean War (1853–1856).[71]

Consequently, descriptions of Armenian monuments occupy a limited space in the few travel reports of the time written in Italian. In these texts, the country – far from being the ultimate destination of travelers – emerged simply as a space of passage between other territories, and medieval monuments, if mentioned, were only hastily described in favor of other aspects, such as the costumes and traditions of the people.[72] In Felice de Vecchi's (1816–1862) *Giornale di Carovana* (1847), for example, the author dedicated some pages only to the

69 For a detailed study of this event, see Moraschi 2023.

70 Campini/Moraschi (unpublished).

71 For more information about the conflict, see Arnold 2010 and Blake 2006.

72 See, e.g., De Vecchi 1847 and *Idem* 1854, De Bianchi 1863, De Filippi 1865. These are the only travel accounts written in Italian that we were able to find (excluding translations of foreign accounts). For more information and bibliography on the topic see Laycock 2009; Said 1978, and Braudel 1985.

[14] Giuseppe Cappelletti, *L'Armenia*, Frontispiece, vol. I, Florence 1841

[13] Skevra reliquary, end of the 13th century. Wooden core and gilded silver, 35,5 cm × 63,5 cm (closed), Saint Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum

cathedral of Etchmiadzin, which he generically connected to Byzantium while signaling, in another passage of the text, further "traces of the ancient Genoese and Byzantine style".[73] Interestingly, however, the church was later photographed – possibly for the first time – by an Italian, Luigi Montabone (†1877), in the frame of a broader diplomatic mission to Persia by a delegation of the unified Kingdom of Italy in 1862.[74] The three photographs of Etchmiadzin by Montabone have a fundamental historical value as they attest to the state of preservation of the church before its alterations at the end of the 1860s **[15]**.[75]

The decisive turning point for the development of proper art historical studies on Armenian medieval heritage in Italy – in parallel with the establishment of the discipline and the emergence of "Byzantine studies" – can be dated only to the turn of the century, following the research of the Austrian scholar Josef Strzygowski , and, particularly, the publication of *Amida* in 1910.[76] Indeed, in his book, Strzygowski carried forward his theory of the primacy of the East in the development of Western art, attributing to Armenia a role as a mediator of artistic forms between Persia and Byzantium.

In 1914, in opposition to Strzygowski's ideas, and according instead to the pan-Roman nationalistic narrative promoted by the Kingdom of Italy since the political unification of the country, the engineer and architect Giovanni Teresio Rivoira (1849–1919), decided to devote an entire chapter to Armenian medieval architecture in his *Architettura Musulmana, sue origini e suo sviluppo* **[16]**, a contribution that aimed to confirm Roman authorship more broadly in the development of both Western and Eastern architecture, including in Islamic forms.[77] More concretely, Rivoira proposed a review of some of the most important medieval churches of historical Armenia, retracing hypothetical Roman sources to demonstrate their dependence on Western models. In doing so, he postdated most churches' foundations and concluded that Armenian medieval architecture was a branch of Roman architecture and a root for the Islamic style.[78] Nonetheless, the scholar showed appreciation for Armenian medieval heritage and admitted, in the case of Ani cathedral – whose dating in 1001 is attested by an inscription –, an influence on eleventh-century Tuscan architecture, especially in the application of decorative blind arches on the church of San Miniato in Florence and the Cathedral of Pisa.[79]

Interestingly, Rivoira was supported by two Mekhitarist fathers, namely Minas Nurikhan and Gabriel Nahapetian, who helped him with the transliterations of Armenian names and, most of all, gave him the photographs of the monuments under investigation, as the text attests.[80] Most of these photographs were taken by Father

73 De Vecchi 1854, pp. 161, 185–188.

74 Montabone 1862–1865. Luigi Montabone was a renowned photographer active from the second half of the 1850s in Turin. He became a Royal photographer and later opened some branches of his activity in Milan, Florence, and Rome. For contextualization, see Moraschi 2023.

75 Namely, the addition of a sacristy to its east side commissioned by the Catholicos of All Armenians Gevorg IV in 1868. See Abeghyan 2014, p. 67.

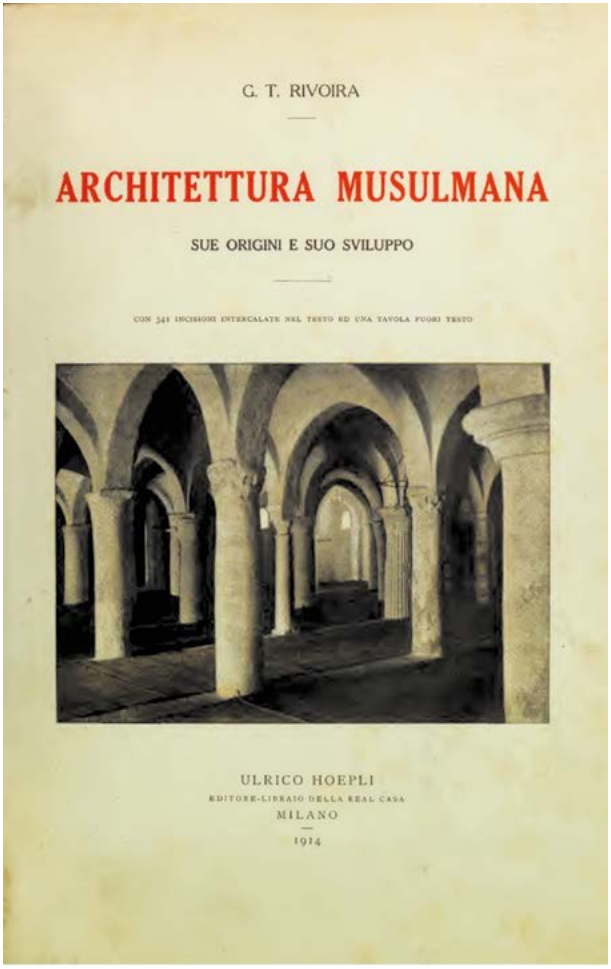
76 Strzygowski 1910. See in this volume, pp. 104–107 and Marchand 1994.

77 Rivoira 1914. The scholar's "Romanist" position was already clear in a previous publication dated 1901 (Rivoira 1901). On the author and his work, see Wharton 1995, pp. 1–14, Grigor 2007, Bevilacqua/Gasbarri 2020, p. 27, and, more recently, Spampinato 2023, pp. 137–143.

78 Spampinato 2023, p. 141.

79 *Ibidem*.

80 Rivoira 1914, pp. 5 (2), 238, 391.



[15] View of the South and East sides of the Ējmiatsin Cathedral, photograph by Luigi Montabone, 1862–1865

[16] Giovanni T. Rivoira, *Architettura Musulmana, sue origini e suo sviluppo*, Frontispiece, Milan 1914

Nahapetian himself, a figure recently studied by Vigen Galstyan. According to Galstyan, Nahapetian's activity, as well as that of the other Armenian photographers who began to document Armenian architectural heritage in the nineteenth century, must be considered in the framework of the Armenian cultural revival of the 1860s–1900s, when photography became a device for an empowering restaging of Armenian identity.[81] It also appears that Rivoira discussed some of his ideas with the Fathers and even with the famous Armenian architect Léon Gurekian (1871–1950), showing that, from the outset, the study of Armenian art in Italy developed in dialogue with members of Armenian communities.[82] In addition, the consistent Armenian presence in Italy after the political unification of the country and its activism could partially explain – at least in the first half of the twentieth century – the absence of interest by some Italian scholars in the art of neighboring countries, such as Georgia.

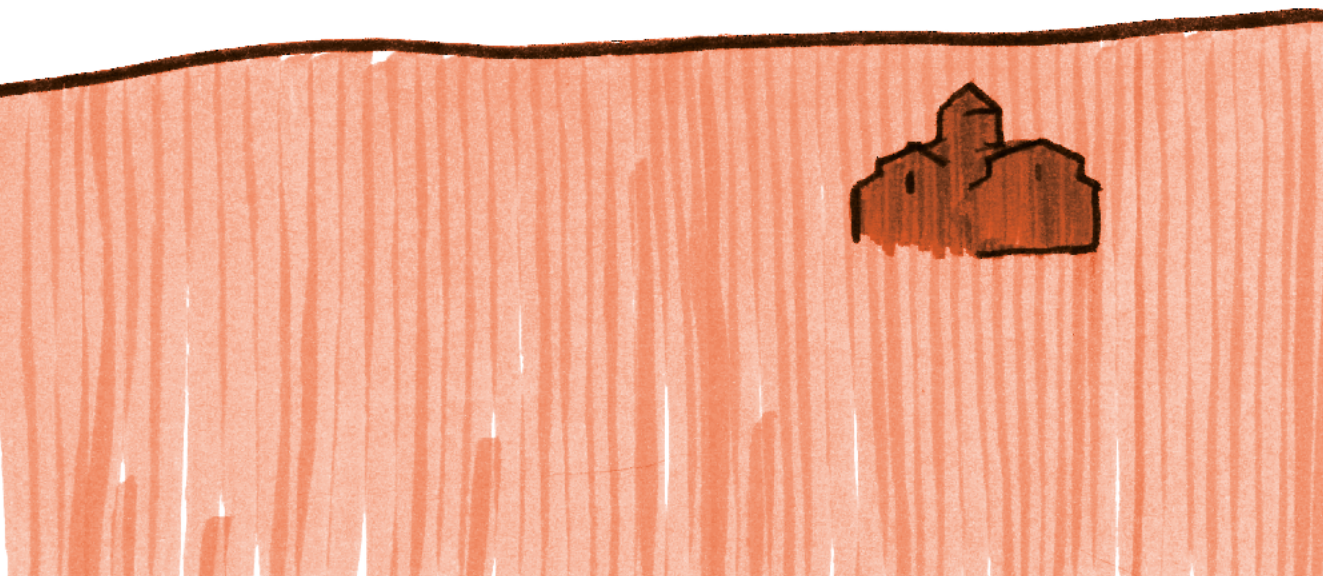
In conclusion, during the nineteenth century, mentions of Armenian monuments in contributions written in Italian are almost null and relate to broader historical overviews sponsored by members of the Armenian communities to show the relevance of their culture to the proto-Italian and Italian political and intellectual elites. Indeed, it was only following the spread of the theories of Josef Strzygowski that Armenian art found new relevance in art-historical – and nationalistic – debates, enabling its study by Italian scholars to satisfy contemporary needs. This occurred during a dramatic moment: indeed, while Rivoira was publishing the first Italian art historical study of Armenia, one of the darkest pages of the history of humankind was being written: the Armenian Genocide.

81 Galstyan 2018. We learned, after communicating with the author, that a book with an expanded chapter on this figure is currently in preparation.

82 We came to know about exchanges of opinions concerning medieval architecture between Rivoira and Gurekian from Léon's nephew, Armen Gurekian. We are grateful to Giacomo Confortin for helping us in the mediation.

CHAPTER III

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE, BETWEEN INDIFFERENCE AND HUMANITARIANISM, AND THE BIRTH OF THE SOVIET UNION (1915–1921)



The period from 1915 to 1921 corresponds to the most dramatic moment in the history of the South Caucasian region and of the entirety of Asia Minor. Indeed, the few years covered in this chapter encapsulate both the events of First World War and what is now referred to by most of the scholarly community – and indeed most states – as the "Armenian Genocide". It is also the time of the Russian revolutions of 1917 that culminated in the Bolshevik coup which precipitated the bloody and brutal civil war.

In just a few decades, history transformed Asia Minor forever. By 1924, four million Christians from various minorities were killed, displaced, or forced to convert. By the end of the Armenian genocide, in less than a decade, Anatolia was emptied of its original inhabitants – some 1.5 million victims have been recorded to date – and the artistic monuments found there were also dramatically compromised as they were subjected to systematic destruction in all media including architecture, manuscripts, and other art objects.

Armenia and Georgia – because of the Russian revolutions – experienced a brief moment wherein they formed a united federal state, then became independent, before being again annexed to an empire, this time to the utopian empire of the proletarians, the Soviet Union. Violence, suffering, and cultural genocide accompanied these years that were, especially for Armenians, a manifestation of a real "valley of tears". The annexation to the USSR sanctioned the beginning of another very painful path of purges and deaths for both Georgians and Armenians.

Against this backdrop, the question the authors of this chapter pursue is to understand how this tragedy changed the gaze of "others" on the art and culture of the region. Given the delayed schedule of scholarly publication – due in large part to the many mechanisms imposed to assure factual accuracy – there were few immediate results or responses from the academic community, relative to the scale of the genocide. Yet the trickle of scholarly testaments is still discernible, and ample space was given to the situation in the region, especially in Anatolia, in the newspapers. Recounting the genocide, its historical background, the various actors involved, and brief reflections on the art and culture of what was eventually called a "martyr nation" were focuses promoted by various newspapers.

The media determined critical reactions, yet never reported from a neutral political position. In the war years, the French, Italians, and

British were part of a wartime conflict that pitted them against the central empires. Consequently, anti-Ottoman rhetoric was an end in itself. Talking about the genocide and its atrocities therefore also became a weapon of wartime propaganda. This, of course, does not in any way diminish the atrocities committed at the behest of Mehmed Talaat Pasha (1874–1921), the architect of the genocide, and the Young Turks government. It does explain the sudden shift of some European media after years of indifference to the cause of the Armenians of Ottoman Turkey, who sided ardently with the Armenians. This sharp shift in reporting tactics stands out even more as the first genocide (1894–1896) had been passed over in relative silence by European media broadly.

The period studied here corresponds to two essential turning points in studies of the region. What was already present, at least on a theoretical level, in the preceding decades became a reality – the discourse, at the time considered scientific, concerning human races. After the first linguistic studies, new racial theories permeated a very dense network of human and natural sciences. Thus, Armenians would be referred to by some as the "Jews" of the East. The parallel was based, of course, on the notorious commercial activities of the two "peoples". Given, however, the weight of anti-Semitism, exalted by racial theories, such a parallel was not only dangerous but also explained the grounds for the genocide implemented by the Ottoman Empire. Of course, when compared to its apex during the time of the Nazi crimes little more than two decades later, biological determinism had not yet reached such a highly articulated theoretical level. However, the Armenian genocide appears as the first tangible result at a mass scale of the biogenetic nationalism that would shortly thereafter invade the Eurasian continent – touching all sciences, including art history.

The second essential element considered in this chapter belongs directly to art historiography. Indeed, it is during this most incriminated period that the most influential volume in the history of medieval Armenian art studies was published – Josef Strzygowski's celebrated volume *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*. Strzygowski's work on Armenian materials and his methodological impact have already been mentioned in the previous chapter, but it was in 1918 that his monumental research transformed the field. As we shall see below, it is not only the first monographic study of Armenian architecture in a Western language, but it was also revolutionary in its scope and ideas. The perspective proposed by Strzygowski upends traditional interpretations of Caucasian art, for not only did he see Armenian art as the "handmaiden" of Western art, but he also argued that it should be considered one of the hubs of creativity that spilled over from the East to

the Greek and Latin West. Despite this admirable work to connect with the art of the Caucasus, it is imperative for this study that Strzygowski also built his argument based on racial theories that presented Armenians as belonging to an Aryan stock. Racial theories thus become, at least in part, the common thread and the battleground that motivated some of the most important studies considered in this chapter.

RUSSOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *IVAN FOLETTI, MARGARITA KHAKHANOVA*

As already mentioned, this chapter opens with one of the most traumatizing moments of the twentieth century, the "Armenian Genocide". In addition to the murder of over a million and a half children, women, and men, this period coincided with the beginning of more or less systematic destruction of the heritage considered "Armenian" on the territory of present-day Anatolia. This genocidal drama must be understood in the context of First World War, which was certainly a catalyst of Ottoman Armenophobia.[1] In the six years following these events, the Russophone world would be shaken by a series of successive crises that would change, in no uncertain terms, the history of the twentieth century. But what was the impact of this dramatic period on the history of Russophone scholarship?

In 1915, the year that coincided with the beginning of the Armenian genocide, an essential volume by Nikolaj Jakovlevič Marr (1864/65–1935) **[1]** came out in this regard.[2] From a Georgian-Scottish family, Marr was one of the foremost specialists in Armenian and Georgian linguistics. Despite his philological training he was appointed in the late nineteenth century as director of excavations at Ani, the ancient capital of medieval Armenia, and thus he became interested in Armenian artistic and cultural history.[3] The small volume published in 1915, however, is not a proper scholarly study but rather a kind of pamphlet, of only fifty-three pages, dedicated to a wider audience. Entitled "The Cultural World of the Caucasus and Armenia", the volume aspired to significantly affect the political situation.[4] In fact, with his work Marr wanted to remind the Russian empire of the existence of the Caucasus and its culture, which he sees as one of the empire's most load-bearing – and which in his view the empire had forgotten. Indeed, he spoke of the great sacrifices of the Armenian people and the irreparable damage being done.[5] But he also recalled that being integrated into Russia was, for Georgia, a guarantee to develop peacefully despite the many problems engendered by colonial incorporation.[6] By recounting the history of the region and its dialogue with

1 See, e.g., the synthesis by Bobelian 2009.
2 Choisnel 2005.
3 The report on the excavation will be published only in 1934. See Marr 1934.
4 Marr 1915.
5 *Ibidem*, pp. 50, 52.
6 *Ibidem*, pp. 49–50.

other local cultures, Marr wanted to remind his readers of Russia's duty to Armenians in Turkey:

> "Russia has an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate in action the beauty of its soul, sensitive to the spiritual beauties. The soul of a great people, a people who are liberators, who pave the way to the world and their own freedom by steadfastly liberating the suffering and oppressed peoples".[7]

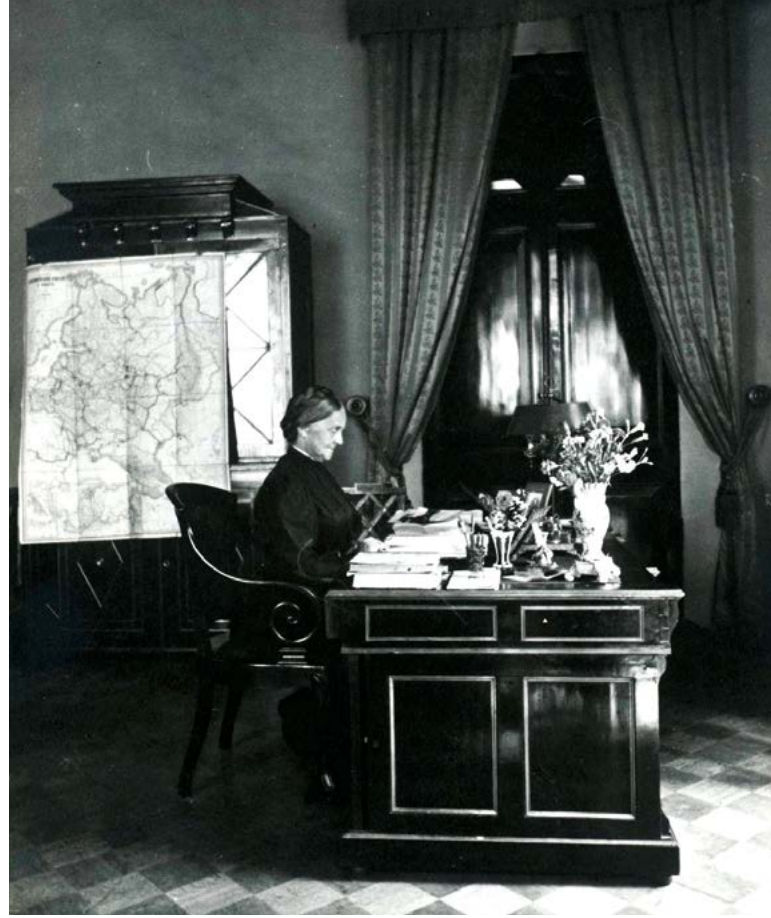
We are unable to know the exact month in which Marr's little volume was published, but one gets the impression that the author was aware of the genocide in progress (or in preparation) and wanted to use the nearly century-old argument, by then almost a national tradition, to mobilize the empire: the belief that Russia had a duty to protect its threatened Christian brethren.[8]

7 Marr 1915, p. 51.

8 The Russian press was largely informing about the genocide. See, e.g., Ošerovskij 1915.

[1] Nikolaj Marr with his students, Ani, 1912

[2] Praskov'ja Uvarova, Karatcharovo, 1899



This highly politically engaged text is an outlier, however, as other research did not react to the events of the war or the tragic events of the genocide. Countess Praskov'ja Uvarova, for example, who headed the Imperial Archaeological Commission, published a monumental volume presenting prewar research **[2]**.[9] In the introduction to the eighth volume she explained the delay in initial publication as due to a large number of exterior responsibilities, but nowhere mentioned the current situation.[10] The extremely positivist studies that were presented in the volume correspond to the myth of a science completely detached from real-world events. This is even more paradoxical when one considers that in those same months the Russian press was presenting the events taking place in Ottoman Armenia with increasing virulence:

"The Armenian nation, as a whole, is now experiencing perhaps the most tragic moment in the long and

9 Zhervje 2007.
10 Uvarova/Kučuk-Ioanesov 1916.

> sorrowful history of its national existence. The sword of the god of war has struck it more painfully than any other nation".[11]

The dramatic history of those years was not limited to the events unfolding in Anatolia: as is well known, in February 1917, the Russian empire was shaken by the first revolution that led to the collapse of the tsarist regime.[12] In the following months the country, still involved in the war effort despite the regime change, was in turmoil: Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik party, proposed abandoning Armenia to its fate, while the leader of Mensheviks Georgij Plekhanov (1856–1918) and Alexandr Kerenskij (1881–1970), the prime minister of the provisional government, opposed this proposal arguing that without Russia's protection the Armenians would otherwise be killed in a second wave of genocide **[3]**.[13] However, it is obvious that, tasked with solving such internal problems as the revolution, the civil war, and the external threat of World War I, Russia did not have the resources to deal with the Armenian question as well. Thus, during the first congress of the Soviets, the fate of Armenia was mentioned only once, in the framework of criticizing Lenin's policy:

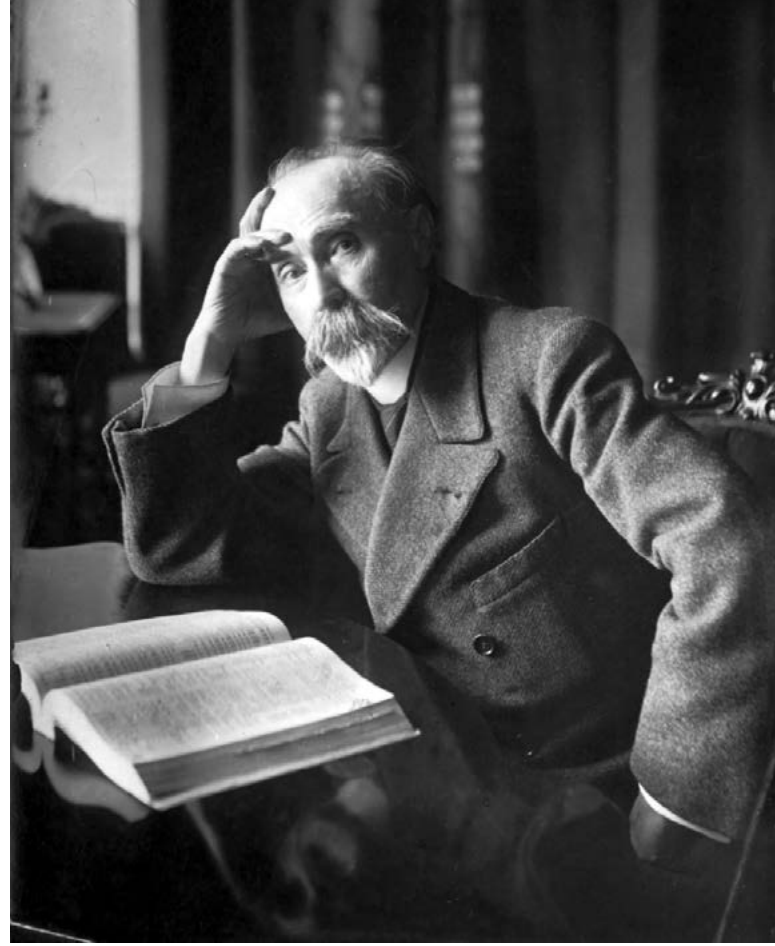
> "Comrade Lenin was so busy with his fight against the defenders and against all the bourgeois thinkers, as many of us are called, that he even forgot that Armenia was carved out, that there were no Armenians there for you to declare [an] Armenian republic [...]".[14]

In these chaotic times, however, periodic publications dedicated to the region continued to be produced, building on the momentum of previous years and publishing timely studies of Armenian and Georgian monuments.[15] Once again, the pace of scholarly publications – then as today – was seemingly completely detached from correspondence with the rhythms of the real world.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 and the subsequent Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which effectively closed the Eastern Front, the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was born in the territory of the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus.[16] The country would endure, under constant attacks from Turkey, only until May 1918, when the first Armenian and Georgian republics were born. This political experience, which would last in both cases until sometime between December 1920 and January 1921, was the first realization in modern times of the project of an Armenian and Georgian nation after

11 *Armjanskij Vestnik* 1916, p. 1.
12 It is impossible even to try to summarize the bibliography about the Russian Revolution. The most important sources are, however, collected in the volume edited by Daly/Trofimov 2009.
13 Rakhmetov 1930; Tunjan 2002.
14 Rakhmetov 1930, p. 359.
15 *Khristjanskij Vostok* 1917.
16 Reynolds 2011.

[3] Georgij Plekhanov, 1917



centuries of existence within other political entities.[17] After Sovietization, the Soviet elites would not forgive the two countries for this wave of "bourgeois nationalism".[18] Furthermore, according to Leninist propaganda, the two states had become detached from Russia as a result of enemy actions:

> "There is no doubt that the external imperialist forces have concentrated their forces to detach Transcaucasia from Russia, to divide the country into small fragments, into tiny nation-states, in order to weaken their internal and external fronts and thus make their own imperialist plans easier".[19]

The country was shaken by civil war and millions of citizens fled as emigrees, while others were arrested and executed by Bolshevik

17 Mahé/Mahé 2012; Rayfield 2012; Suny/Terry 2001.
18 Arkomed 1931 [1922].
19 *Ibidem*, p. 9.

authorities.[20] During this same period, a text by Nikolaj Marr, titled "Archaeological Expedition in 1916 to Van", was published.[21] Written in 1916, as evident from the title, it was published years later in the summer of 1922. In the preface, written by Joseph Orbeli (1887–1961), this delay was explained by Marr's many publishing activities, while the volume was dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Asiatic Society, founded in Paris in 1822. In the face of the horrifying and momentous changes in the region, archaeological sciences and art history impassively continued their usual work.

Except for Marr's 1915 pamphlet, the war, genocide, and revolution do not seem to have any impact on the history of Russophone studies of the Caucasus. This is surprising given the events immediately before and those that follow. This indifference, in our view, can be explained in three different ways. First, there are no normative volumes published during this period intended for a wider audience. The positivistic approach, largely obscuring the opinions of the authors, dominates the field. A second explanatory element is possible in our view: in such an alienating situation, people often detach themselves from the reality of events and hide in an ideal world, one that the promise of "objectivity" in science appears to provide.[22] This is what is documented, for example, by the study of Nikodim Kondakov during the revolution and his escape from Russia: although he lacked access to bread, he made time to write books on a daily basis, despite knowing that they may never have a reader.[23] Finally we hypothesize that the lack of scholarly attention may be due to an issue of focus: immersed in their world of research some scholars do not seem to see the world around them. Perhaps the truth lies at the intersection of these three assumptions. The fact remains, however, that at one of the most dramatic moments of the twentieth century, studies on medieval Armenia and Georgia seem almost completely disconnected from the larger history.

GERMANOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *KLÁRA DOLEŽALOVÁ, ADRIEN PALLADINO*

Although there was significant German scholarly presence in the Caucasus – we can mention, for example, the first director of the Caucasian Museum in Tbilisi Gustav Radde (1831–1903) – for art historians based in imperial Germany and Austria, the language barrier and lack of first-hand experience with Caucasian monuments was a significant obstacle.[24] The art of the Southern Caucasus, therefore, continued to receive only marginal interest and was mediated in German

20 For the emigration from Russia, see the recent synthesis by Foletti/Foletti/Palladino 2022.
21 Marr 1922.
22 On the notion of "repression" in psychology, see Cathelineau 1999.
23 Foletti 2017, pp. 64–72.
24 Difficult situation regarding access to monuments as well as secondary literature is mentioned, for example, by Kluge 1918, pp. 4–5; or later by Chubinashvili [Tschubinaschwili] 1922, p. 217. On the figure of Radde, see, e.g., Plontke-Lüning 2005.

scholarship either through the older studies of Carl Schnaase or the newer research of Josef Strzygowski. Against the backdrop of the unfolding genocide of the Armenian people, Strzygowski provided the most important study of the first part of the twentieth century.

Before that, in the second decade of the twentieth century, Armenian and Georgian monuments, as in other countries, slowly penetrated German art historical scholarship through a growing interest in Byzantine art. Despite the well-established discipline of Byzantine studies already formed around figures such as Karl Krumbacher (1856–1909), scholarship on Byzantine art eventually made its way to Germany through scholars affiliated with the Russian academic environment, where the field held a special place.[25] This concerns notably Oskar Wulff (1864–1946) often considered one of the founders of Byzantine art history in Germany and a facilitator of Russian scholarship in the West **[4]**.[26] Born to a Baltic German family, Wulff pursued studies at the universities of Dorpat and Saint Petersburg, before continuing his studies with August Schmarsow (1853–1936) in Leipzig. Between 1895 and 1898, he completed a three-year study stay in Constantinople at the Russian Archaeological Institute, where he also met other influential figures in the field. Amongst them was also Strzygowski, who was instrumental in the development of the Byzantine collection at the Berlin State Museums where Wulff was later appointed as assistant.[27] In 1918, Wulff published a pioneering German overview of Byzantine art for Fritz Burger's *Handbuch der Kunstwissenschaft* series where he discussed both Armenian and Georgian monuments and artifacts in passing.[28] However, as other scholars before him, his interest lay mainly in determining the extent of Byzantine influence over Georgian and Armenian monuments. Even though Wulff was quite well acquainted with Strzygowski's *oeuvre*, he took a more reserved position in the assessment of the Caucasian heritage, arguing for a clear primacy of Byzantine art over the Caucasus. In doing so, the Russophile followed a position widespread amongst Russian scholars of the time.[29] Unsurprisingly, it was the sections devoted precisely to architectural history that were later criticized by Strzygowski.[30] Nevertheless, Wulff's work apparently enjoyed wide circulation in Germany in its time and contributed in part to shifting interests in Byzantium.

By the year 1915, the German Empire was shaken to its foundation by the events of the First World War. As one of the central powers, it was preoccupied with developments on multiple fronts. Despite, or perhaps due to close ties with the Ottoman Empire, which culminated in a war alliance, the unfortunate fate of Ottoman Armenians became a

25 See, e.g., Agapitos 2015.

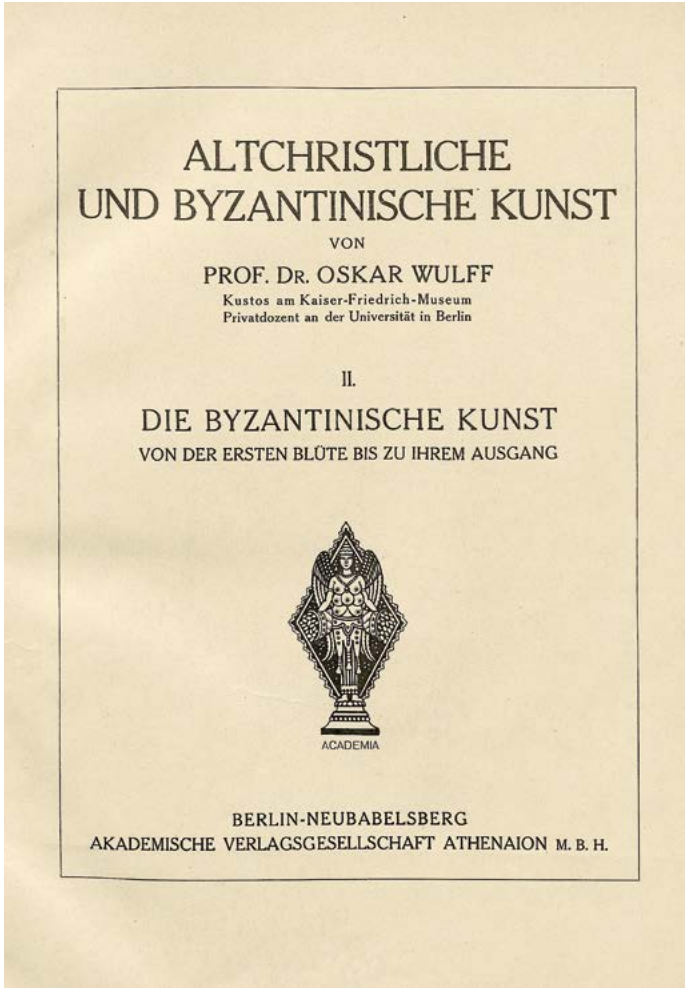
26 Von Zaloziecky 1947. Of special importance for Western scholarship was Wulff's lengthy review of *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art* by Dmitri Ainalov: Wulff 1903. As Barbara Schellewald demonstrates, Wulff himself placed more emphasis on his theoretical works: Schellewald 2010. Wulff also provides many details on his career path in his autobiography, see Wulff 1936.

27 On the beginnings of the Byzantine collection, see Irmscher 1987.

28 Wulff 1918.

29 See in this book pp. 95–100.

30 On Wulff's criticism, see Strzygowski 1919b; also, Baumstark 1920.



[4] Cover of Oskar Wulff's *Altchristliche und byzantinische Kunst*, vol. II, Berlin 1918

matter of discussion, and the atrocities once again mobilized a group of pro-Armenian activists around Johannes Lepsius, who was mentioned in previous chapters.[31] During and especially after the war, the view of the Armenian question oscillated between strict denunciation of Armenian oppression while addressing Germany's share of guilt and the side advocating the German-Turkish alliance by what Stefan Ihrig calls the "denialism" and "justificationalism" of Turkish policy.[32] These debates were further inflamed with the end of wartime censorship and the assassination of Talaat Pasha, one of the official instigators of the Armenian repressions, in 1921 in Berlin. Lepsius and other Church missions which had witnessed the massacres firsthand urged the German government by calling upon Christian solidarity

31 For a comprehensive study on the figure of Lepsius and his solidarity activities, see Hosfeld 2013 or the more recent Hayruni 2020.

32 The bibliography on the complex question of German perception of Armenian genocide is nowadays quite vast. See, e.g., Ihrig 2016 with further bibliography; or Gruner 2012.

and the humanitarian duty of the German nation. A congregation of the Catholic and Protestant churches of Germany even sent a joint appeal to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg:

> "Neither we nor our Christian nation can remain silent. The Turkish government, which itself initiated and used the Islamic solidarity of all countries to achieve its own objectives, cannot expect its Christian allies to keep quiet about their Christian solidarity. [...] Everything must be done to prevent German honor being tarnished by any suspicion of responsibility, even joint responsibility, for the scandalous acts mentioned above. It is unbearable to think that while we Germans are building mosques for Muslim captives, hundreds of Christian churches are being destroyed or converted into mosques. Our conscience is heavy with the knowledge that while the German press extols the magnanimity and tolerance of our Muslim ally, Muslim hands are pouring out torrents of blood on innocent Christians, and tens of thousands of Christians are being forced to convert to Islam".[33]

Bethmann Hollweg's answer was clear, given the military alliance between Germany and Turkey: "Our only aim is to keep Turkey on our side until the end of the war, and it doesn't matter whether this has an effect on the lives or deaths of Armenians. If the war is to continue, we will need the Turks even more".[34] Such a stance prevented any attempts at direct intervention in the resolution of the Armenian question. Following this party line, the German press adopted an anti-Armenian stance and fostered a negative image of Armenians as puppets of the Entente powers. Playing on the strings of growing anti-Semitism, Armenians were presented as hapless Orientals, as quasi-Jews.[35] The lack of official justice and reaction by the European governments, and the complacency of Germany, prompted the underground Armenian network *Vrez* ("Vengeance") to enact extrajudicial justice – murdering six Ottomans and one Azerbaijani who were executors of mass crimes against the Armenians. Three of the victims – Talaat Pasha, Cemal Azmi, and Bahaddin Şakir – were shot in Berlin in 1921 and 1922. The 1921 Berlin trial of Talaat Pasha's murderer, student Soghomon Tehlirian (1897–1960), was the only occasion when German and international media attention focused on the destruction of the Armenians, despite the efforts of the

33 See Abschrift An den Kanzler des Deutschen Reiches Herrn Dr. von Bethmann Hollweg, Exzellenz, Berlin W, accessible online: http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1915-11-10-DE-011, consulted 12.07.2023.

34 See Notiz Bethmann Hollweg 17, accessible online:http://www.armenocide.net/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs/1915-12-07-DE-001, consulted 12.07.2023.

35 See Ihrig 2016, sp. pp. 157–189, 270–298.

authorities to keep the trial as discreet as possible.[36] It is important to remember that the Berlin trial had a significant impact on a certain Raphael Lemkin (1900–1959), then a young law student in Lwów (now Lviv) and the future "father" of the 1948 Genocide Convention. The Armenian tragedy was seminal at all steps in Lemkin's definition of genocide.[37]

The war made itself felt in German academic circles as well, since the German-Turkish alliance represented a challenge, as well as a set of opportunities, for a myriad of German orientalists.[38] Perhaps paradoxically, at the same time, Germanophone scholarship witnessed the publication of two crucial publications devoted to the art of Caucasus at the close of the great war. In 1918, German linguist and archaeologist Theodor Kluge published his doctoral thesis *Versuch einer systematischen Darstellung der altgeorgischen (grusinischen) Kirchenbauten*.[39] Professionally linked to Georgia by compiling comparative studies on Caucasian languages, Kluge encountered numerous monuments that had largely escaped German scholarly attention during his travels.[40] Initially only a passing amateur interest, Kluge soon attempted a systematic scientific classification of medieval Georgian churches based on their ground-plan arrangements.[41] In doing so, he either resorted to his own measurements or relied on the work of his Russian colleagues. As Annegret Plontke-Lüning has noted, from today's perspective Kluge's work did not bring many fundamental insights – for, despite breaking the idea of Transcaucasian art in favor of the (old) Georgian monuments, he did not attempt to exempt Georgian art from subordination to Armenian or Byzantine influences.[42] However, within the Germanophone scholarly milieu, Kluge advocated for Georgian material and his work formed a counterbalance to the prevalent scholarly interest in Armenian examples. After all, Kluge's study was one of the works to which Strzygowski turned in his opulent monograph on the medieval architecture of Armenia which appeared later that year.

As has been justly pointed out many times, Strzygowski's *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* represents a true milestone in the study of Caucasian artistic heritage, in terms of its scope and content **[5]**.[43] By the time of its appearance, Strzygowski was a renowned specialist in Oriental and Byzantine art and held a position of *ordinarius* at the University of Vienna which he had obtained to the displeasure of his Viennese colleagues in 1909. The two volumes of *Die Baukunst* were, and in many aspects remain today, the most comprehensive synthesis of Armenian architectural history of the Middle Ages, published

36 Hofmann 1989.

37 See, e.g., Balakian 2013; Mamigonian 2020.

38 Marchand 2009, sp. pp. 436–437. Margaret L. Anderson even mentions a Full Employment Act for German orientalists researching on the Ottoman Empire: Anderson 2011, sp. pp. 203–204.

39 Kluge 1918.

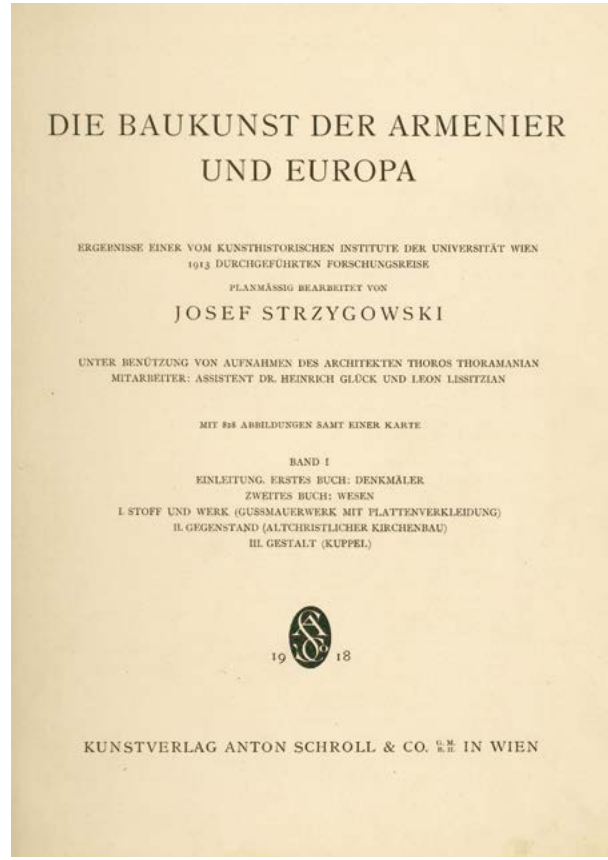
40 *Idem* 1907–1910.

41 Kluge based his preference for Georgian monuments on linguistic and religious criteria: "*Wenn ich* […] *nur von georgischer Kunst rede, so tue ich das aus berechtigen historischen Gründen, den der religiose und kirchliche Einfluß Georgiens ist zu allen Zeiten im ganzen Kaukasus ein bedeutender gewesen. Seit den ältesten Zeiten gibt es nur eine Kirchensprache – das Georgische – auch dort, wo man es nicht versteht*", Kluge 1918, p. 5.

42 Plontke-Lüning 2007, p. 64. The limitations of Kluge's work were later commented critically by the eminent Georgian art historian Giorgi Chubinashvili: see Chubinashvili 1922, p. 217.

43 Strzygowski 1918. For its scientific contribution, methodology and the distinctive character of Strzygowski's argumentation, the book itself has become a subject of scholarly scrutiny. See, in particular, Maranci 1998a; *Eadem* 2001.

[5] Cover of Josef Strzygowski's *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, Vienna 1918


DIE BAUKUNST DER ARMENIER
UND EUROPA

ERGEBNISSE EINER VOM KUNSTHISTORISCHEN INSTITUTE DER UNIVERSITÄT WIEN
1913 DURCHGEFÜHRTEN FORSCHUNGSREISE

PLANMÄSSIG BEARBEITET VON

JOSEF STRZYGOWSKI

UNTER BENÜTZUNG VON AUFNAHMEN DES ARCHITEKTEN THOROS THORAMANIAN
MITARBEITER: ASSISTENT DR. HEINRICH GLÜCK UND LEON LISSITZIAN

MIT 808 ABBILDUNGEN SAMT EINER KARTE

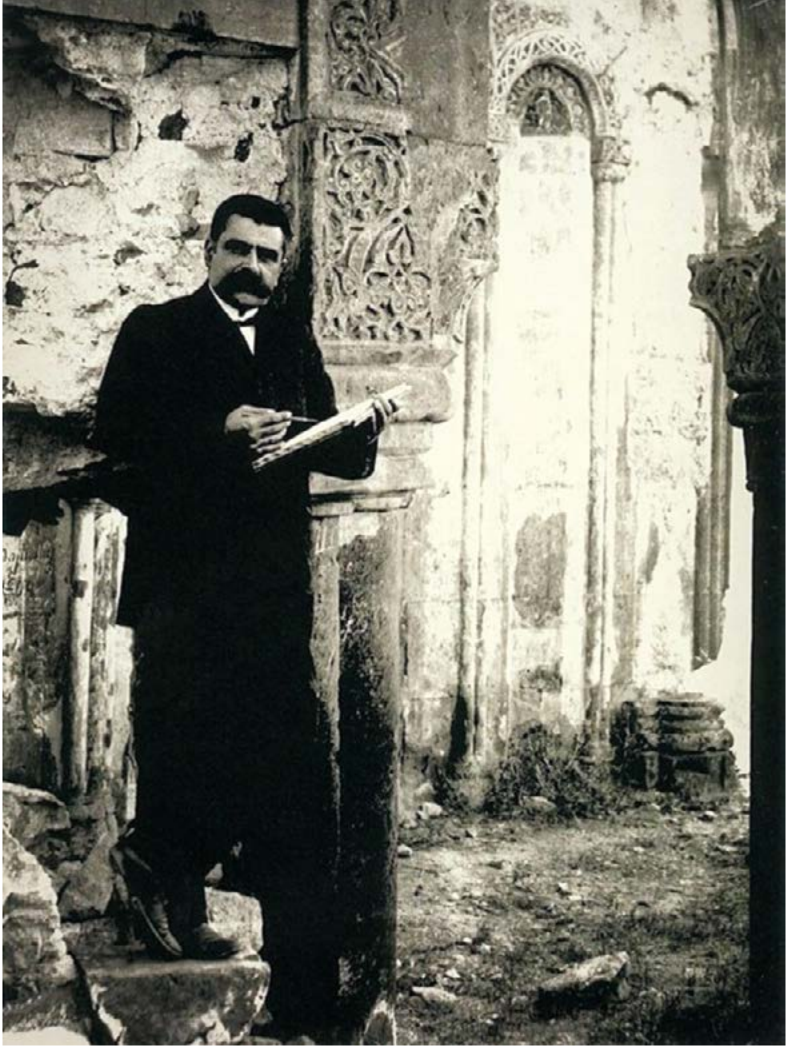
BAND I
EINLEITUNG. ERSTES BUCH: DENKMÄLER
ZWEITES BUCH: WESEN
I. STOFF UND WERK (GUSSMAUERWERK MIT PLATTENVERKLEIDUNG)
II. GEGENSTAND (ALTCHRISTLICHER KIRCHENBAU)
III. GESTALT (KUPPEL)

19 18

KUNSTVERLAG ANTON SCHROLL & CO. G. M. B. H. IN WIEN

in a Western language and incorporating a plethora of previously unpublished material. In this regard, Strzygowski benefited from a study trip to Armenia that he personally undertook in the autumn of 1913 and from his close relations with the Armenian architect Toros Tʻoramanean who supplied him with a vast array of drawings and photographic reproductions **[6]**.[44] Strzygowski was not only the first to treat Armenian architecture in a separate large-scale study, he also sharply defined his position as against its supposed creative subordination to the West. For the first time, Armenia was not framed as a place that simply received artistic inputs from Byzantium or further West, but, to the contrary, Strzygowski saw the region as the "influencer" of these cultures. Strzygowski developed a grand idea of a westward migration of Armenian architectural forms rooted in the ancient architecture of Iran, drawing on earlier studies on the "origins" of mankind in the Indo-European ancient East. This view was considerably different not only from the predominant scholarly

44 For additional archival materials regarding Strzygowski's Armenological studies, see Plontke-Lüning 2015; or recently Polleroß 2023.



[6] Toros T'oramanean

[7] The *Aufruf* of the Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft published in the society's journal *Mesrop*, 1914

Nr. 23

Aufruf!

Die politische Umgestaltung des Orients hat die Augen der europäischen Welt wieder auf **Armenien** gelenkt. Die Großmächte haben mit der hohen Pforte einen Reformplan für die von Armeniern bewohnten Provinzen Ostanatoliens vereinbart, um die Gefahren zu beschwören, die bei der Fortdauer der bisherigen Zustände von dort der Ruhe des Orients und dem Weltfrieden drohen. Es ist sichere Aussicht vorhanden, daß diesmal im Unterschiede von allen früheren Behandlungen der armenischen Frage ein befriedigendes Ergebnis erzielt wird. Es steht zu hoffen, daß die schlimmsten Uebelstände beseitigt und dem armenischen Volke die Möglichkeit, sich kulturell und wirtschaftlich zu entfalten, in vollem Maße gegeben wird.

Hieran hat **Deutschland,** dessen diplomatische Vertretung den Reformplan wesentlich gefördert hat, ein unmittelbares Interesse. Durch seine großen wirtschaftlichen Unternehmungen in Kleinasien, die teils in überwiegend von Armeniern bewohnten Gebieten gelegen sind, teils unmittelbar an solche Gebiete heranführen, wird es auf die Pflege engerer Beziehungen zu den Armeniern hingewiesen, die ja in allen diesen Gegenden die Träger des wirtschaftlichen und des kulturellen Lebens sind.

Dazu besteht bereits seit Jahrzehnten zwischen Deutschland und Armenien ein **Austausch kultureller Art.** Nach den Metzeleien von 1894—96 sind eine Anzahl deutscher Schulen, Waisenhäuser und Hospitäler in Armenien begründet worden, die dort deutsche Kultur verbreiten. Auf armenischer Seite wird schon längst das Studium deutscher Sprache, Literatur und Wissenschaft mit größtem Eifer betrieben. Mehrere Hunderte von armenischen Studenten sind auf deutsche Hochschulen gekommen und haben Verbindungen mit Lehrern und Schülern unserer wissenschaftlichen Institute angeknüpft. Auch für die Erschließung der reichen Schätze des eigenen Volkstums haben sie hier Anregung und Förderung empfangen, da die Erforschung der Sprache, Geschichte, Literatur und Kunst Armeniens unter tätiger Mithilfe der deutschen Wissenschaft geschieht.

Alle diese Bestrebungen stehen aber ohne innere Verbindung zueinander. Weitverbreitete Vorurteile hindern die engere Gestaltung der deutsch-armenischen Beziehungen. Es gilt, unter beiden Völkern eine bessere Kenntnis der beiderseitigen Kultur anzubahnen und zu erhalten. Zu diesem Zwecke rufen wir alle Kreise auf, die aus wirtschaftlichem oder politischem, wissenschaftlichem oder humanem Interesse eine Pflege der deutsch-armenischen Beziehungen wünschen, sich mit uns in einer

„Deutsch-Armenischen Gesellschaft"

zu vereinigen. Als **Ziele** einer solchen Gesellschaft kämen in Betracht:

1. Die Verbreitung einer gerechten, unvoreingenommenen Beurteilung des armenischen Volkes in Deutschland und des deutschen Volkes unter den Armeniern.
2. Die Vermittlung einer eingehenden Kenntnis der Leistungen des armenischen Volkes für die Gesamtkultur und der Bestrebungen des deutschen Volkes für die Förderung der armenischen Kultur.
3. Die Pflege persönlicher Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen und Armeniern, besonders denen, die in Deutschland studieren.

Als **Mittel** zur Erreichung dieser Ziele sind in Aussicht genommen:

1. Die Herausgabe einer Monatsschrift in beiden Sprachen, die über die armenische Kultur unterrichten und der deutschen Kultur den Weg nach Armenien bahnen soll.
2. Die Versorgung der deutschen Presse mit wahrheitsgetreuen Berichten über die Lage in Armenien.
3. Die Uebersetzung wertvoller armenischer Werke in das Deutsche und deutscher Werke in das Armenische.
4. Die Begründung einer wissenschaftl. armenischen Bibliothek in Deutschland zum Studium der arm. Sprache, Kultur und Geschichte.
5. Die Förderung des Unterrichts in der deutschen Sprache in den armenischen Schulen.
6. Die Begründung einer Auskunftsstelle für die armenischen Studenten in Deutschland ,und ihre Einführung in deutsche Familien.

Wir bitten alle, die mit uns in den vorstehend genannten Zielen übereinstimmen, mit uns zu einer **„Deutsch-Armenischen Gesellschaft"** zusammenzutreten und ihre Adresse dem mitunterzeichneten Pfarrer Stier in Alten bei Dessau mitzuteilen.

Das Komitee

Dr. **Lepsius,** Potsdam — Dr. **Marquart,** Professor an der Universität Berlin — D. **Rade,** Professor an der Universität Marburg — Lic. Dr. **Rohrbach,** Friedenau-Berlin — **Stier,** Pfarrer in Alten bei Dessau — Dr. jur. **Dardinian,** Rechtsanwalt, Charlottenburg — Dr. rer. polit. **James Greenfield,** Berlin — Dr. med. [illegible], Arzt, Berlin — [illegible], Schriftsteller, Berlin — Dr. med.

mainstream of the time but also from his early work on the Etchmiadzin Gospels.[45] Central to his reflection were centrally planned buildings topped with a dome. Strzygowski considered the domed construction a sign of the Armenian national awakening and its ultimate triumph over the longitudinal forms forcefully imposed by the styles of the Mediterranean. Even though the appearance of *Die Baukunst* represented an important international interest in Caucasian art in the first half of the twentieth century, Strzygowski's peculiar argumentation, questionable dating methods, and employment of racial theory also found many opponents over time.

As Christina Maranci has shown, the reasons for Strzygowski's engagement with Armenian architecture were manifold: from a long-term interest and attractive career opportunity to his pan-German sympathies and even the contemporary political situation in Austria-Hungary.[46] It must be emphasized, however, that as early as 1914 Strzygowski's name appeared on the list of supporters of the newly established Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft (DAG) **[7]**. Strzygowski's association with DAG is of particular interest, for it links him to a circle of influential and politically active pro-Armenian activists operating in Germany.[47] The DAG was initially established in response to the Armenian reforms of 1914 and as a mechanism to gather those who "out of economic or political, scientific or human interest, wish to cultivate German-Armenian relations". With the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war, however, the society's agenda expanded to include humanitarian activities and support for an independent Armenia.[48]

Although Strzygowski's relations with the DAG representatives require far more detailed investigation than is possible here, it is probable that through the association, Strzygowski had a certain insight into the contemporary events in Armenia. It is also worth mentioning that his previously published contribution on Armenian domed churches later re-appeared in a small booklet issued by Rohrbach in 1919, not long after the declaration of the independent Republic of Armenia.[49] The article concluded with several selected excerpts from the recently published *Die Baukunst*, all of which pointed to the distinctive character of Armenian architecture. It thus seems that Strzygowski, whether consciously standing up for the Armenian cause or not, helped to foster the notion of Armenian national heritage precisely at a time when modern Armenia was paving its way to political independence. Further chapters will show that this was not the last time he participated in the publishing activity of the DAG.

45 See, e.g., Marchand 1994; Maranci 1998b. The question of Strzygowski's pan-German inclination is further discussed in the next chapter. For his work on the Etchmiadzin Gospels, see the previous chapter of Adrien Palladino in this volume, pp. 79–81.

46 Maranci 2002.

47 In fact, the signature states: "*Hofrat Wolf Strzygowski* [sic!], *Professor an der Universität Wien*". Strzygowski was not the only Viennese amongst the signed: one of the committee members of the DAG was also Nerses Akinian (1883–1963) of the Viennese Mekhitarist Monastery, with whom Strzygowski collaborated on *Die Baukunst*. One of the founding members of the DAG was also James Greenfield (1870–1939), a close collaborator of Lepsius and later ambassador of the independent Republic of Armenia in Germany. Even Greenfield figures among the sponsors of Strzygowski's publication, see Strzygowski 1918, p. VIII.

48 "Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft", in Goltz/Meissner 2004, pp. 122–123.

49 Strzygowski 1919a. For the original version see *Idem* 1916.

Following the initial shock of the Hamidian massacres, the attitude of the French academy and intellectuals in the years between the genocide and the Interwar period oscillated between attempts at humanitarian aid and humanistic support for Armenia, and a broader disinterest due to issues that were viewed as more pressing for French society. The need to make Armenia better known to a French public was eloquently summed up by the numismatist and Byzantinist Gustave Schlumberger (1844–1929) in March 1916 who argued that:

> "There is no race less known in the West. For almost all French people, even educated, the question is simple; the Armenians are hapless Orientals who, like the Jews, trade in the Levant and whom the Turks periodically slaughter".[50]

As in the late nineteenth century, numerous researchers and intellectuals were heavily involved in the fight for democracy and the denunciation of Ottoman and then Turkish horrors, amongst which we can include Victor Bérard (1864–1931), Pierre Quillard (1864–1912), Jacques de Morgan (1857–1924), Antoine Meillet and Frédéric Macler, all key figures in the growing awareness of the importance of the Caucasus' cultural heritage in these years.[51] Major political figures such as Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) and Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), even if politically opposed, wrote in favor of the Armenian cause in France.[52] The denunciation of the atrocities appeared in newspapers, sometimes only through broader engagement with current issues in French society. These issues included, amongst others, the political divide and questions of anti-Semitism in France around the Dreyfus affair (ca. 1894–1906), as well as latent anti-Germanism especially during the war – the Germans had not firmly condemned the massacres and thus were sometimes even implicated in them.[53] The French press was particularly active in the denunciation of the atrocities of the Young Turks government. *L'Humanité*, the socialist journal founded by Jaurès, titled "Massacres in Armenia" ("*On massacre en Arménie*") in May 1915, denouncing how "the young Turkish government surpassed its predecessor in cruelty. In the panic of imminent defeat, it took revenge on the Christians of Armenia for its moral and political bankruptcy".[54] On May 25, French, British, and Russian newspapers sent a famous "warning" to the Turkish government:

50 Gustave Schlumberger, 10 March 1916, *Journal des Débats*.

51 For reasons of space, it is impossible here to extensively cite these authors, but see, e.g., De Morgan 1918; Meillet 1919. On the topic, see Duclert/Pécout 1999; Vahramian 2003; Duclert 2015; Palladino 2023, with further bibliography.

52 See mostly Duclert 2015.

53 On the anti-Germanic question see, e.g., Griselle 1916; on the topic, Gottschlich 2015; Ihrig 2016.

54 *L'Humanité*, 22 May 1915.

> "For about a month now, the Kurdish and Turkish population of Armenia has been carrying out massacres of Armenians, often with the help of the Ottoman authorities. Such massacres took place around mid-April in Erzurum, Dertchun, Eguine, Akn, Bitlis, Mush, Sasun, Zeit'un, and throughout Cilicia; the inhabitants of a hundred villages around Van were all murdered in the town itself, and the Armenian quarter was besieged by the Kurds. At the same time, in Constantinople, the Ottoman government is cracking down on the harmless Armenian population.
> In the face of these new crimes by Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied governments publicly inform the Sublime Porte that they will hold personally responsible all members of the Ottoman government and its agents implicated in such massacres".[55]

By October, *L'Humanité* published an article entitled "The extermination of the Armenians. Germany accomplice of the Young Turks" **[8]**, betraying the latent anti-German feeling in these years.[56] As in Germany however, the French governments' more pressing concern was the war, and besides a few significant military and humanitarian operations – the famous episode of the Summer of 1915 retold so poignantly in Werfel's *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933) – sometimes conjointly led with the *Légion d'Orient*, French authorities did not intervene to prevent the massacres and change the course of this tragic history.[57]

Beyond the press and beyond the personal commitment of scholars in this frame, these events also had an impact on the scientific study of the Caucasus. Most notable in this impact is the foundation by the abovementioned scholars Frédéric Macler and Antoine Meillet, along with a group of leading politicians and academics, of the *Société des études arméniennes* in 1919.[58] The society was soon endowed with a journal, the *Revue des études arméniennes*, in 1920 **[9]**. Founded in the same years as other pioneering journals of interdisciplinary research still active today exploring the ancient cultures of the Near East or the Eastern Roman Empire, such as *Syria* (1920) and *Byzantion* (1924), the *Revue* aimed from the outset to become an international platform for the study of Armenian culture in the broadest sense of the term. In fact, it was the first such platform dedicated to Armenia in Europe. The introduction to the first volume, by Meillet and Macler, recalls the previous marginalization of Armenia and

55 *Le Petit Parisien*, 25 May 1915.
56 *L'Humanité*, 15 October 1915.
57 For the broader context, see Papazian 2017.
58 Founding members include many committed Armenophiles: besides Meillet and Macler, Bérard, André-Ferdinand Hérold, Schlumberger, H. Lacroix, Gabriel Millet, and Charles Diehl.

sets the tone for most of the French-language studies that would follow in those years:

> "Without doubt, Armenia has never been, at any moment of history, the center of a great and original civilization. Its geographical situation and the historical events that resulted from it have never allowed it to largely radiate.
> But, besides the fact that her external action was non negligeable – Georgia was largely subject to the influence of Armenia, and we know which importance M. Strzygowski attributes to Armenian architecture – the Armenian evidence is of great value to help understanding neighboring civilizations. Placed at the meeting point of different nations, the Armenian people were subject to the action of distinct civilizations, alternately and often at the same time. The data provided by Armenian evidence can thus enlighten facts pertinent to Iranian, Greek, Syriac, Ancient French, Arab, Turk, etc. phenomena.
> The new journal [...] would like to serve as a center for Armenian studies for Western scholars.
> It comes at its hour, at a time when, after unheard-of sufferings, the Armenian people take back their place in the council of Nations".[59]

The introduction refers to contemporary events: in 1920, a battered Armenia regained its place on the chessboard of nations following the attempted independence of the first Republic of Armenia and the Treaty of Sèvres (August 1920), which recognized Armenia as a free and independent state. That same year, as already mentioned, the Bolsheviks seized power in Yerevan, leading to the creation of the Soviet Republic of Armenia. In contrast, the magazine's introduction presents historical Armenia as a crossroads. In this perspective, Armenia became important for its ability to absorb linguistic realities and visual cultures: it was viewed as a conduit, not an autonomous creative force. It becomes evident that in these years of intense crisis, these figures' individual commitment to the threatened Armenia needs to be dissociated from their condemnation of Ottoman and Turkish atrocities, and their position as European scholars who continue to see Armenia as a fascinating cultural reality, but unincorporated in their value system.

59 Macler/Meillet 1920.

[8] Headline from the front page of the newspaper *L'Humanité*, October 15, 1915

[9] Cover of the first issue of the *Revue des études arméniennes*, 1920

Sans frais dans tous les Bureaux de Poste

	1 AN	6 MOIS	3 MOIS	1 MOIS
Seine et Seine-et-Oise	18 fr.	9 fr.	4 50	1 50
Départements et Colonies	21 »	10 50	5 25	1 75
Étranger Union postale	31 »	16 50	9 »	3 »

Fondateur : JEAN JAURÈS

L'EXTERMINATION DES ARMÉNIENS

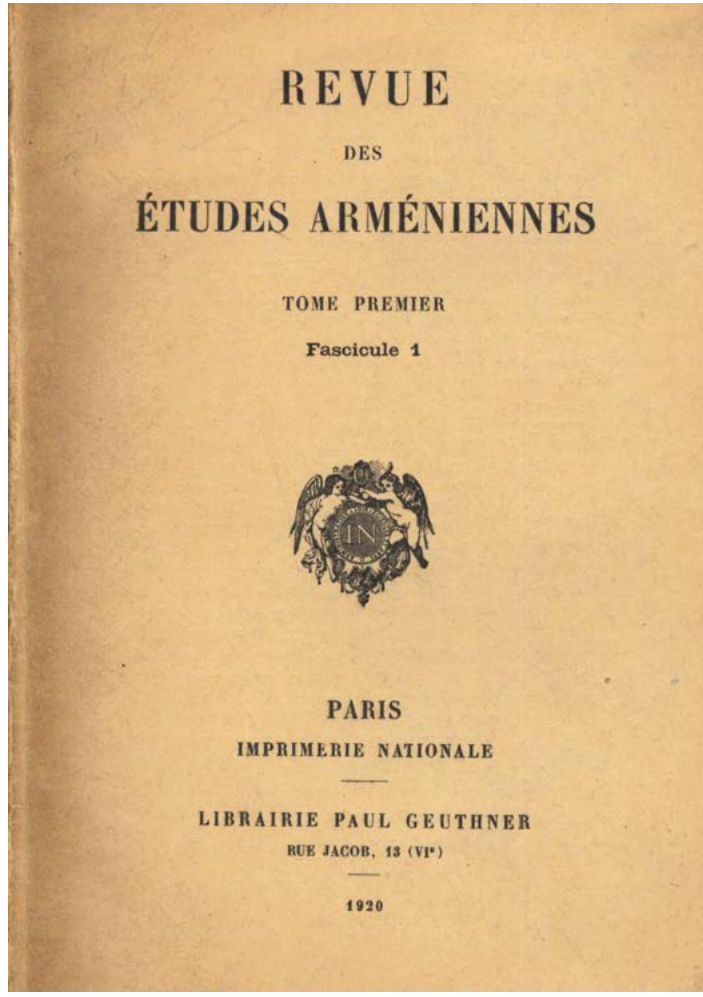
L'Allemagne complice des Jeunes-Turcs

La presse française, anglaise et italienne s'est occupée, ces derniers jours, des abominables massacres d'Arméniens ordonnés, dirigés et exaltés par les Jeunes-Turcs avec la haute approbation, plus ou moins avouée, du gouvernement allemand.

Au Parlement anglais, lord Cromer et lord Bryce apportèrent de nouvelles précisions, le 6 courant sur ce qu'on savait déjà à propos de cette triste affaire. Mais nul rapport est si terrible — parce que plus complet — que celui publié par le

mands eux-mêmes. Ils marchaient sous le soleil brûlant sans pouvoir se procurer ni du pain ni de l'eau. Beaucoup de femmes virent périr leurs enfants sous leurs propres yeux. Les gendarmes qui les conduisaient violaient les jeunes filles et organisaient les scènes les plus répugnantes.

Des femmes — nous assure lord Bryce — étaient dévêtues et obligées de poursuivre leur marche dans la nudité la plus complète. Quelques-uns de ces pauvres créatures devinrent folles et jetèrent leurs enfants.



REVUE

DES

ÉTUDES ARMÉNIENNES

TOME PREMIER

Fascicule 1

PARIS

IMPRIMERIE NATIONALE

LIBRAIRIE PAUL GEUTHNER

RUE JACOB, 13 (VI^e^)

1920

[10] Page with reproduction of a watercolor by Arshak Fetvadjian, from Frédéric Macler, "L'architecture arménienne dans ses rapports avec l'art syrien", *Syria*, I/4 (1920), pl. XXXII

Two important art historians were active on the Armenian society's committee and promoted, themselves or later through their students, a perspective much like the one outlined in the introduction: Charles Diehl (1859–1944) and Gabriel Millet (1867–1953). Both were Byzantinists, and it is from this perspective that they approached the arts of Armenia. In 1921, in one of the earliest issues of the *Revue*, Diehl published an art historical text on late antique and medieval Armenia.[60] This essay is in fact a response to Strzygowski's contemporary studies. Although Diehl leaned towards the Hellenistic East as the source of creativity in the Late Antique and Early Christian world, he had already periodically argued that Strzygowski's statements needed to be strongly nuanced: for Diehl, despite the importance of other creative centers from which various impulses could come, such as Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and even Armenia, the real crucible for the formation of artistic forms combining the East with a Hellenistic background was Constantinople.[61] In his 1921 article, published following the publication of Strzygowski's 1918 study on Armenian architecture, Diehl repeats his criticism of the Austrian author. For Diehl, the creative part attributed to Armenia by Strzygowski is too great, and Armenia should therefore not be considered as the cradle of Christian or Byzantine art, but as one of the stages in the mixture between the Ancient East and Hellenistic elements. Thus, for the Late Antique period:

> "[...] one must thus conclude that, in its origins, [Armenian art] does not present any significant enough traits so that we may flatter ourselves, following Strzygowski, to have found in Armenia the 'solid ground' on which to build the history of the formation of Eastern Christian art [...] And however interesting Armenian art of the seventh century appears, it is only, through the Byzantine influence it endures, a province of Byzantine art".[62]

While Diehl acknowledged greater creativity in the Armenian world in the tenth and eleventh centuries, this time in relation to Islamic art, his perspective was closer to that of Russian researchers, mentioned in the precedent chapter, who saw Armenia as a province of the great Byzantine Empire, albeit an interesting one.

Although not an art historian but having published extensively on the visual arts of medieval Armenia – sometimes with a perspective aimed at a broader audience – Frédéric Macler's more nuanced perspective is worth mentioning.[63] In the first issue of *Syria*, Macler published a brief article specifically examining the relationship between

60 Diehl 1921.

61 This idea is clearly expressed already in Diehl 1904, responding to Stryzgowski 1901 and *Idem* 1903.

62 Diehl 1921, p. 231.

63 See chiefly Macler 1917, more intended for a broader audience, as well as the more specialized publications, such as *Idem* 1913; *Idem* 1920a.

Syrian architecture and art and Armenia **[10]**.[64] Macler's article essentially presented previous studies on Armenia, recalling the tradition of French studies from Chardin to Texier and how the discipline was divided between scholars of Islamic and Byzantine arts. Macler is more an observer than a critic of Strzygowski's or Diehl's position in this text and provides a more nuanced judgment, following the same movement described above. He considered Armenia as the fertile crossroads of varied impressions:

> "[...] the most various influences have been exerted on Armenian art. The dome, which was known to the Assyrians in its double heightened or spherical form, passed into Armenia either directly or via Persia. The polygonal form, apparently of Cappadocian origin, is well represented in Armenia, and Byzantine influence can be seen in a number of monuments. But the oldest architectural monuments betray a Syrian inspiration. On this Syrian base, an original, national Armenian architecture has developed, denoting a sure and delicate artistic taste".[65]

In many ways, this more nuanced perspective was supported by scholars for many years, often bringing Armenia into the fold of researchers studying the Persian and Sassanid Orient or Byzantine art.

Alongside this perspective, the question of the relationship between Armenian architecture and the birth of "Romanesque" art in Europe continued to be mentioned marginally throughout this period, only finding a new lease on life in the inter-war period, as we shall see below. As for the other art historian involved in the creation of the *Société des études arméniennes* and its journal, Gabriel Millet, he wrote little on the art of Armenia. His involvement in the subject – from the perspective of a Byzantinist interested in the influence of Constantinople throughout the Middle Ages in the Balkans and in other Christian countries – can be seen most notably through his students, chiefly Sirarpie Der Nersessian (1896–1898) and André Grabar (1896–1990), to whom we will return shortly.[66]

In conclusion, it is worth recalling that it was precisely during the darkest years between the Hamidian massacres and the genocide that Armenian studies were given official Francophone international bodies, under the impetus of Armenophile researchers, with the *Société des études arméniennes* and the *Revue*. Founded in 1920, the *Revue* lasted only thirteen years until 1933, when it was discontinued, three years before Meillet's death. The other contributor, Frédéric Macler, died

64 *Idem* 1920b.
65 Macler 1920b, p. 263.
66 On Millet, see Rapti 2018.

in 1938, continuing to publish extensively on the arts and philology of the Caucasus. It took 30 years for the journal to be revived, in the 1960s. Its formation must be seen as closely linked with the dramatic political situation and the emergence of a real professional interest in Caucasian studies in these years.

ANGLOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

As discussed earlier, the British interest in the region mainly concerned the control of Central Asia. This was dependent on maintaining a certain status quo with the Ottoman Empire, at least until 1914. The strategic importance of the Caucasus did not correspond to a particular moment of increased studies on its visual and material culture. With the emergence of a broader interest in Islamic studies in Anglophone scholarship, the Caucasus remained a crossroads and a marginalized reality. Following the massacres of the late nineteenth century and the events of 1915, Britain was engaged side by side with the international community in indicting the Ottoman Empire for what was labeled a "crime against humanity", while remaining careful not to compromise important economic interests in Ottoman Turkey and Egypt.[67] British newspapers – through strong anti-German sentiments fostered by the First World War – seized the opportunity to condemn Germany's entanglement and complacency in Armenia, directly linking it with Germany's other misconducts. In influential newspapers such as *The Times*, articles on the "Destruction of a Race" (September 25, 1915), "The Armenian Massacres" (October 8, 1915), and "German Aid to Murder" (February 8, 1915), culminated with the use of the notion of "extermination" in 1917: "Extermination of Armenians" (October 15, 1917).[68]

The Armenian's plight became one of the more prominent humanitarian causes of the period, but it did not seem to provoke any particular response in art historical studies.[69] Nevertheless, Strzygowski's work did provoke reactions and responses from British and American scholars, even if these were chiefly related either to his theories on the origins of early Christian art or to the *Orient oder Rom* controversy.[70] Progressively this debate included Persian and Islamic art and architecture, which in these years were the domain of scholars such as Arthur Upham Pope (1881–1969). While only tangential to the topic, the arrival of Armenian émigrés and the formation of the early diasporas in Europe and in the US prompted renewed interest in "oriental" importations such as carpets from the Middle East and Western Asia

67 On these broad questions, see chiefly the excellent studies of Laycock 2009; Tusan 2014; *Eadem* 2017.

68 Besides the source journals, see Steel 2016.

69 On the humanitarian question, see, in particular, Watenpaugh 2015.

70 Strzygowski's reception in the US had been chiefly the fruit of Allan Marquand's (1853–1924) mediation, see Marquand 1910. For the reception history in the Anglophone world, see Kadoi 2018, pp. 41–44.

[11] Dragon carpet, Armenian or Northwest Persian carpet, 17th century / V&A Museum, London

– amongst which Armenians were prominent vendors. These also became a topic of predilection for art historians such as Pope and had already been the locus of art historical fascination (and speculation) since the late nineteenth century.[71] Pope wrote a much-discussed study about so-called Armenian "dragon carpets" as transmitters of images and iconographies throughout the Caucasus, the Silk Roads, and the Middle East **[11]**. According to Pope, however, no evidence existed that such objects are indeed woven in Armenia. He argued that their dating and localization in the Armenian highlands was a mistake and that they were of Persian origin, provoking heated debates with Armenian scholars.[72] Pope's work would have a profound impact on later scholarship, thus partially eliminating Armenia from the weaving history of the Caucasus despite direct evidence of Armenian intercession in trade and manufacture.[73] Nevertheless, in this perspective focused on ornament and "minor" arts, the arts of the Caucasus were seen – even for learned audiences discussing issues of dating and localization – as a place that merged the dream of the distant but lavish Ottoman Empire, Persia, and other cultural productions considered chiefly "decorative" in these geographical areas of the world.

Turning now to more focused studies on the Southern Caucasus, a pioneer in the English-speaking academia was Robert Pierpont Blake (1886–1950).[74] Today remembered mostly as a key figure in the broader field of Byzantine studies in the United States **[12]**, Blake was encouraged during his dissertation in the 1910s by his German teacher Eduard Meyer (1855–1930) to study in Saint Petersburg with the Russian scholar Mikhail Rostovtsev (1870–1952). Rostovtsev was a leading scholar on the late Roman Empire and "Byzantium". Russian scholarship more broadly had been at the forefront not only in studies on "Byzantium" in these years, but also on geographical areas such as the northern parts of the Black Sea – Scythia – the Caucasus, chiefly Georgia, and these regions' relations to Persia. Impressed by the possibilities offered by the Imperial University in Saint Petersburg, Blake started to publish in Russian in the 1910s, learning Arabic, Syriac, Georgian, and Armenian. In Saint Petersburg, he was taught not only by Rostovtsev, but also Nikolaj J. Marr. He returned to Russia in 1914, intending to lecture there but, during a stay to work in archives in Tbilisi, the Russian Revolution interrupted his plans. Due to this impactful moment, Blake remained in Georgia and taught five years in Tbilisi State University after its creation before returning to the US. There he was – alongside the Russian-French Japanologist Serge Elisséeff (1889–1975) – instrumental in establishing a significant

71 For the question and problems around "Oriental" carpets in the US in the early twentieth century, see Kadoi 2012. For the question of Armenian rug vendors in the US, sp. n. 12. On carpets and art historical methods in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Flood 2016.

72 Pope 1925. For Armenian responses, see, e.g., Sakisian 1928; Kurdian 1940. On the context, see Kadoi 2012, pp. 5–6.

73 Pollio 2019.

74 For Blake's biography, see Elisséeff 1951; Blake 1996.

[12] Robert Pierpont Blake (1886–1950)

department of Byzantine and East-Asian studies at Harvard.[75] With Blake, Armenian and Georgian studies had, for the first time since the nineteenth century, set foot within the American academy – mirroring the importance of the discipline in Russia.

Blake was not an art historian and never focused strictly on material and visual culture. He taught and published widely on the Byzantine and Ottoman empires, on Georgian and Armenian languages, and edited a vast number of literary texts from manuscripts. However, his connections to Russian academia are fundamental when considered within the broader framework. With the end of the First World War and the Revolution of 1917, the structure and nature of Anglophone studies on the Caucasus slowly began to change due to

75 See Marung/Naumann 2014, sp. pp. 422–425.

the sheer number of émigré scholars arriving in Europe and progressively in the US from countries where "Byzantine" studies and realities beyond traditional art history had occupied a more important place. Other figures involved in the relief actions to Russian refugees include figures such as Thomas Whittemore (1871–1950) who likewise contributed to the profound transformation of Byzantine studies in the US.[76] Since many of these scholars adopted a perspective inherited from Russian studies on the Caucasus (and also the Russian ideas of Byzantium), the Russian perception of the region perfused American academia throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Other significant outputs in Anglophone scholarship were those produced by émigrés from Armenia, as a significant diaspora emerged in the early twentieth century. In the Interwar and the following period, while tensions rose throughout Europe, it is, significantly, émigré scholars who provided new scholarly directions beyond traditional national divides. Many of them, such as Sirarpie Der Nersessian, whom we shall return to later, did not emigrate directly to the US but served as bridges between divergent conceptions of art histories.

ITALOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *RUBEN CAMPINI, ANNALISA MORASCHI*

The dreadful news of the Armenian Genocide did not take long to reach Italy. Despite an initial marginality within the headlines, after Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire on August 21, 1915, newspapers such as, among others, the *Corriere della Sera*, *La Stampa*, and *L'Ora* not only reported information but also proposed reflections on the tragedy with articles from international relations experts **[13]**.[77] Thus, what was at the beginning of the year a marginal blurb in the newspapers amidst the European war tensions resulted in a series of engaged articles, also accompanied by striking headlines such as "The martyr of a people. An Asiatic Poland" by the journalist Vico Mantegazza (1856–1934), published on September 29, 1915, in the *Corriere della Sera*. There, the author introduced the ongoing massacres.[78]

In fact, at the time, the members of the Armenian communities throughout Europe took action to promote awareness of the atrocities committed in the Ottoman Empire by Mehmed Talaat Pasha (1874–1921) and the Young Turks. For this reason, in 1915, the Armenian Committee of Italy was created, with the aim of representing and protecting Armenians, especially Ottoman-born Armenians, residing in Italy by promoting the cause and presenting the history and culture of the country, which up to that time was still little-known to the

76 Irish 2021.

77 Manoukian 2014, pp. 41–42. There is a large bibliography on the Armenian communities in Italy, however, on the Italian art historical studies on Armenian monuments there is very little material except for the research and doctoral thesis of Beatrice Spampinato, who collaborates in this volume. For a brief overview of the art historical publications see Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 57–70. On the topic of the reception of the Armenian genocide in Italy, see Aliprandi 2009; Haroutyunian 2018b; Martelli 2015, pp. 213–231.

78 "*Per una seconda volta nel giro di pochi anni arriva in Europa attraverso i Comitati armeni e la stampa dei paesi liberali, il disperato appello di un popolo che per la posizione geografica del suo paese e le vicissitudini della storia pare destinato ad un perenne martirio*" from Mantegazza 1915, p. 3.

general public.[79] Vico Mantegazza was the first to acknowledge the role of the Armenian Committee in the arrival of the news in Europe in his article of September 29, 1915.

Once the news of the genocide reached the public, important names active in politics and journalism publicly supported the community. For example, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), an Italian politician and philosopher, published in March 1916 an article in the newspaper *Il Grido del Popolo*, where he wrote that "Armenians should make Armenia known, make it alive in the consciousness of those who ignore, do not know, do not feel" continuing:

> "Something has been done in Turin. A review named 'Armenia' has been out for a few months which with seriousness of purpose, with a variety of collaboration says what the Armenian people are, what they want, and what they should become. The initiative for a series of books should start from the magazine which, with more effective persuasion and demonstration, would give Italy a picture of what the language, history, culture, and poetry of the Armenian people are".[80]

Indeed, the Armenian communities were more active than ever, and Turin was taking shape as a center of Armenophile publications in Italy. As early as October 15, 1915, a magazine titled *Armenia. Eco delle rivendicazioni armene*, mentioned by Gramsci, was initiated as an outlet to support the Armenian cause.[81] The magazine was probably founded by Dr. Nishan Der Stepanian (1889–1955), an Armenian born in Erzincan and a resident of Italy, whose yoghurt business operating in Turin at Corso Regina Margherita 73 also became the magazine's headquarters.[82] The newspaper printed twenty-seven issues between October 1915 and October 1918 with articles that ranged from informative to political, social, cultural, and historical. It featured contributions from both Armenians and Italians, mostly published anonymously. The first issue of the magazine opened with a plea to the king of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III of Savoy (1869–1947). As previously mentioned, the title of "king of Armenia", held by the Savoy crown but never formally used, was often recalled by the Armenian community in Italy in search of recognition.[83]

The initiative of the newspaper was supported by various other publications and, interestingly, throughout the newspaper's lifetime, a few articles on Armenian monuments found space within its pages. In fact, a column on Armenian architecture was present in some of the

[13] "The central empires fight for the primacy of deliquency", *Rugantino* (1917). On the left Sultan Mehmed V, carrying a sack with the text "massacres in Armenia, etc."

79 Manoukian 2014, pp. 42–44.
80 Gramsci 1916, p. 3.
81 The magazine has been well studied by Haroutyunian. See: Haroutyunian 2020, pp. 107–120; Manoukian 2014, pp. 37–40; Spampinato 2023, pp. 134–151.
82 Haroutyunian 2020, pp. 107–120, sp. p. 112. For a biography of Nishan Der Stepanian, see Yeretzian 1963.
83 "*Il suo* [*d'Italia*] *eroico e nobile Re è il discendente di quei Savoia, che portavano il titolo di Re d'Armenia. Essi salendo al trono d'Italia l'hanno abbandonato. Ma gli armeni continuano ad inneggiare ai Savoia nelle loro canzoni e vorrebbero dire, se la voce, soffocata dall'infernale ferro e fuoco turco-tedesco, potesse giungere Vittorio Emanuele III: Maestà, si ricordi di noi...*" from *Armenia*, I (1915), front page–3, sp. p. 3.

Rugantino doppio

Gl'imperi centrali si contendono il primato della delinquenza

Non è bastato ai due imperatori scatenare la terribile guerra che arrossa di sangue l'Europa, e fa regnare la distruzione nelle città già industri ed operose e nelle campagne che un tempo echeggiavano di canti festosi; essi vogliono ancora mascherarsi d'infamie senza nome sfogando la loro rabbia bestiale senza pietà! E così, mentre l'Imperatore d'Austria, nella decrepita vecchiezza, fa lavorar la forca e tiene in esercizio il suo illustre amico Il boia; il Kaiser, a cui sfuggì dalle mani lorde di sangue lo scettro col quale voleva dominare il mondo, fa fucilare un capitano inglese reo solo di aver cercato di difendersi dalla insidia di un sottomarino, e di questo delitto barbaro, come del martirio inflitto alla sventurata miss Clavel si dà vanto come di un'eroica azione... Ed il turco, loro degnissimo alleato, sotto il peso delle atrocità commesse in Armenia, che aveva ridotta un cimitero, nell'apprendere le gesta dei suoi *camerati*, esclama: Ubè amici, seguitando di questo passo mi toglierete l'unico primato che finora mi ha distinto: quello della barbarie!

ARMENIA

Rovine di Ani: La cappella di S. Gregorio.

Interno della cappella di S. Gregorio.

ARCHITETTURA ARMENA

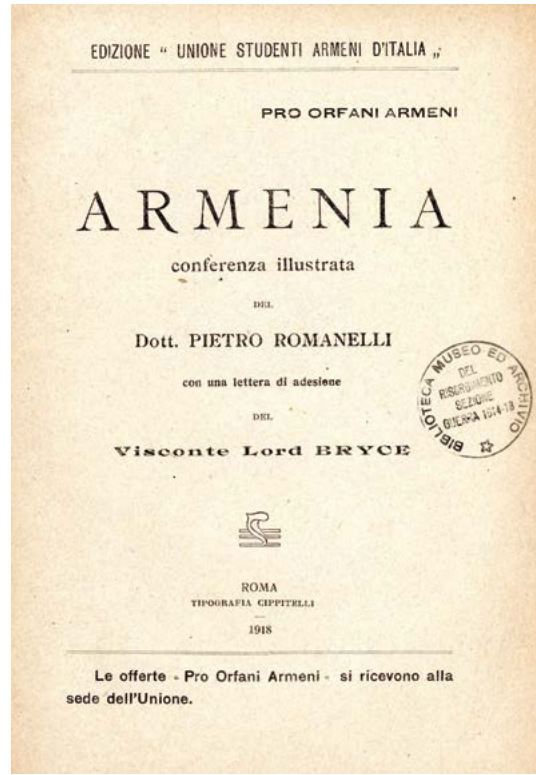
Ani: Cappella di S. Gregorio

opera del celebre architetto armeno Ortud, completata nel 1040

KHAI

Racconto di AVEDISS AHARONIAN

"GIOVINE EUROPA"



EDIZIONE " UNIONE STUDENTI ARMENI D'ITALIA "

PRO ORFANI ARMENI

ARMENIA

conferenza illustrata

DEL

Dott. PIETRO ROMANELLI

con una lettera di adesione

DEL

Visconte Lord BRYCE

ROMA

TIPOGRAFIA CIPPITELLI

1918

Le offerte - Pro Orfani Armeni - si ricevono alla sede dell'Unione.

issues, mostly in 1916, with topics regarding cities and buildings, such as Saint Gregory's chapel in Ani, correlated by texts and photographs extrapolated from the works of Nikolaj Marr and Henry Lynch **[14]**.[84] In the ninth number, published in 1916, an article inaugurating the column, titled "Armenian Architecture", tried to give a general introduction to Armenian architecture:

> "One of the forms of art, in which the Armenian genius has gloriously established itself, is architecture. Here, too, the Armenian artist had to execute his work under the worst political and environmental conditions. That is why the productions of all kinds that are part of the intellectual and artistic heritage of the Armenian people acquire even greater value [...]".[85]

This quote shows that partly, and differently from the previous century, art and architecture started to be used to convey a message of identity, and the work of the artist was employed as a metaphor for

84 *Armenia*, XI (1916), p. 9.
85 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

[14] "Architettura Armena. Ani: Cappella di San Gregorio, opera del celebre architetto Dertad, compiuta nel 1040", *Armenia*, XI (1916), p. 9

[15] Pietro Romanelli, *Armenia: conferenza illustrata del Dott. Pietro Romanelli con una lettera di adesione del visconte Lord Bryce*, Rome 1918

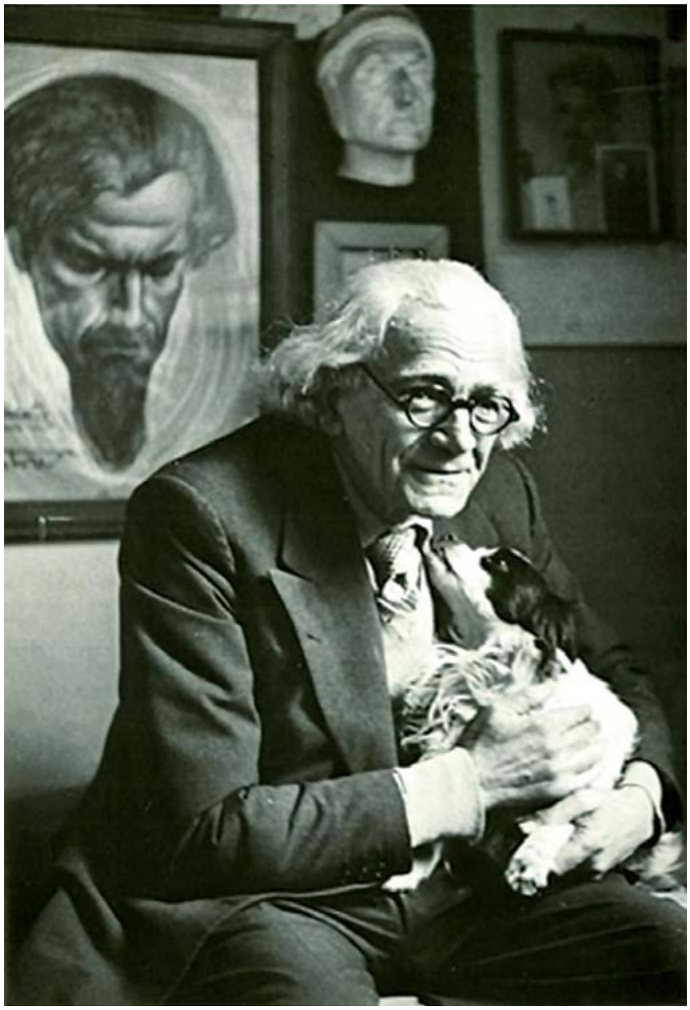
the hardships endured by the Armenian people.

Further initiatives proposed by the Armenian Committee included a well-attended conference in Rome, where the archaeologist Pietro Romanelli (1889–1981) spoke and projected images of Armenia **[15]**.[86] It was followed by a thirty-two-page publication where he discussed the history of Armenia, the massacres, and the Italo-Armenian relations, all accompanied by four images of Armenian monuments (three photos and one model from T'oramanean).[87] At this moment in time, the images of the monuments were considered representative and useful to illustrate Armenia and, thus, slowly started to enter the visual vocabulary of the larger audience in Italy. The text, published by the *Unione Studenti Armeni* also reported on its back the information about a series of books dedicated to Armenian culture with a collection dedicated to Armenian architecture and other volumes, including one on landscapes, monuments, and inscriptions.[88]

A year later, in 1919, the magazine *L'Artista Moderno. Giornale di Arte Applicata* – which was mainly dedicated to contemporary Art Nouveau architecture – published a small and concise article titled "The Churches of Armenia" on March 25, with no illustrations.[89] The author, who did not sign the text, seems to have had at least a certain level of familiarity with the available bibliography, as he mentions the work of T'oramanean as well as excavations and discoveries. In particular, the reference to some "recent" excavation at Kizil Kule in Alanya, Anatolia, makes it possible to speculate that the author might have been the aforementioned Romanelli, as he had participated in an archaeological mission there in 1914.[90] Nevertheless, the author stresses the existence of an important number of churches and new forms of art in Armenia that "consecrate with a new title, the nationality of Armenia".[91] Furthermore, the article briefly discusses the topic of the "external influences" on – and of – Armenian architecture, a topic dear to the art historical discussion on Armenian art since Strzygowski.[92]

A few years later, in 1924, a similar brief article on Armenian art was published by Hrand Nazariantz (1886–1962) with the title "The Art of Armenia" **[16]**.[93] Nazariantz, an Armenian-Constantinopolitan poet and intellectual, was active in the promotion of Armenian culture with the publication of numerous poems as well as books and articles. Despite being an escapee of the genocide, under political asylum at the Italian consulate of Constantinople from 1913, in his publications he never explicitly promoted anti-Turkish propaganda, an act that gained him enemies among his countrymen.[94] In "The Art of Armenia" Nazariantz, after writing about poetry as one of the main

86 Manoukian 2014, p. 43.
87 Romanelli 1918.
88 Manoukian 2014, p. 51.
89 *Le Chiese d'Armenia* 1919, pp. 87–88.
90 Paribeni/Romanelli 1914; Vistoli 2017, pp. 221–224.
91 *Le Chiese d'Armenia* 1919, p. 88.
92 Especially after Strzygowski 1918.
93 Nazariantz 1924, pp. 210–215, sp. p. 213. For a bibliography of Nazariantz, see: Manoukian 2014, pp.28–31; Filippozzi 1987.
94 Manoukian 2014, p. 30; Spampinato 2023, p. 154.



[16] Hrand Nazariantz (1886–1962)

forms of expression of the Armenian *genius*, he introduced architecture as a projection of poetry. Nazariantz also presented the topic of "influence", with a similar opinion and rhetoric to that present in Strzygowski's work. The author stated that some Western architectures such as San Satiro in Milan, also mentioned by the Austrian scholar, were either built by Armenians or had decorative elements derived from Armenian art. He concluded this brief section by recalling that these monuments "collapse under the insult of time, which is accompanied, terrible and overbearing accomplice, by the destructive purpose of the Muslim [...]".[95]

This important article denounced the precarious situation of

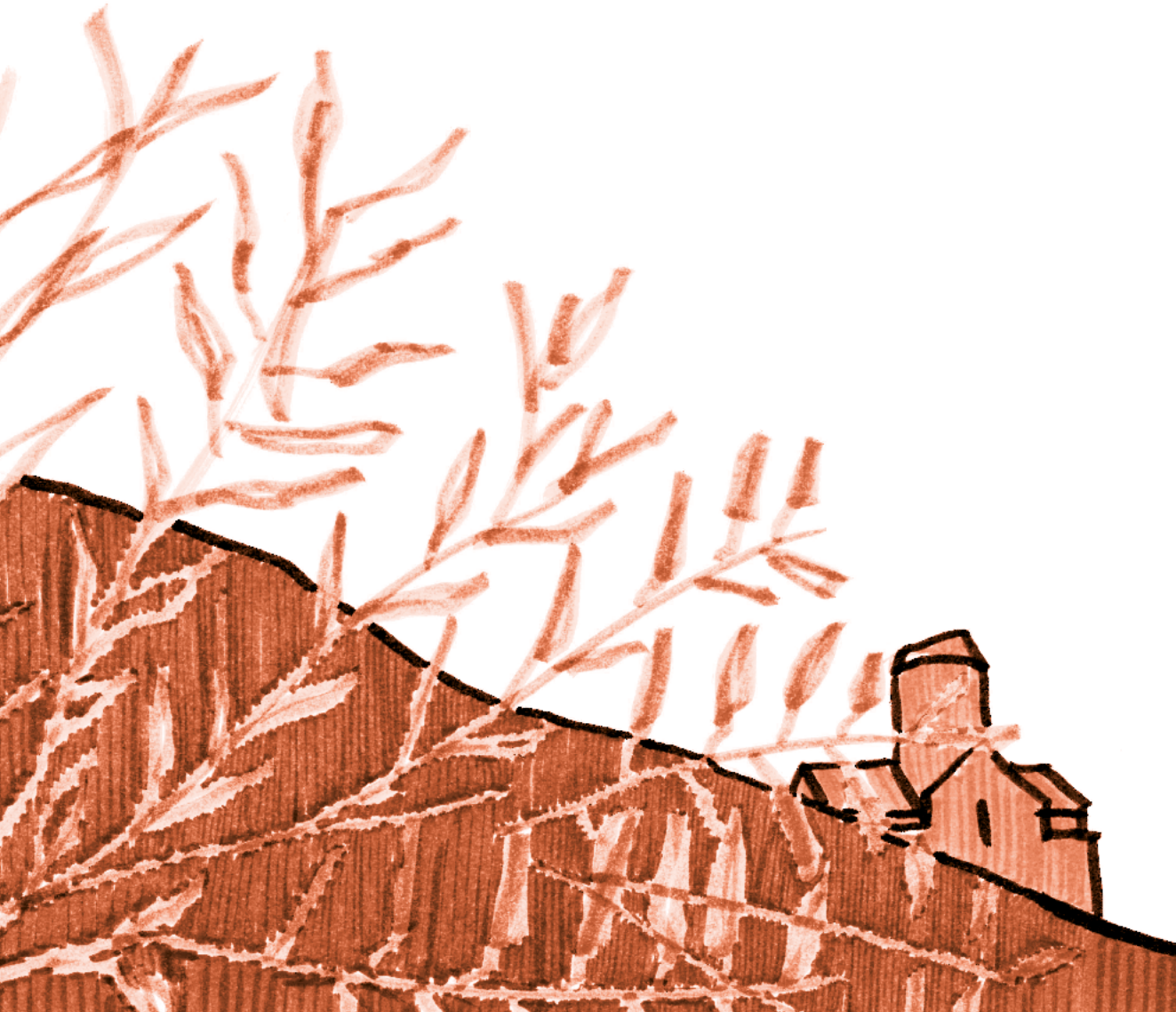
95 "*Oggi crollano sotto l'insulto del tempo, cui si accompagna, terribile e prepotente complice, il proposito distruggitore del mussulmano* [...]" from Nazariantz 1924, pp. 210–215, sp. pp. 213.

Armenian monuments, which were systematically destroyed by the Turks during the six years between 1915 and 1921, and, along with them, the traces of Armenian culture in Ottoman territory.

In conclusion, between 1915 and the mid-twenties, and chiefly because of the tragic events that unfolded in Armenia, the country became better known in Europe and Italy; however, their cries for help fell mostly on deaf ears in a war-torn continent. Thus, the Armenian communities took action to have their country noticed by promoting those cultural features that made it recognizable and relatable to a European audience. While none of the publications listed here are strictly related to visual and material culture, they are nevertheless significant since they showed how Armenian art – considered one of the key vectors of culture – was deployed to defend an identity at risk of vanishing.

CHAPTER IV

MARXISM, TOTALITARIANISM, AND NATIONALISM (1921–1945)



The Interwar period represented a major moment of professionalization and creativity in the discipline of art history. The field became more precise as scholars honed its methods and developed new approaches. Despite rising nationalist tendencies from the First World War onwards which expanded with the rise of surrounding totalitarian regimes in the 1930s, art history was an increasingly international field, with shared methods developing between Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Britain, and, especially in the 1920s, also the United States. The rise of the totalitarian regimes, however, transformed the methods of art history into an ideological tool, especially in Nazi Germany, where science and scholarship were instrumentalized as never before to justify the unjustifiable. The new geopolitical structure of the world – with a division of European space into three increasingly polarized zones that ranged from the communist utopia in the USSR to Nazi and Fascist regimes and democratic states – had a direct impact on how the past was recounted, especially in studies on the Southern Caucasus. We are thus faced with a paradox: research was increasingly international, yet at the political level the Eurasian-Atlantic continued to polarize throughout the period studied in this chapter.

This situation was reflected in the emergence of increasingly conflicting narratives. Thus, in the Soviet world, Leninist and Marxist narratives presented the artistic cultures of the medieval Caucasus, at first, as extremely cosmopolitan. Then, in the war years, the distinctiveness of the region's different national cultures was emphasized. In democratic countries – such as France and the United States – the region continued to be connected to Byzantium or Persia, while at the same time, it was considered the crucible of the East, the place of transformation and a crossroads of visual inputs. In the emerging axis powers, the heritage of the Southern Caucasus continued to be regarded almost exclusively through a racial framework, either in contrast with the greatness of Rome or in a complicated dialogue between ancient Indo-European realities and modern Aryanism.

However, it would be reductive to read this very complex historical moment in such a linear and univocal manner. The ideologies behind the various regimes certainly had a great impact on research, but their reality is always more complex. Thus, for example, in Italy, the battle between a marginal and inferior perception of the Caucasus (conceived in the context of celebrating the absolute centrality of Rome) and that of Caucasian art as one of the miracles of the pre-modern world played out. The first line was advocated by the partisans of

nationalist fascism, while the other testifies to a liberal, perhaps Francophile orientation that was often hostile to the regime. This narrative conflict shows that, at least until the late 1930s, there was a partial plurality of opinion in the country. Adherence to a branch of art history, then and now, is a means of positioning oneself on the intellectual and ideological chessboard, as the case of Italy exemplifies. The situation in the USSR until the mid-1920s was equally fraught. Dissident ideas were present, yet in this case, the brutality of the regime and very effective censorship caused important dissenting voices to disappear from public discourse.

Further complicating the situation was the mobility of intellectuals and scholars in this period. Until the Second World War, in fact, persons (and thus ideas) circulated with relative freedom. The first country to significantly reduce the mobility of its citizens was the USSR, but the Cold War and its almost airtight barriers were still far away. Mobility also has an interesting temporal dimension. Such is, for example, the case with Giorgi Chubinashvili (1885–1973), one of the most important figures in Georgian art history. Chubinashvili, still a subject of the Tsar, was trained in the German world prior to the Second World War and thus would maintain privileged relations with this nation throughout his long life. Over the years, however, he closely followed the development of scientific trends in the Soviet Union, which led him from a more internationalist positions to a nationalistic outlook. His training, as well as his method, remained anchored in German art history. Equally cosmopolitan and complex is the parable of Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1903–1988), who, in the image of many others, followed the movement from the Russian Empire to the West. An art history shaped by the migration of scholars is apparent in the cases of André Grabar and Sirarpie Der Nersessian – the latter a scholar who had a profound impact on French and American scholarship. In this sense, one of the crucial aspects of the period considered here is emigration – a constitutive element of Interwar art histories.

This chapter tells the tale of the birth of parallel narratives, narratives related to the institutional development of the bloodiest regimes in history. The story of the people who found themselves living in this context, however, shows how research – often built on positivist foundations – follows more complex itineraries than one might imagine. Moreover, the various regimes confronted are different in nature and change radically over time: pre-war Italy is of a drastically different shape than the Italy of the mid-1920s; Lenin's USSR is also different from that of the great purges of 1937. The Second World War stirred the hornet's nest, making the most plausible allies – who had uncoincidentally

entered the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact – unreconcilable enemies, and which ultimately seated Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Franklin D. Roosevelt on opposite ends at the table of war.

RUSSOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *IVAN FOLETTI*

After the creation of the USSR, medieval art history experienced a series of shocks in the country. The adoption of a version of anticlerical Marxism combined with the evolving politics of the new state.[1] In the 1920s Lenin promoted the so-called "korenizacia" – commonly translated as "indigenization".[2] The purpose of this project was to foster national identity in the various regions of the Soviet Empire. The regime wanted, in this way, to distance itself from Tsarist Russification practices. Promoting national identity, however, also became a propaganda tool for Lenin: in anticipation of a world revolution, the USSR leadership wanted to promote the vision of an international country internally. It is therefore not surprising that in the first "official" texts presenting Armenian and Georgian art, we see ideological development from the earlier period. The first edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* – an authoritative, censored, and thus normalized text – reads **[1]**:

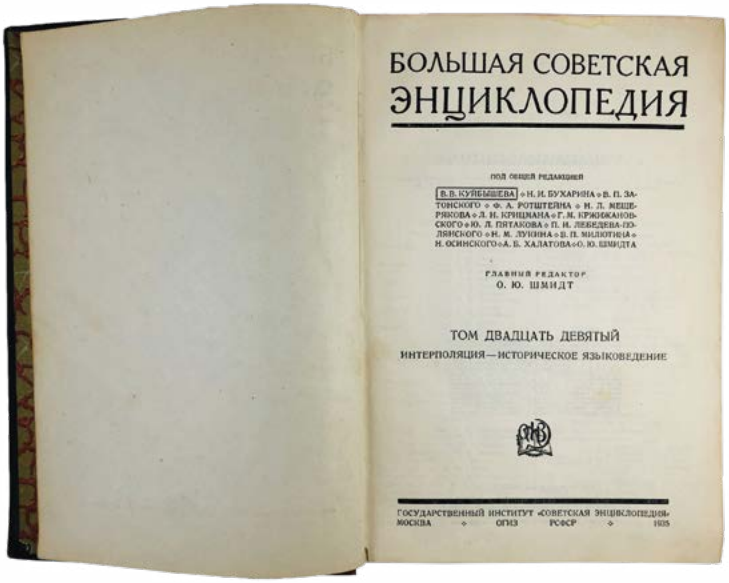
> "The development of Armenian architecture has been traced by art historians since the sixth century. The Armenian architectural style was formed under the overlapping influence of the Byzantine architecture of the eastern provinces, which emerged on the basis of Hellenistic and Persian architecture".[3]

Armenian art was thus given an independent place in the history of world culture even with its dependence on Byzantium. The same was said about Georgian art:

> "The early Christian period of Georgian Art (from the fourth century on) was marked by lively ties both with Sassanid art (Persia) and with the neighboring eastern Christian countries, mainly with Armenia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine. Constantinople and its region seem to have had a direct influence on the Black Sea coast".[4]

Dependence on other cultures was framed as obvious; in the context of the newly promoted "indigenization", however, the cosmopolitan

1 Foletti/Rakitin 2020; Pospielovsky 1987.
2 Suny 1993, p. 146; Plokhy 2017, pp. 350–421.
3 Šmidt 1926.
4 *Idem* 1930.


БОЛЬШАЯ СОВЕТСКАЯ
ЭНЦИКЛОПЕДИЯ

ПОД ОБЩЕЙ РЕДАКЦИЕЙ

В. В. КУЙБЫШЕВА ◇ Н. И. БУХАРИНА ◇ В. П. ЗАТОНСКОГО ◇ Ф. А. РОТШТЕЙНА ◇ Н. Л. МЕЩЕРЯКОВА ◇ Л. Н. КРИЦМАНА ◇ Г. М. КРЖИЖАНОВСКОГО ◇ Ю. Л. ПЯТАКОВА ◇ П. Н. ЛЕБЕДЕВА-ПОЛЯНСКОГО ◇ Н. М. ЛУКИНА ◇ В. П. МИЛЮТИНА ◇ Н. ОСИНСКОГО ◇ А. Б. ХАЛАТОВА ◇ О. Ю. ШМИДТА

ГЛАВНЫЙ РЕДАКТОР
О. Ю. ШМИДТ

ТОМ ДВАДЦАТЬ ДЕВЯТЫЙ

ИНТЕРПОЛЯЦИЯ—ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЕ ЯЗЫКОВЕДЕНИЕ

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ИНСТИТУТ «СОВЕТСКАЯ ЭНЦИКЛОПЕДИЯ»
МОСКВА ◇ ОГИЗ РСФСР ◇ 1935

[1] *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, first edition, 1926–1947

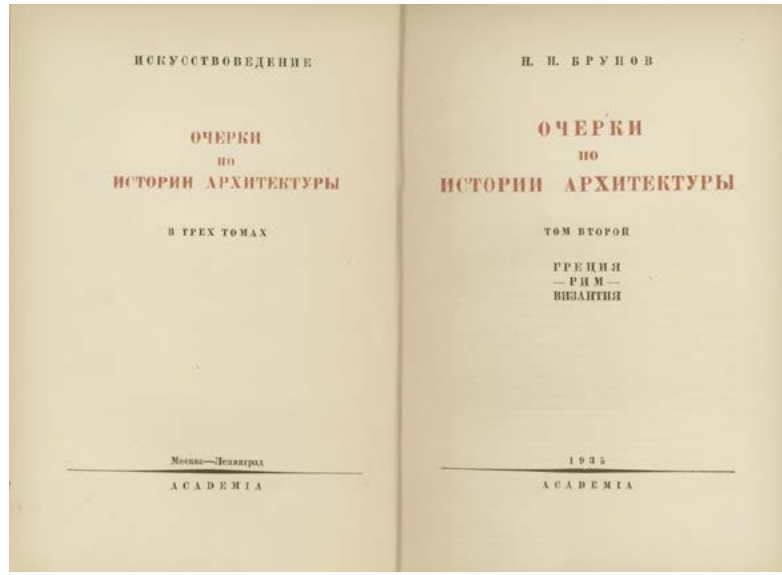
note is not surprising. This was a concept also advanced by Nikolaj Brunov (1898–1971), who wrote in 1930 **[2]**:

> "A comparison of the monuments of Armenian and Georgian architecture of the sixth-seventh and subsequent centuries with the monuments of Christian architecture of the Mediterranean regions shows that the Caucasus was at that time closely connected with the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire in the field of architecture as well. [...] But at the same time, the architecture of Armenia and Georgia already at this early time has its rather pronounced face, which allows us to recognize the Caucasian monument among other Byzantine works".[5]

While the general outlines of the narrative seem unchanged in Brunov's account, the reality was more complex. Brunov's grand summary was imbued with moralizing and anti-historical rhetoric, typical for Marxist-Leninist thought. Speaking of the pre-modern past and its culture, the author thus condemned religion, the feudal system, and decadent aspects of courtly culture. Put another way, the past became an explicit training ground to promote dominant ideas in the present.[6] Interestingly enough, at least in the 1930s, the new national policy of Russification promoted by Stalin was not readily perceived.[7]

5 Brunov 1935, p. 12.
6 Foletti/Rakitin 2020, pp. 126–128.
7 Plokhy 2017.

[2] Nikolaj Brunov, *Ocherki po istorii arhitektury. Tom 2: Grecia. Rim. Vizantia,* Moskow/Leningrad 1935



Instead, studies on the art of medieval Armenia and Iberia experienced a radical shake-up in the years of the Second World War. As is well known, after an initial alliance with Nazi Germany, the USSR was invaded in the summer of 1941 by Nazi troops. After months in which the advance of the Wehrmacht seemed unstoppable, a front was formed only a few kilometers from Moscow and Leningrad.[8] Against this dramatic backdrop, to cope with Nazi propaganda in the Baltic countries and Ukraine, the Soviet Politburo decided on a radical transformation in both national and religious policy: after years of violent persecution, the Orthodox Church was allowed to elect a new patriarch, while the national question took center stage.[9] The Soviet leadership thus hoped to galvanize the people against the enemy. The result was swift: not only did the fortunes of the war begin to turn, but a marked change occurred in the art historical texts as well.[10] Thus, in 1944 Shalva Amiranashvili (1899–1975) wrote *A Georgian History* and did not hesitate to propose a quite different vision than the preceding one:

> "It was not until the late ninth century that western Georgia was freed from the pressure of the Byzantine Church hierarchies and politics, which had hindered the development of national culture".[11]

In these few words, the perspective was reversed: not only should Georgia not be considered a Byzantine province but, contrary to that, the

8 See, e.g., Carley 2001.
9 Roccucci 2009.
10 Foletti/Rakitin 2023.
11 Amiranashvili 1950 [1944], p. 98.

Byzantine yoke prevented its national development. Even heavier words were used two years later by Varazdat Harutyunyan, who wrote about the situation of Armenian culture (and art) during the seventh century.

> "The struggle for the independence of the Armenian people, which was directed both against Arab and Byzantine rule, was headed by Prince Theodoros Rshtuni, who was the ruler of Armenia in the initial period of the Arab raids. During the long struggle between the Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire, each of the opponents tried to attract Armenia to their side".[12]

Between enemies from east and west, the Armenian nation, headed by Prince Rshtuni, struggled for its independence. This perspective would have been perceived as very problematic only a few years earlier. In the 1930s, in all likelihood, it would not even have been possible to publish such an essay, while the consequences for the author of these lines would have been dramatic. There is no doubt, therefore, that the war years coincided with a momentous change in national and religious politics and, consequently, in the writing of national artistic histories.[13]

Another element must be remembered. The shift in perspective is evident from these sources and many others. Therefore, a very clear interconnection between party politics and normative writings on art history is apparent. Officially, however, the shift was not defined as such. For example, in a text published three years after the conclusion of the war, by Mikhail Babenčikov (1890–1957) the desire to study the art of the Soviet republics, oppressed by decades of the tsarist regime, within a de-colonial perspective was made clear **[3]**:

> "All this was a direct consequence of the tsars' colonial policies. Tsarism, – according to the words of comrade I. V. Stalin, – constrained, and sometimes simply abolished the local school, theater, educational institutions in order to keep the masses in darkness. Tsarism suppressed any initiative of the best people of the local population. Finally, Tsarism killed every activity of the people on the outskirts of the country".[14]

Babenčikov took up Stalin's own words, adopting official dogma, to justify the renewed interest in regional and national issues. In his

12 Harutyunyan 1946, p. 3.
13 Foletti/Rakitin 2023.
14 Babenčikov 1948, p. 14.

[3] Yuriy Annenkov, *Portrait of Mikhail Babenčikov*, 1921

text, the events of the 1930s and the strong Russification desired by Stalin were framed as natural responses to tsarism.[15]

When the second version of the Soviet encyclopedia was published in 1949, the change was accomplished. In the entries "Armenian Art" and "Georgian Art", Byzantium was no longer evoked, while the unique and exceptional virtues of the two peoples and their artistic creations were celebrated. On Armenia, it read:

> "Since the fourth century A.D., feudal relations have been strengthening. The Art of Armenia developed as a result of the uniqueness of the socio-economic development and was connected with the local artistic traditions. The establishment of Christianity strengthened cultural ties with Syria and other provinces of the Roman Empire (later Byzantium). The original cultural ties between the peoples of Transcaucasia were also strengthened. As a

15 Foletti/Rakitin 2020, pp. 134–136.

result, similar, often identical, artistic forms were being created in the arts. The best pieces of medieval Armenian art, which were mainly of a religious nature, used folk images and expressed the ideas of humanism and patriotism contrary to their church shell".[16]

In just under 30 years, then, at least in normative publications such as the various editions of the Soviet encyclopedia, we witness a paradigm shift. Contrary to expectations, it is not so much the Marxist-Leninist perspective that had a decisive impact, although the change in tone is undeniable. It is the events of the war and the need to react to Nazi propaganda that radically transformed the official discourse on Armenian and Georgian art: from being secondary artistic cultures of the Byzantine world with a diminished identity of their own to the emergence – at least in rhetoric – of fully autonomous and emancipated national appendages.

FRANCOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *ADRIEN PALLADINO*

Francophone scholarship was in a very different situation than Russophone in the Interwar years. To better understand the situation of Caucasus studies in the Francophone realm the development of Byzantine studies must be considered. The latter were in these years transforming under the impulse of figures such as Gabriel Millet, Louis Bréhier (1868–1951) or Georges Duthuit (1891–1973) but also of émigré scholars such as André Grabar. In this frame, émigré scholars brought new perspectives on the countries considered or considering themselves "heirs" of the Byzantine Empire. At the same time, scholars and European artistic circles became more engrossed with the "oriental" and "decorative" aspects of Byzantine aesthetics. This predominantly "oriental" vision of the Byzantine East, inherited from the nineteenth century, dovetailed more with Strzygowski's or Russophone studies than the primacy of Rome. This must also be understood alongside those questioning the legitimacy of the tradition of mimetic representation and the recognition of other modes of relating to images. Such questions were central since they directly concerned modernism and the avant-garde's desire to create new images dissociating themselves from the Western canon. The 1931 exhibition of Byzantine art was the climax of this newfound scholarly and artistic attitude toward the arts of the Eastern Roman Empire.[17] Within the exhibition, photographs of Armenian and Georgian monuments were displayed, in keeping with the logic that these regions

16 Vavilov 1950, pp. 88–97, sp. p. 89.
17 See Lovino 2020.

are united within the great family of Byzantine art. This art was indeed acknowledged as:

> "a common language spoken by diverse peoples, who, according to the secret genius of their race, have expressed in it similar ideas, beliefs, dogmas, and aspirations. Within this common language, however, different dialects can be distinguished, i.e., schools, each with its own style, its own way of expressing its sense of beauty. This art [...] could not be absolutely homogeneous. But beneath this apparent diversity lies a profound unity [...]".[18]

From such a perspective, the arts of the Caucasus were presented as the product of particular "races" who nevertheless spoke a dialect, a variation, branching from the Byzantine trunk. Given the geopolitical situation – one part of the region the USSR and the other just emerging from a bloody genocide – apart from the architectural photographs, no objects from the Caucasus were shown at the exhibition. At the same time, in filiation both with the ideas brought into the field by Strzygowski but also in dialogue with older studies such as those of DuBois or Texier, the arts of the Caucasus came to be seen – if not ever as central – as a rich repertoire of forms and images from which to construct a "world art history" based on comparisons sometimes stretching the chronological and geographical boundaries. André Malraux's role in proposing a world art history derived from his formal comparisons which greatly impacted the field. In this broader frame, three figures emerged as particularly important for the studies on the Southern Caucasus and its materials. Most interestingly, none of them was born in France: two of them were born in the Russian Empire, and the last in the Ottoman Empire to an Armenian family. Yet, their contributions written in French make them all fundamental to the Francophone reception and transformation of the art history of the Southern Caucasus in the Interwar period.

The first of these figures is Jurgis Baltrušaitis (1903–1988). Born in Moscow to a Lithuanian family but emigrated to France and integrated into the art historical milieu already in the 1920s, Baltrušaitis revived, using new methodological tools, the question of the birth of Romanesque and Gothic arts, especially in connection with the architecture of Armenia and Georgia. In doing so, Baltrušaitis became one of the most innovative interpreters of the arts of the Caucasus in

18 *Exposition* 1931, p. 32

the first half of the twentieth century.[19] His profound knowledge of Caucasian materials was certainly provided on the one hand by his early Russian formation, where he must have heard of the Caucasus. On the other hand, it was bolstered by his travels facilitated by his father – then Russian ambassador in Lithuania – in Soviet Armenia and Georgia in 1927 and 1928. He brought back not only firsthand knowledge of the monuments but also a set of exceptional photographs that illustrated his two monographs on the topic. These are *Études sur l'art médiéval en Géorgie et en Arménie* in 1929 and, later, the *Problème de l'ogive et l'Arménie* in 1936.[20] Both books bear the methodological input of one of Baltrušaitis' influential mentors, Henri Focillon (1881–1943) – one of the most important exponents of the formalist school of art history in these years, who would later emigrate to the United States.[21] As Focillon himself recalled in the preface of the 1929 book, Baltrušaitis applied a formalist comparative method with the goal of understanding the origins of Western Romanesque art by searching for some of the sources, inspirations, archaic forms, and themes common to Armenian, Georgian and "Western" monuments. This investigation developed along different axes, from ornamentation (interlacing and geometric) to figurative sculpture, architecture, and architectural decoration, with special attention given to the geometrization of the forms in the art of the Caucasus, and those images and forms that circulated between ancient Mesopotamia, the Caucasus, and, ultimately for him, "Western" Romanesque art and architecture.[22] In these texts, besides Focillon's primacy of form, not only can one discern Baltrušaitis' confrontation with some of the themes that were present in nineteenth-century thoughts on the arts of the Caucasus – namely the filiation between the arts of the Caucasus and the Romanesque which recalls Quicherat's questioning (as discussed in Chapter II) – but also a perfuse application of the idea of the transmission of Indo-European images and myths through artistic creation as a vehicle of images and form. Baltrušaitis' serious confrontation with the materials sometimes brought to light comparisons that are still interesting and valid today, even if the question of filiation has been abandoned **[4]**.

Baltrušaitis' studies move away from a discussion focused on the origins of Christian art and from Late Antiquity to search, instead, for the elusive traces of the migration of forms from one medieval world to another. Baltrušaitis thought must be seen as the outcome of studies that started in the second half of the nineteenth century on a philological basis, which then developed in the specific context of the profoundly traumatic events of the early twentieth century. These circumstances pushed a transformation toward objectivity,

[4] Plate with comparison of the figures in the squinches at Kumurdo in Georgia (10th century) and the Abbey of Sainte-Foy in Conques (12th century), from Jurgis Baltrušaitis, *Études sur l'art médiéval*, 1929, pl. LXXXIII

19 On the topic, see Donabédian 2003; Palladino 2023, pp. 109–114. For Baltrušaitis' biography, see Chevrier 1989; Žukauskienė 2012.

20 Baltrušaitis 1929; *Idem* 1936. He touches on the topic also in *Idem* 1934, where the role of the Caucasus in the transmission of ancient forms and motifs coming from Mesopotamia is discussed in chapter IV.

21 Ducci 2021.

22 See Spampinato 2019.

D'après Takaichvili.

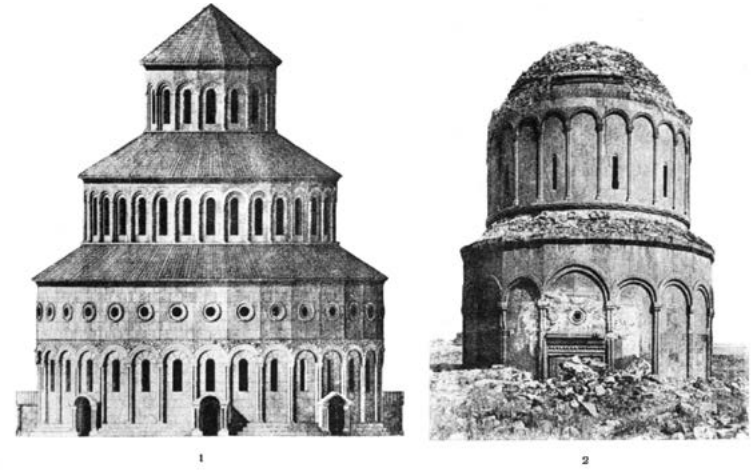
Cliché M. H. N° 76.890.

professionalism, and formalism in the discipline of art history during the Interwar period.

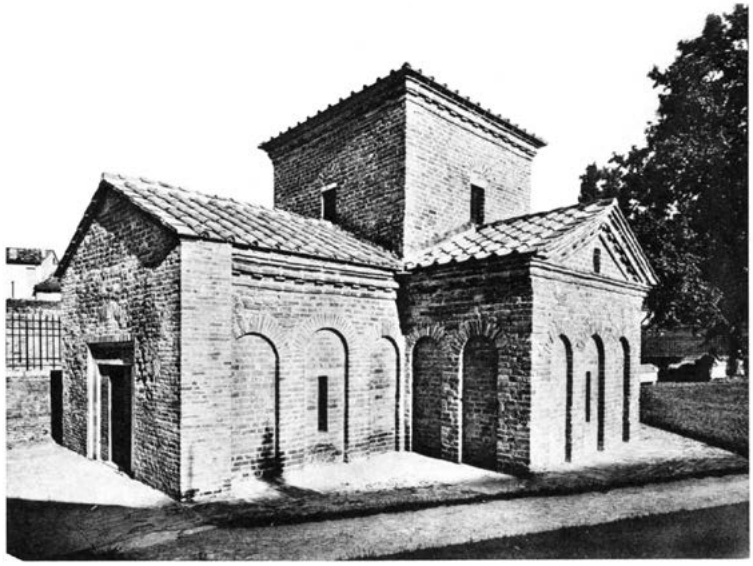
Russian emigration after the 1917 Revolution had also begun to transform Byzantine studies in France. A prominent figure in this context is André Grabar (1896–1990). Born in Kiev at the end of the nineteenth century, he emigrated in the 1920s and naturalized in 1928. Grabar brought with him an important cultural baggage built up during his training in Saint Petersburg with some of the most eminent Byzantinists of their time. This training was bolstered during emigration through Bulgaria and his constant contact with the Russian Byzantinist émigré community in Prague, at what was, for a few decades, one of the most important international institutes for Byzantine and Eurasian studies, the *Seminarium Kondakovianum*.[23] A pupil of the Byzantinists Paul Pedrizet and Gabriel Millet in France, Grabar completed his Russian training, becoming one of France's most influential Byzantinists.[24]

23 Foletti/Palladino 2020; Palladino 2020.

24 Foletti/Palladino 2020, sp. pp. 77–91.



[5] Plate comparing the church of Zvart'nots, the Savior church in Ani, and the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, from André Grabar, *Martyrium*, 1946, pl. VIII



His *Martyrium*, published in 1946, can be seen as the culmination of the substantial first half of his career. Whilst deeply rooted in the questions formulated in the first half of the twentieth century about the origins of architectural forms throughout Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, it opened the way to studies of the second half of the twentieth century. The book covered the architectural filiations of the martyrium from a formalist perspective, but also the religious attitudes and images associated with the cult of relics, adopting a broad approach that provided hypotheses and suggestions on the origins of

Christian art and architecture. This perspective united, perhaps more than before due to Grabar's background, the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman and post-Roman world. The volumes' long-lasting success must be understood through Grabar's particular interest in the correlation between religious praxis (in this case the cult of relics) and form and images. He adopted a pan-Mediterranean view stretching from Italy to the Adriatic coast, the Eastern Roman Empire, the Black Sea, and Russia. Within this framework, the buildings of Armenia and Georgia were ubiquitous realities in the study of Late Antique and Byzantine architecture and its filiation. Well-informed and based on studies in Russian and German by Tʿoramanean, Marr, Chubinashvili, and Strzygowski, Grabar included martyrial buildings such as the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, Hṛipsimē, the Church of the Apostles in Ani, the Holy Cross in Mtskheta, and of course Zvartʿnots **[5]**.[25] In so doing, the Russian émigré directly took aim at Strzygowski and his idea of Caucasian architectural particularism, instead affiliating these monuments with ancient mausolea:

> "[...] all the elements of the Caucasian tetraconch martyria, as far as their plan is concerned, find their correspondence in the architecture of ancient mausolea, and the variety of these points of contact gives the measure of the influence that this art must have exerted in Transcaucasia, during Christian antiquity [...].
> Only common ancient origins can satisfactorily explain the identity of the plans for Etchmiadzin II (seventh century) and San Satiro in Milan (eighth century) [...]".[26]

On the one hand, the Caucasian tradition was thus linked to the vast world of the ancient Mediterranean, to the detriment of the Armenian originality suggested by Strzygowski. Later, Grabar also specified the filiation of buildings such as Zvartʿnots with the martyria of Syria and Palestine, likewise underlining the question of filiation with the cult practices and buildings of Jerusalem. In this idea of an ancient filiation, possibly mediated by the Byzantine Empire, we find the early Interwar Russian roots of Grabar's thinking, in which the Caucasus was fully viewed as a region connected to the ancient Mediterranean through the Black Sea, Syria, and Palestine, but not the center of original culture.

The last of our émigrés, Sirarpie Der Nersessian (1896–1989) despite a different journey, encountered a similar art history in France as the one met by Baltrušaitis and Grabar. Der Nersessian was born

25 Grabar 1946, vol. I, pp. 181–187.
26 *Ibidem*, pp. 186–187.

in Ottoman Constantinople to an elite intellectual Armenian family. Losing both parents when she was still young, her formation was profoundly impacted by her maternal uncle, Malachia Ormanian (1841–1918), who was the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople from 1896 to 1908. She received a cosmopolitan education in French and English, while at the same time developing a deep interest in the cultural and religious traditions of Armenia. In 1915, in order not to be captured (and killed), Der Nersessian emigrated to Geneva with her aunt and her sister Araxie before arriving in 1919 in Paris. Admitted to the Sorbonne, she enrolled at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) and pursued Byzantine studies and art history with Diehl, Millet, and Focillon, becoming a French citizen in 1925. It is also in Paris that she met fellow Byzantinists in emigration, such as František Dvorník (1893–1975) and André Grabar.[27]

She became an assistant to Millet **[6]**, with whom she published a lengthy study in the *Revue des études arméniennes* in 1929 on an Armenian illustrated psalter of the fourteenth or fifteenth century (since 1937 at the Freer Gallery of Art, MS 37.13) and presented her two state doctoral theses in 1936, both on Byzantine and Armenian manuscripts.[28] From the outset, she worked, employing the methodology promoted by scholars such as Millet, on Byzantine and Armenian monuments, and chiefly manuscripts. While Millet had already started to publish some of the manuscripts from the Mekhitarists in Venice, Der Nersessian's mastery of the language, ease of navigating the international world of art history, and knowledge of religious tradition and Armenian liturgy made her catalog and her work on individual manuscripts in various collections invaluable additions to scholarship and attracted broad attention.[29] Ultimately, Der Nersessian provided, with her native mastery of the languages, revisions to the existing endeavors of earlier figures such as Uvarov, Macler, or Brosset. As a matter of fact, while Der Nersessian's method was of French formation and while these two theses were written in French, she was writing extensively in English even before their completion, publishing as early as 1927 in *The Art Bulletin* on Byzantine and Armenian illumination.[30] Millet's connections, Der Nersessian's own elite contacts, and these publications led her to be formally invited in 1930 to move to the United States to teach at Wellesley College, MA, near Boston, by the eminent art historians and Byzantinists Charles Rufus Morey (1877–1955), Albert M. Friend, Jr. (1894–1956) and Walter S. Cook (1888–1962). Her life path and studies formed, as discussed below, a constant bridge between Byzantine and Armenian studies in France, the United States, and beyond.

27 For Der Nersessian's biography, see Allen *et al*. 1989; Kouymijan 2005.

28 Millet/Der Nersessian 1929. The two theses were published as Der Nersessian 1937a and *Eadem* 1937b.

29 Der Nersessian 1937a. Part of this publication was made possible thanks to funds provided by Miss Helen Frick, thus highlighting the already existing American connections of Millet and, in turn, Der Nersessian.

30 See Der Nersessian 1927; *Eadem* 1933.

[6] Photographs at the École Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, surrounding Gabriel Millet, first to the left of Millet Sirarpie der Nersessian, 1929

GERMANOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *KLÁRA DOLEŽALOVÁ, ADRIEN PALLADINO*

As the other chapters of this book illustrate, Strzygowski's two-volume opus resonated vividly in both Eurasian and local Germanophone art historical scholarship. Especially in the West, it long acted as the most substantial point of scholarly reference. It is to Strzygowski's undeniable credit that Armenian monuments entered discussions about medieval art and its origins and called attention to the limits of the previous Eurocentric and largely Romanocentric scholarship.[31] But as has been hinted at, Strzygowski's contributions also received considerable criticism for his sometimes-questionable methodology and controversial conclusions that strongly mirrored his ideological stances.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Strzygowski's promotion of racial ideology, already foreshadowed in *Die Baukunst*, became noticeably more pronounced. Within his later work, Strzygowski elaborated on the idea of a pan-Aryan architectural tradition in which Armenian monuments occupied a seminal position as bearers of primitive Aryan forms. As Christina Maranci showed, Strzygowski's interest in the Indo-German origins of architecture and ornament put his oeuvre fully in line with Indo-European studies of the time and, likely, with his personal, pan-German mindset.[32] In this context, it is not entirely surprising that Strzygowski's contribution appeared in a 1934 pamphlet entitled *Armeniertum – Ariertum* **[7]**.[33] The booklet also testified to Strzygowski's persistent contacts with the Berlin circle of

31 For an overall positive review of *Die Baukunst*, see Roth 1923–1924.

32 Maranci 1998b.

33 Strzygowski 1934. On the purpose and activities of DAG (Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft), see the previous section.

Armeniertum – Ariertum

Herausgegeben von der Deutsch-Armenischen Gesellschaft Berlin

unter Mitwirkung von

Professor Dr. H. H. Schaeder
Dr. von Leers
Dr. A. Abeghian
Dr. Karl Roth
Lic. G. Klinge
D. Ewald Stier
Professor Dr. Strzygowski
Max, Herzog zu Sachsen
Richard Schäfer
Lic. Dr. Paul Rohrbach

Potsdam 1934

Verlag der Deutsch-Armenischen Gesellschaft, Berlin
Sitz Potsdam, Roonstraße 13
In Kommission: Missionshandlung Lepsius, Fleischmann & Grauer, Potsdam

[7] Frontispiece of *Armeniertum - Ariertum*

Armenologists and pro-Armenian activists, as it was issued on the initiative of the Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft (DAG) whose activities Strzygowski supported as early as 1914.[34] The publication, which in several contributions aimed at proving the Indo-Germanic origins of Armenians and their culture, was validated by the growing political tension of the 1930s. With the Nazi seizure of power, the question of the racial affiliation of Armenians was back on the agenda, including their persistent designation as quasi-Jews.[35] Hence, in addition to fostering cultural relations between Germany and Armenia, the pamphlet played a key role in preventing the Armenian minority in Germany from suffering the later fate of the Jews.[36] Regardless of Strzygowski's motivations and worldviews, the DAG thus seems to have been able to use his scholarly outputs effectively in order to pursue its political and humanitarian objectives.

Not all of Strzygowski's scholarly hypotheses advanced in *Die Baukunst* were unanimously accepted.[37] In addition to the political charge of Strzygowski's works, the theory of the transmission of Armenian forms to the West posed a great challenge and was contested

34 See the previous chapter on German historiography between the years 1915 and 1921.

35 See, e.g., Ihrig 2016, sp. pp. 299–319.

36 "Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft", in Goltz/Meissner 2004, pp. 122–123.

37 See, e.g., the contemporary reviews of *Die Baukunst* by Herzfeld 1919–1920; Chubinashvili 1922; or Lefèvre-Pontalis 1923.

even within the circle of his colleagues, both in Germany and internationally.[38] Even Strzygowski's older work on the Etchmiadzin Gospels received a critical response in light of his new ideas, namely by the German Byzantologist Kurt Weitzmann (1904–1993). Weitzmann dedicated his habilitation to Byzantine and Armenian book illumination and published his book *Die armenische Buchmalerei* in 1933.[39] Almost forty years after the appearance of Strzygowski's study and just two years before he was forced to leave for the United States to escape Nazi persecution, Weitzmann, in this book, responded to some of Strzygowski's dating arguments. As Adrien Palladino has suggested, being a former student of Adolph Goldschmidt (1863–1944) and Strzygowski's ardent opponent Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938), Weitzmann opposed Strzygowski's earlier conclusions and pointed out the creative revival of Antique motifs by Armenian illuminators in the tenth century, and the lively interactions between Armenia and the rest of the Mediterranean wherein Armenian illuminators acted both as recipients and originators of new artistic forms.[40] The previously mentioned Sirarpie Der Nersessian arrived at similar conclusions directed against Strzygowski the same year as Weitzmann.[41] Possibly, this was also an *a posteriori* rejection of the pan-Aryan prism through which Strzygowski increasingly approached the Armenian heritage and a way for young scholars to position themselves in relationship to the scholar who had dominated the field during the entire end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The post-war period brought about yet another twist in the Western scholarship on Caucasian heritage for which the Germanophone milieu – or more specifically, the one of the Weimar Republic (1918–1933) – once again took the central stage. In 1922, a critical assessment of Strzygowski's *Baukunst* was published in German by Georgian art historian Giorgi Chubinashvili **[8]**.[42] Chubinashvili was closely intertwined with German academia and was no stranger to Armenian medieval architecture either. Born in Saint Petersburg, he pursued an education at the universities of Leipzig, Halle, and Munich, where he attended lectures of Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945).[43] Upon his return to Saint Petersburg, after he finished his studies, he took part in archaeological excavations of the ancient Armenian city of Ani under the direction of the archaeologist Marr.[44] In the review, Chubinashvili acknowledged several inconsistencies in Strzygowski's postulates, most of which he attributed to an insufficient reflection of Georgian examples. Most importantly, he openly questioned Strzygowski's stance regarding the subordination of Georgian to Armenian art which he believed to be a result of long-standing historical and racial biases not based

38 See, e.g., the article of Strzygowski's assistant Heinrich Glück (1889–1930) about the Renaissance revival of domed churches, viewed by Glück as prompted by Islamic architecture in Byzantium, rather than directly introducing Armenian forms: Glück 1919. Glück then continued to work on Islamic architecture, including its examples preserved in Armenia: *Idem* 1923.

39 Weitzmann 1933.

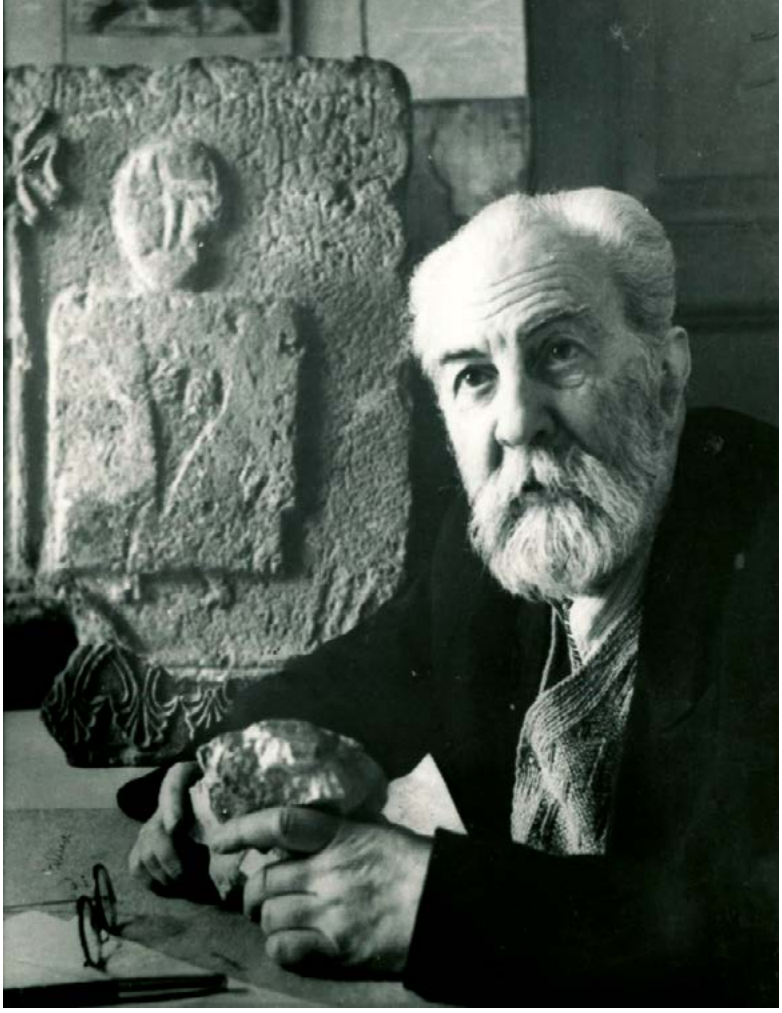
40 Palladino 2021.

41 Der Nersessian 1933.

42 Chubinashvili 1922.

43 Concerning the practical influence of Wölfflin's theories on Chubinashvili's methodology, see the contribution by Ivan Foletti and Margarita Khakhanova in the chapter I.

44 Chubinashvili occasionally returned to the reassessment of Armenian monuments in the following years: Chubinashvili 1928; *Idem* 1929.



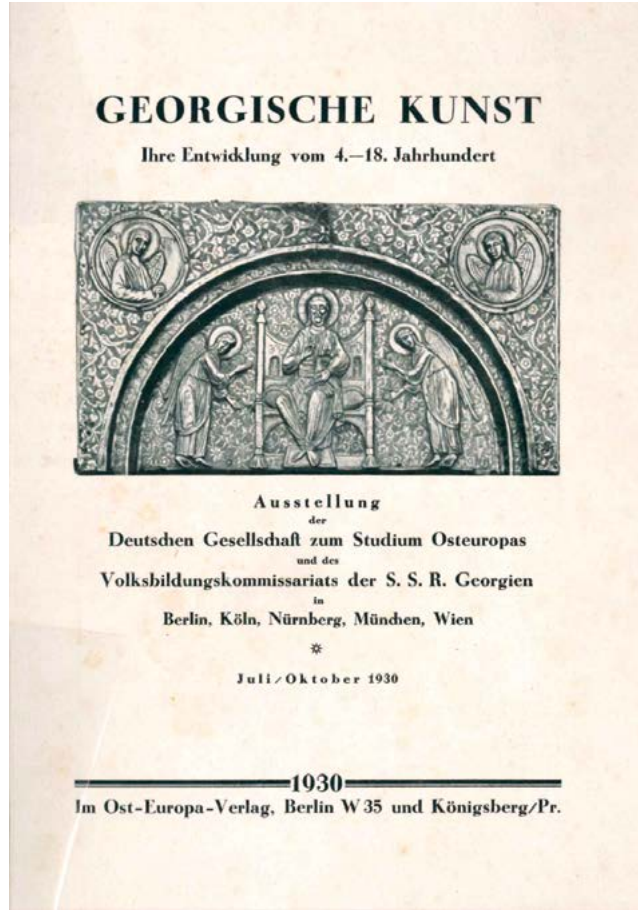
[8] Giorgi Chubinashvili (1885–1973)

on objective research. Proving the contrary became Chubinashvili's lifelong pursuit – he eventually went down in history as an advocate of the legitimate position of Georgian art in the general field of art history and, holding important positions at the University of Tbilisi and the Georgian Academy of Sciences, as the founder of art historical research in Georgia.

In 1930, Chubinashvili participated in the organization of a traveling exhibition, presented in several German metropoles and aptly entitled *Georgische Kunst* **[9]**.[45] The exhibition was a unique opportunity for Western audiences, both academic and lay, to get acquainted with Georgian material culture on a first-hand basis. It thus posed a challenge to the current scholarship largely based on Strzygowski – despite the fact that the Georgian National Treasure, a group of the most valuable art objects from Georgian collections, was taken to the

45 *Georgische Kunst* 1930.

[9] Cover of the exhibition catalogue *Georgische Kunst,* 1930



French exile and only returned to the country in 1945.[46] Chubinashvili not only oversaw the selection of the exhibits but wrote a scientific introduction to the catalog and personally delivered an introductory lecture at the exhibition's openings.[47] On the German side, the exhibition was co-organized by the so-called *Deutsche Gesellschaft zum Studium Osteuropas* (DGSO), founded in 1913 by the politically engaged historian Otto Hoetzsch (1876–1946).[48] The society was originally established to pursue studies on imperial Russia but after the First World War widened the sphere of its interest to Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, of which both Georgia and Armenia, after a brief period of independence, became part in the early 1920s. A significant impetus for the society's activities was then the rapprochement of Germany and the Soviet Union in the light of the Rapallo Treaty of 1922. The DGSO representatives were interested in collaboration with Soviet experts

46 See Filipová 2018.

47 The DSGO journal *Osteuropa* published a transcript of a lecture given by Chubinashvili on 9 July 1930 in Berlin: Chubinashvili 1930.

48 Hoetzch's vision in establishing the DSGO, then the *Deutsche Gesellschaft zum Studium Russlands* was published in the journal *Osteuropa*: Hoetzsch 2013. On the figure of Hoetzsch, see Voigt 1978.

[10] Friedrich Schmidt-Ott (1860–1956)

and scientific exchange in different fields including economics, agriculture, and natural sciences, not excluding culture – already in 1929, the DGSO mediated an exhibition of Russian icons which enjoyed an enthusiastic reception among German Byzantinists.[49]

The idea of presenting an exhibition of Georgian art in Germany was conceived during the director of DGSO Friedrich Schmidt-Ott's (1860–1956) travel through the Soviet Union in 1928. In Tbilisi, Schmidt-Ott met with Chubinashvili who introduced him to an impressive selection of precious objects kept in the collections of the university museum **[10]**. The exhibition proposal was only the first of a series of steps that were agreed upon to establish closer cooperation between the two countries.[50] As the title reveals, the exhibition as well as its catalogue presented the audience with an overview of Georgian art and architecture and its development between the fourth and the

49 Lishnevskaya 2021.

50 The event is briefly described in Schmidt-Ott's memoirs: Schmidt-Ott 1952, pp. 239–247, sp. p. 241.

eighteenth century. Chubinashvili introduced several examples of Georgian metalwork, tapestries, as well as photographs and drawings of architecture and wall paintings, whose scholarly assessment not only overtly revealed his nationalist tendencies but also a certain adherence to the Soviet ideological background. This can be felt, for example, in his emphasis on the long tradition of folk art as the basis of Georgian artistic production.

Later that year, the planned archaeological excavations were launched at the site of Nokalakevi to investigate the remains of the ancient city of Archaeopolis. The excavations, led by Christian archaeologist and Catholic theologian Joseph Sauer (1872–1949) and his student Alfons Maria Schneider (1896–1952), were of relatively short duration and bore rather ambiguous results.[51] Despite the efforts on both sides, a change in the political climate in Germany as well as the Soviet Union, reflected in funding and personnel, slowly brought the German-Georgian collaboration to its end.[52] Sauer later succeeded in publishing a short study on the Jvari Church of Mtskheta **[11]**. He focused on the origins of the vital Georgian cult of the cross, which he traced back to Syria and Jerusalem while briefly introducing Chubinashvili's up-to-date observations on the architectural form of the church.[53] For Chubinashvili, Jvari represented one of the key monuments of Georgian architectural history, to which he devoted a comprehensive study as early as 1921 and then envisaged its German translation.[54] However, the translation never came to fruition. The second volume of the series, devoted to the church of Ts'romi and published in 1934, was one of Chubinashvili's last studies in German.[55]

This overview would not be complete without mentioning the Caucasus' place within the Nazi geopolitical and ideological worldview. With the Second World War and the intensification of science as a tool of propaganda and racial justification within the Nazi regime, the Caucasus was again, in the 1940s, the territory of studies of special interest. On the one hand, in the broader frame of the war economy, the Caucasus had to be crossed to reach the regions especially rich in oil on the Caspian coast, a territory disputed by the British forces. This military operation "Edelweiss" ultimately failed, and the German troops never managed to push much beyond Mount Elbrus.[56] But further, uniting the eighteenth-century ideas on the Caucasian race and the question of the origins of Aryan Indo-Germanic populations, the Caucasus was seen as a place to be investigated in depth in order to validate the Nazi racial ideology. Such an idea led to the planning of a scientific exhibition by a special commando (*Sonderkommando K*)

51 Schneider 1931.

52 Schmidt-Ott comments on the end of the collaboration as follows: "[…], but [excavations in Nokalakevi] ended on the Georgian side, as I was told, with a disappointment insofar as, following the old legends, they had hoped to find great treasures. The excavation of the old burial site adjoining the Mtskheta Cathedral, which I visited in 1928, did not take place, as the change of influential figures and the incursion of communist tendencies were not favourable to our work in Georgia […] The restriction of *Notgemeinschaft* funds completely prevented further ventures in Russia […] The economic transformations in the Bolshevik empire and its political stance brought about a steady deterioration in scientific relations in the new decade as well, especially since these were also subject to ever-increasing distrust on the part of the Russian government", Schmidt-Ott 1952, p. 227.

53 Sauer 1931.

54 Chubinashvili 1921.

55 *Ibidem* 1934.

56 As some decades before, the mountains were also the territory of political confrontations between the involved powers, see Hoesli 2022, pp. 431–591.

of the German *Ahnenerbe*, a "scientific" association which had been founded in 1935 by Himmler as an instrument of Nazi Cultural Policy.[57] Partly under the guidance of the infamous ss anthropologist Bruno Beger (1911–2009), who had participated in earlier Nazi Tibet expeditions, the commando was tasked with a "total exploration of the Caucasus" (*Totalerforschung des Kaukasus*) which would have included geological studies, anthropology, anthropometric studies, etc. While the expedition never happened because the region became inaccessible to Germans by 1943, the racial questions posed since the eighteenth century were repeated again against the background of radicalized pseudo-scientific endeavors that see the Caucasus as one of the cradles of Aryanism. It is, in this frame, not surprising that Strzygowski published, starting from the late 1930s, books that were funded by the *Ahnenerbe* and in which Armenian art was reduced in an almost caricatural way to its role in the formation of the Aryan race and architecture, themselves testimonies to the "Northern genius" and racial supremacy of Indo-Germanic populations.

57 Kater 2006.

[11] Jvari Church, Mtskheta, 7th century

Although nearly as concerned with race and the formation of nationhood as Germany, the United States during the Interwar period tells a different story of diverse scholarship, intentionally shaped by an émigré community. Beyond the study of Persia and the Islamic East under which Armenian arts had often been regrouped, Byzantine studies started, from the Interwar period on, to emerge more prominently in the United States. This was partly the result of the development and professionalization of the field in Europe, but also the result of various contacts with European scholarship and the gradual process of the emigration of persons and ideas. This happened not only through scholars who engaged with the European tradition of research on the "origins" of Christian and Byzantine art, but also through prominent collections of medieval art which owned great, important quantities of Byzantine and Armenian manuscripts, such as the Frick Collection, the Freer Gallery, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Walters Art Gallery, and also the Chester Beatty Collection in Dublin as well as the British Library. A shift of focus in the Anglophone world with the emergence of a strong art history in the United States is useful to understanding the dynamics at play in the study of Caucasian materials.

One of the more prominent figures in this frame by the late 1920s was the art historian Charles Rufus Morey (1877–1955). Close to Allen Marquand, one of the founders of professional art history in the United States, Morey was, at Princeton, a crucial figure bridging the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Morey's name is still closely linked with the iconographic method and with the vast photographic collection gathered at the Index of Medieval Art, of which he was a founder.[58] Furthermore, Morey was largely involved in the investigation of Early Christian art, entertaining strong ties with institutions in Europe and being largely responsible for the dialogue between European and American scholarship and for the reception of German scholarship.[59] Within Morey's broad investigations on medieval art, in line with the entire first half of studies in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, the American position was clearly linked with a search for the survivals of Hellenism in Late Antique art. In a long 1929 article on East Christian miniature illumination, Morey strictly followed Strzygowski's assertion that the Etchmiadzin Gospels were what he called a *pasticcio* of medieval art in which the illuminated pages are reused and only stitched together in the tenth century.[60] For Morey, these miniatures should be linked with

58 See Smyth 1993; Hourihane 2002.

59 For the broader frame, see DaCosta Kaufmann 2010.

60 Morey 1929.

the Egyptian iconographic and stylistic tradition, and thus the miniatures were done by a hand trained in the Coptic tradition, to be added later to the Gospel book. Ultimately, the Etchmiadzin Gospels' role was only marginal for Morey, but his general goal in the article was to go more generally against the idea of a Macedonian Renaissance promoted in the same years by scholars such as Kurt Weitzmann and Hugo Buchthal. He wanted to promote his own chronology for objects such as the Paris Psalter, for which Morey advocated a pre-Iconoclastic dating.[61]

Despite these disputes in chronology, the prevalent idea for these scholars was that the transmission and survival of Hellenism throughout the medieval period happened in large part thanks to the Eastern Roman Empire. In this case, Armenia was framed as a marginal receptacle of broader questions related to Byzantine art.

Although not an expert on the Southern Caucasian materials, Morey was open-minded and had a clear vision of how to foster Byzantine studies in the United States. Alongside Albert Mathias Friend, Jr., who had joined Princeton in the 1920s and was also interested in Eastern Christian art, chiefly manuscripts, as well as with Walter S. Cook, teaching and studying Romanesque art in New York, Morey invited Sirarpie Der Nersessian – thus significantly and durably impacting the field of studies on the Southern Caucasus in the United States. It seems that the scholars had been impressed by her work with Millet at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, notably that on the impressive photographic collection – a medium that was becoming increasingly critical for the teaching and research and that Morey wanted to foster in the United States.

In 1930, Sirarpie Der Nersessian was invited by Morey, Friend, and Cook to teach near Boston at Wellesley College. There, she taught for sixteen years, quickly becoming full professor, chairman of the department of art history, and director of the local Farnsworth Museum. By 1944–1945, Der Nersessian was invited as a resident fellow to one of the most prestigious institutes dedicated to Byzantine studies: Dumbarton Oaks. In 1946, she was appointed professor of Byzantine art and archaeology at Dumbarton Oaks and Harvard University, becoming the first-ever woman of her time to gain full professorship there. Through her international formation in emigration and her deep knowledge of Armenian manuscript illumination – both the studies of "Western" scholars but also Armenian scholars such as the Catholicos Garegin Hovsepian (1867–1952), Der Nersessian was able

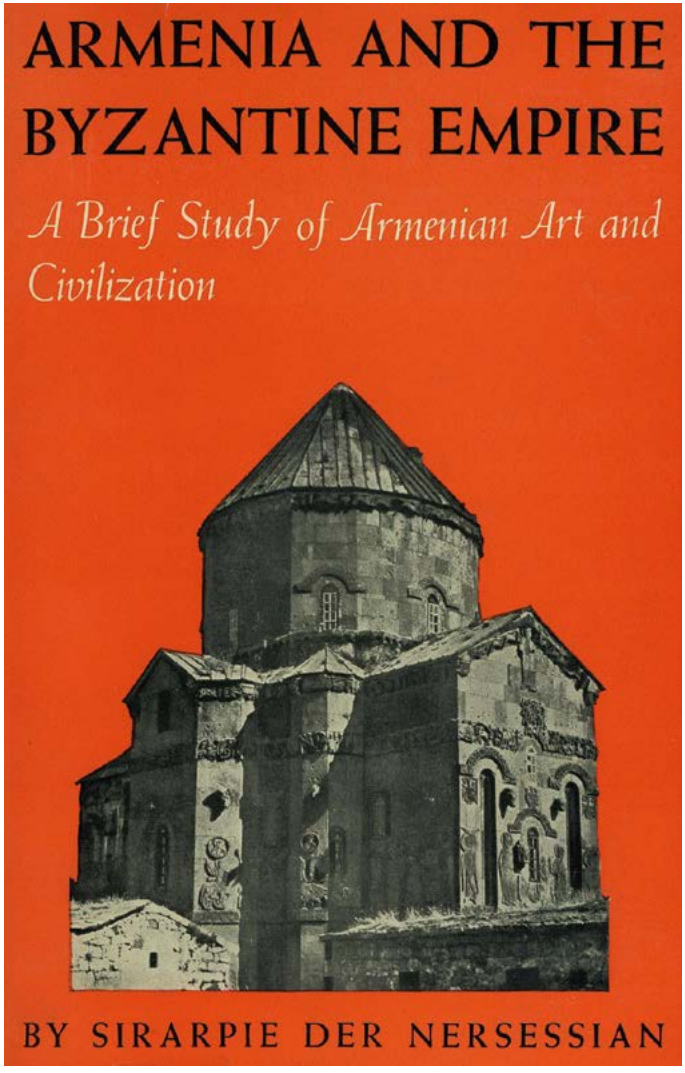
61 On the broader debates around the tenth-century Renaissance, see Spieser 2017.

to go beyond the established boundaries of Byzantine art history and to show the particularism and distinct characteristics of Armenian art.[62] Whilst based in the United States and affiliated with American institutions, it is hard to consider Der Nersessian only from one linguistic perspective. Her work was, in the years ranging from the 1920s to the 1940s, truly crossing boundaries, and up until her passing some months before the fall of the wall in 1989, she was a true *trait d'union* between pre-Soviet Armenian art history, French Byzantine Studies, and the multicultural experience of Interwar American scholarship on Byzantium. Some years later, this constant exchange would be strengthened by the arrival at Princeton – again through the intermission of Morey – of Kurt Weitzmann, another figure who had a profound knowledge of Byzantine and Armenian manuscripts. Figures such as Grabar and Father Dvorník, whom Der Nersessian had met in Paris, would also meet again in the United States, far from war-torn Europe **[12]**. American scholarship on Byzantine and Caucasian materials thus emerged profoundly shaped by a double movement: first, the reception and "digestion" of European scholarship by founding figures such as Morey, followed by the actual invitation of émigré scholars who brought their own training and perspective, itself shaped by the divergent historiographies studied throughout this book, to the United States. Such a fertile crucible, fermented through increased English publications, paved the way for post-war art history.

In this frame, a true protagonist in the development of studies partly focused on the Southern Caucasus – most often through the lens of Byzantium – is the research institute at Dumbarton Oaks. This institute, located in a beautiful estate surrounded by gardens in Washington, D.C., had been gifted in 1940 to Harvard University by the wealthy collectors and art patrons Mildred Barnes Bliss (1879–1969) and Robert Woods Bliss (1875–1962) as a research library and collection focused on Byzantine studies.[63] It was frequently described, especially after the Second World War, as a place that preserved – through the presence of émigré scholars – the cosmopolitan nature of pre-war Europe, especially once the countries of the Soviet world were cut off from international research. Der Nersessian was invited to Dumbarton Oaks as a senior fellow in 1944–1945, becoming later a full member of the faculty and member of the board of scholars. A culmination of this first period of Der Nersessian's career must be seen in the publication, in 1945, of her book aiming at a broader audience titled *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire* **[13]**.[64] The book is the result of five lectures delivered at the Pierpont Morgan Library in 1942, at the height of the Nazi occupation of France and on behalf of the École Libre des Hautes Études, founded

62 See Kouymijan 2005.
63 See Carder 2010.
64 Der Nersessian 1945.

[12] Sirarpie Der Nersessian (in the center) surrounded from left to right by André Grabar, Paul Alexander, and Father František Dvorník, ca. 1958



[13] Cover of Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire*, 1945

the same year by exile scholars in New York.[65] In the preface, Henri Grégoire recalls how this publication has the potential to truly bring, in English, the topic of Armenian art to a wide audience:

> "Is it necessary to say that here, the deep sense of the Armenian soul never turns into 'scientific nationalism'? That the author never yields to the temptation of claiming for her homeland, if only following in the footsteps of illustrious authorities, the exclusive merit of having created such and such an art form? Even, and above all, in the face of the seductive intuitions of Strzygowski, Miss Der Nersessian always knows how to 'keep her wits'. That is why we'll follow her without fear, wherever she sets out to assert the originality of Armenian creation. [...] As said, the book is stimulating. Its victorious date, August 1944, will, I'm sure, usher in a triumphant era in the exploration of a field which, despite so many fine and good works, retains the allure of almost uncharted territory".[66]

Behind this laudatory preface lies a text that places Armenia and its art in the full complexity of their relationship with the Byzantine Empire and Persia, without on the one hand giving in to Armenian nationalism, but also critically revising certain hypotheses of international eminences such as Macler, Strzygowski and Nicolas Adontz (1871–1942), and making the subject truly accessible to a wide audience.

Through her publications, her presence at Dumbarton Oaks just after the war, and her full professorship in Byzantine art at Harvard University, Der Nersessian must be seen as a true pioneer who strengthened the position of Armenian studies in art history not only in the United States but across the field. She made previous and highly specialized studies available and accessible to a wider audience of historians and art historians increasingly interested in this still "uncharted territory".

ITALOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *RUBEN CAMPINI, ANNALISA MORASCHI*

As with many of the previous studies, Italophone scholarship was shaped by a rise in nationalism during the Interwar period. From 1922 to 1943 the national fascist party ruled the kingdom of Italy, with Benito Mussolini as its leader. One of the pivotal points of fascist ideology was that it attempted to elevate Italy as the only true heir to

65 On the *École Libre des Hautes Études de New York*, see Chaubet/Loyer 2000.

66 Henri Grégoire, preface of Der Nersessian 1945, pp. xx–xxi.

Rome, which was considered the pinnacle of culture and civilization.[67] During the *Ventennio*, art became an object of propaganda, connected to the *romanitas* which the regime was inspired by. To raise international awareness of the "superiority" of Italian culture, an exhibition in London at the Royal Academy was organized in 1930,[68] to compete with a series of other international expositions such as those on Spanish and Dutch arts. The exhibition, called *Italian Art 1200–1900*, concentrated on the Italian Renaissance, again with a connection to Rome in mind.

During and after the exhibition **[14]**, a series of articles was published in Italy to attack those who were perceived as "decriers" of Italian art. This is tangible in an article by journalist Goffredo Bellonci (1862–1964), published in the *Giornale d'Italia*, which included the following excerpt:

> "[...] and these men [...] continue that war against Rome and Italy which has been going on for several decades now and which would like to take away from us a primacy recognized for many centuries [...]. So, come on, delete the chapters on Roman art and medieval Italian art from history and replace them with chapters on Hellenism, eastern Christian art, byzantinism, gothic, [...]. Little Armenia had a power of artistic creation that Rome did not have".[69]

In Bellonci's sarcastic tone, Armenia appears in the article as an example of an art that should not be praised or considered superior to Rome. Among those who came to be seen in a negative light and judged as an "orientalist" scholar was, for example, the art historian Pietro Toesca. Toesca, in fact, was openly critical of the "patriotic Italian criticism of the fascist period".[70] In 1927, he published the first consistent art historical contribution after Rivoira that dealt with Armenia, theorizing, using comparative examples of Romanesque edifices with the cathedral of Ani, that Armenian art had some influence on Romanesque art in Italy. Toesca, following a tradition that was partly developed in France in the late nineteenth century and which found new echoes in the works of Focillon and Baltrušaitis, argued that "some of the most essential and distinctive features of Romanesque architecture can be found in Armenian edifices".[71] He continued:

> "Now, of these similarities, some may well have been fortuitous, or may be explained in other ways than by

67 Among others: Tarquini 2016; *Eadem* 2017, pp. 139–150; Foro 2001, pp. 203–217; Scuccimarra 2005, pp. 539–554.

68 January 1st to March 20th, 1930; *Italian Art* 1930; Borghi 2011.

69 Bellonci 1930, p. 3; Bernabò 2003, pp. 97–99. Bernabò's publication is the most comprehensive and indispensable text on the subject.

70 Bernabò 2003, p. 119.

71 Toesca 1927, p. 480. For the French milieu, see above, pp. 134–140.

[14] Installation view of the Royal Academy's 'Exhibition of Italian Art 1200–1900' in 1930

direct relations: but the whole of them is so remarkable that it must be admitted that Armenian buildings had their own influence on Western architecture".[72]

While the influence of Strzygowski's thinking in Toesca's text is evident, he did not fully agree with an exclusive oriental origin of the Romanesque forms and attributed the lion's share to the developments of the art of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity in the formation of western medieval architecture.[73]

Surprisingly and despite his conflicting views with the regime, Toesca was called to collaborate on the *Enciclopedia Italiana* as director of the art historical section, following the resignation of nationalist art critic Ugo Ojetti in 1929 (1871–1946).[74] In the mid-1920s, Italy wanted to keep up with other neighboring countries in terms of encyclopedic production, the lack of which was considered a serious gap in Italian publishing. Thus, in 1929, the *Enciclopedia Italiana* was created **[15]** from the sodality between Senator Giovanni Treccani, Senator Giovanni Gentile – who became scientific director – and a plethora of intellectuals, both Italian and foreign. Ojetti, in a 1927 letter to Gentile, asked if he agreed to assign the entry on Armenian art to a certain Zurabian, who had already been chosen by Gustavo Giovannoni – director of the architectural section – to write the Armenian architecture entry.[75] However, Zurabian was ruled out because he was considered even more extreme than Strzygowski in advocating Armenia as a strong influence on the West.[76] During his time at the directorate

72 *Ibidem*, pp. 482–483.
73 Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 62–63.
74 On the topic see: *Ibidem*, pp. 63–64; Bernabò 2003, pp. 189–216; Piccolo 2021, pp. 174–180.
75 The letter is reported and commented in Bernabò 2003, p. 208.
76 *Ibidem*.

[15] Giovanni Gentile, Giovanni Treccani and Benito Mussolini consult the first volumes of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, ca. 1931

of the art history section, Ojetti allotted the Russian art section to a "Parisian group" guided by the Russian art historian Pavel Muratov.[77] In April 1928, Muratov, who had assigned to himself the Russian cities and monuments section, wrote to Ojetti asking him what should be done about the arts of the Caucasus and Armenia:

> "And what about the cities of Asian Russia and the historic-classic centers of the Caucasus? Do we have to write them or is someone else in charge of this? Will you write to me right away since points such as Ashgabat (Transcaspian), Haghpat, Akht'ala (Transcaucasia), and especially Ani have some importance – does the person who writes about Armenian art take care of this? What do you think?"[78]

In the end, a couple of entries about Armenia were published in 1929, with sections dedicated to art and architecture, such as "Ani" and

77 Piccolo 2021, p. 177.
78 From the letter of Muratov to Ojetti of April 22, 1928. Reported in Piccolo 2021, p. 177.

"Armeni". The former, compiled by the Roman archaeologist Carlo Cecchelli (1893–1960), was based predominantly on Strzygowski's bibliography and listed only some of the monuments of the city, with a superficial description.[79] According to Lala Comneno, this entry is illustrative of a "second-hand" approach characteristic of even the specialized literature of the time.[80]

The more consistent entry "Armeni", instead, had subsections dedicated to architecture and art; the compilers, mainly the architect Giorgio Rosi (1904–1974) and the art historian Géza de Francovich (1902–1996), worked on the encyclopedia during the change of management between Ojetti and Toesca and treated the subjects in great depth.[81] In fact, de Francovich would later end up dedicating a substantial part of his career to the study of Armenia.[82] Rosi recognized an "Armenian style" that he described alternatively in a positive – with adjectives such as consistent, static, convinced, and unequivocal – or dismissive light – it "could not absorb much nor give much".[83] The topic of influences emerged again; indeed, while expressing that Armenian architecture was stylistically chiefly related to Byzantine architecture, the authors stated that Armenia was at a crossroads. It was influenced from the East, South, and West: "the period of its prosperity, coinciding with the spread of Christianity, followed the artistic flourishing of Hellenistic Persia, Romanized Syria and was contemporaneous with that of Byzantium: three manifestations of the great architectural irradiation of Rome".[84] While this seems like an attempt to create again a direct link from Rome to Armenia – already theorized by Rivoira in 1914 –, such an idea is not particularly enforced here and reached new heights of expression with the *Historia Imperii Mediterranei* series, published during the war years. The sculpture and pictorial decorations, instead, were described unenthusiastically by de Francovich, particularly the latter, considered "of poor and stunted workmanship; they are pale provincial reflections of the refined pictorial art of Byzantium".[85] Overall, the entry was quite comprehensive, albeit with some inaccuracies which also show how studies on Georgian art were still immature in Italy at that time as, for example, the Kutaisi Cathedral was considered Armenian.[86] The art section of the encyclopedia constitutes an interesting example of collaboration between fascist and anti-fascist scholars wherein the fascist Romanocentric ideology was mostly put aside under Toesca's direction and, even though there was no shortage of internal friction, that produced a quasi-independent publication under the regime.[87] After the encyclopedic entries, however, it took several years to have a contribution on Armenian art in Italy.

79 Cecchelli 1929; Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 63–64; Spampinato 2023, pp. 145–148.
80 Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 63–64.
81 Spampinato 2023, pp. 145–148.
82 Rosi/De Francovich 1929. For de Francovich see Spampinato in this volume, pp. 192–197.
83 *Ibidem* pp. 439–440; Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 63–64; Spampinato 2023, p. 146.
84 Rosi/De Francovich 1929 pp. 439–440; Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 63–64.
85 Rosi/De Francovich 1929 pp. 440–443; Spampinato 2023, p. 146.
86 Rosi/De Francovich 1929 pp. 439–440; Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 63–64.
87 Bernabò 2003, pp. 189–216, sp. p. 189.

In 1937 the art historian Sergio Bettini (1905–1986) wrote a text on Byzantine art called "*L'architettura bizantina*", in which he dedicated roughly five pages to Armenian architecture.[88] While still based on second-hand information, his arguments were elaborated and also dealt with the topic of influence, as he hypothesized that "Byzantium itself did not remain immune from Armenian suggestions"[89] and that "[Armenian churches] adopt and develop with a decisiveness and consistency unsuspecting to Byzantium itself".[90] Despite the creative force attributed to Armenia, it was still relegated to a marginal topic composed of church names and approximate dates. However, its marginality was less than that of Georgian architecture, an offshoot whose churches were attributed again to the Armenian artistic sphere.

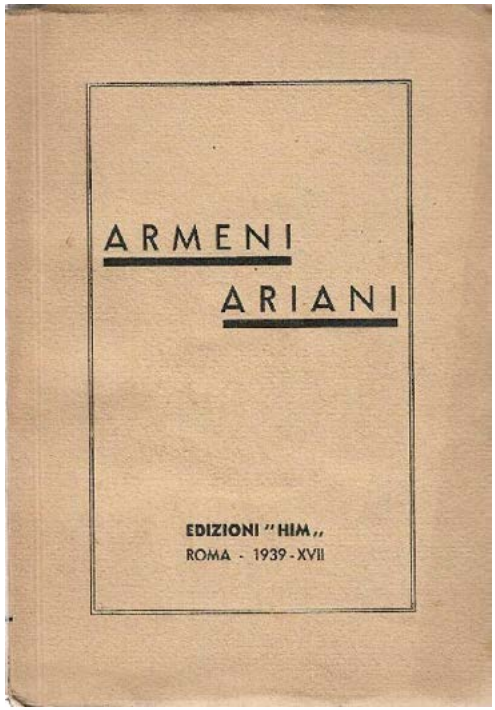
A couple of years later, after the outbreak of the Second World War, between 1939 and 1941, the series *Historia Imperii Mediterranei* (HIM) was published, with the aim of spreading knowledge about the populations of the Eastern Mediterranean and their historical relations with Italy, "to renew old bonds, to strengthen present ones, and to create new ones".[91] This publication was the result of a long-standing strategy of the Italian government – which ultimately aimed to recover the Anatolian region – to counteract the Soviet, English, and French interest in the Southern Caucasus through the promotion of a series of initiatives supporting Armenians.[92] It is not by chance that the HIM venture, partly financed by the *Comitato Armeno d'Italia*, was orchestrated (and directed) by Lauro Mainardi, a fascist official in charge of creating alliances with Caucasian minorities potentially interested in re-occupying their ancestral homelands.[93] While not strictly art-historical in their outlook, the HIM-publications included a few contributions on medieval Armenian architecture in the first two issues, published simultaneously in January 1939. Those were the booklet *Armeni Ariani* **[16]** – the Italian translation of the original German edition published by the *Deutsche-Armenische Gesellschaft* in 1934[94] – and the miscellaneous book *L'Armenia per la sua storia, la sua cultura, la sua posizione geografica, è il ponte naturale tra l'Occidente e l'Oriente*, the first of twelve dedicated issues titled *Armenia*.[95]

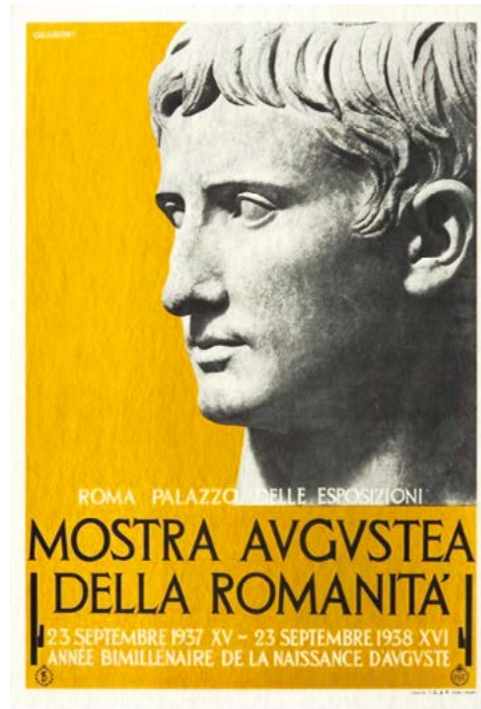
As was immediately evident, the first contribution aimed, more broadly, to establish that Armenians were undisputedly Aryans. That was fundamental also for the Armenian communities in Italy, especially after the enactment of racialized laws in the previous year. Interestingly, the booklet included the translation of the article on medieval Armenian architecture by Josef Strzygowski.[96] In the original version, following the intellectual axis outlined in his previous publications, the Austrian scholar confirmed the Aryan nature of

[16] *Armeni Ariani*, title frontispiece, 1939

[17] *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, lithography by Ludovico Quaroni (69,8 cm × 101 cm), 1938

88 Bettini 1937, pp. 32–27; Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 64–65.
89 Bettini 1937, p. 32.
90 *Ibidem*, p. 35.
91 The acronym refers to the *Comitato Armeno d'Italia* expressed in Armenian and the "History of the Mediterranean Empire" in Latin. Manoukian has thoroughly studied the topic: Manoukian 2014, pp. 75–90. More recently, see Riccioni 2018. Quote from Riccioni 2018, p. 121.
92 Manoukian 2014, pp. 74–75; Riccioni 2018, p. 119. For a precise overview of the topic, see Penati 2008. See also Ferri 2016.
93 Riccioni 2018, p. 119.
94 *Armeni Ariani* 1939.
95 *L'Armenia per la sua storia* 1939.
96 Strzygowski 1939.





Armenian architecture, reiterating its primary role in further developing Western styles.[97] In the Italian version, however, references to the Orientalist debate were censored, as the idea of a primacy of the East in the construction of Western – and Italian – visual culture contrasted with the narrative of the fascist regime, exemplified in the organization of the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* **[17]** and the *Mostra Giottesca* between 1937 and 1938. Both organizations were formed to defend the primacy of Rome and the Italian Renaissance.[98] The choice, however controversial, to publish this article in the editorial series seems justified by a shared conception of art as an expression of nation and race.[99] Therefore, if Armenians were Aryans, their architecture must have been necessarily Aryan as well.

Searching for a compromise between Strzygowskian theories and the fascist ideology – especially after the Pact of Steel between Italy and Germany in the same year –, the second book published in HIM included another article devoted to medieval Armenian architecture, written this time by a certain S. Djevahir.[100] The author may be the Armenian architect Sarkis Jevahirjian (1898–1981), who later published other contributions in *Bazmavēp* related to the topic in the Armenian language. Essentially, the article stated that Armenian architecture

97 See above, pp. 104–107.
98 Spampinato 2023, pp. 148–149. For the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità*, see Marcello 2011; For the *Mostra Giottesca*, see Monciatti 2008.
99 Gillette 2002, pp. 111–129.
100 Djevahir 1939a.

was indeed purely Aryan – following Strzygowski – but that it was dependent on Greco-Roman models. Giuseppe Frasson reached similar conclusions in an article first issued in *Bazmavēp* in the same year but promptly republished in HIM, since for the editors, it constituted a "relevant contribution to the knowledge of Armenian architecture".[101] By placing Armenian architecture in the broader discussion on the roots of Byzantine art and considering the dome as its peculiar architectural element, the author wondered if the latter could have come from Armenia.[102] After recognizing some peculiar characteristics of Armenian architecture, especially from the seventh century CE, when the "Armenian national character" finally emerged, Frasson retraced the model of the earliest type of Armenian dome (*Kuppelquadrat*) to Roman art.[103]

The same theoretical position is also present in the only two other contributions devoted to the topic published in HIM, both present in a booklet dedicated to Armenian art.[104] The first is the brief introduction by Teresio Rovere (1891–1964) **[18]**, where the author overviewed Armenian figurative arts, mainly repeating the same concepts expressed by Frasson.[105] Interestingly, the author exemplified the historical friendship between the Italian and Armenian people by incorrectly reporting that the bronze horses in St Mark's Basilica in Venice resulted from an exchange of gifts between Armenia and Rome and then between Rome and Venice.[106] The second is an article, written again by Djevahir, on the Gaṛni temple. According to the author, in showing the "pure ancient Roman style", the monument proved "how far the Armenians carried and spread Roman civilization". He concluded that "without the Armenians, this great civilization could not have penetrated so deeply into the Near East".[107] Therefore, while the idea of Armenia as a bridge between East and West advocated by Strzygowski remained, it reversed direction, following the contemporary nationalistic narrative present in other publications outside the field.[108]

The same train of thought found further expression in the work of Vincenzo Golzio (1896–1980), who, in his *Architettura bizantina e romanica*, reaffirmed the Roman origin of Armenian architecture. That is seemingly the last Italian contribution on the topic before the end of the Second World War.[109]

In conclusion, after Rivoira's work, during the fascist *Ventennio*, many Italian scholars were actively engaged in rejecting the theories of Strzygowski to defend Roman – and thus Italian – artistic primacy, which was fundamental to fascist nation-building strategies, as well as for supporting the imperialist ambitions of the regime. There were, however, a small number of intellectuals who refused to apply the fascist

101 Frasson 1939a; *Idem* 1939b. Quote from *Idem* 1939b, p. 4 (Premessa).

102 Riccioni 2018, p. 126–127. For a broader overview of the development of Byzantine studies in Italy, see, e.g., Bernabò 2003; Gasbarri 2015a; *Idem* 2015b.

103 Frasson 1939b, p. 15; Riccioni 2018, p. 127; see also Lala Comneno 1996, p. 66.

104 *L'arte armena* 1939. The booklet, however, focuses mainly on Armenian literature and music.

105 The contribution was taken from the *Storia Universale dell'Arte*. Rovere 1939.

106 *Ibidem*, p. 6; see also Riccioni 2018, p. 128.

107 Djevahir 1939b, p. 24.

108 See, e.g., Barduzzi 1940 and Mainardi 1941.

109 Golzio 1939; see also Lala Comneno 1996, pp. 66–67 and, recently, Spampinato 2023, pp. 149–150.

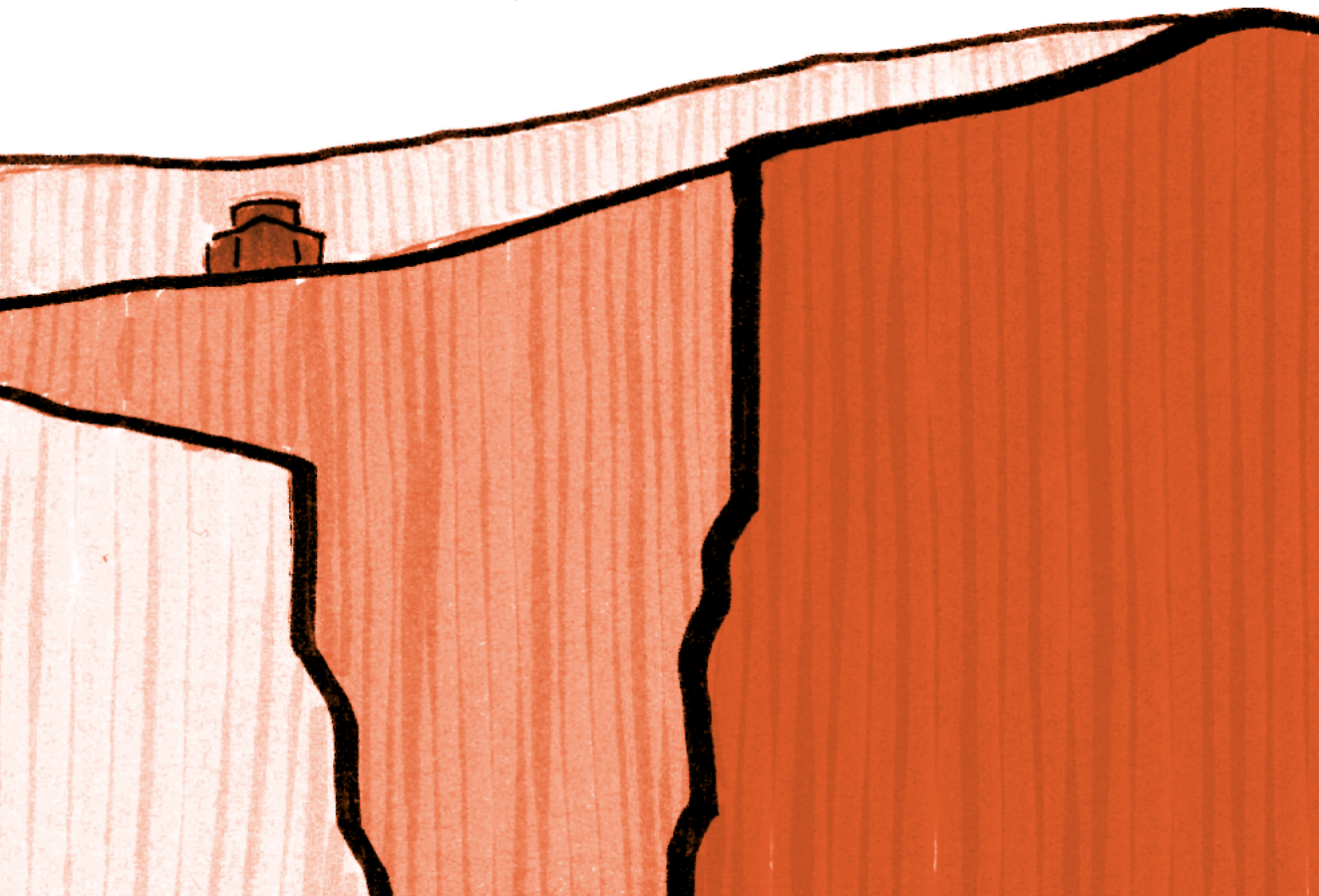
[18] *Teresio Rovere*, woodcut by Ercole Dogliani (31 cm × 23,5 cm), before 1929

Romanocentric ideology to art history in favor of "orientalist" views more akin to Strzygowski. Their work, not only actively criticized but also opposed, curiously still managed to find a place in the Italian *opera magna* of the time, mainly due to the authority of Toesca. Nevertheless, especially during the war years, Armenia and its artistic identity needed to be re-shaped according to nationalistic purposes, which denied Armenia's role as a mediator of forms from the East to the West. In addition, the shared idea of art as an expression of nation and race partially justified the absence of Italian scholars' interest in the period in medieval Georgian architecture. Indeed, as recalled by Christina Maranci, Georgian art, according to Strzygowski, mainly adopted Armenian forms and was not Aryan.[110] Therefore, it did not represent a "problem" for Italian intellectuals. Finally, it is fundamental to mention that Italian research in this period was deeply hindered by regime propaganda and censure, never resulting in thorough investigations of Armenian heritage, which would develop only from the 1960s in Italophone scholarship. Indeed, art and art history – which focused more on the Roman and the Renaissance periods – were mainly tools controlled by the regime to satisfy broader political aspirations.

110 Maranci 2001–2002, pp. 290–293.

CHAPTER V

COLD WAR, COMMUNISM, AND INDEPENDENCE (1945–1991)



The years between 1945 and 1991 were some of the most tumultuous – not only in terms of research, but more generally for global social and political functioning – of the twentieth century. This period, colloquially known as the "Cold War", divided the world into two seemingly bipolar megaliths. On one side was the Soviet bloc, which expanded during the second half of the 1940s to include countries of Central Europe, including Soviet-occupied Germany, the future East Germany, and China. Europe, liberated by the Allies and, of course, the United States of America, stood at the other end. In addition to the geographical situation, at least in theory, the two blocs promoted very different worldviews. In a caricatural and reductive way, on one side there was communism, which promised all proletarians (but not only) an egalitarian paradise. On the other side was capitalism, a meritocratic system, wherein the hardest working could enjoy the fruits of their labors and favors of the regime.

This caricature was, in reality, much more complex: one primary complication was that the division between the two blocs had not been achieved democratically. It was imposed at the end of the world conflict at the Yalta Conference in 1945 by Roosevelt and Stalin along with Churchill. In the Soviet sphere, there were thus, especially in Central Europe, sympathizers of the transatlantic bloc who were often violently repressed by the new regime. This included those who had enjoyed elevated social status during the interwar capitalist regime and who were dissatisfied with the seemingly egalitarian new world, which conspicuously discriminated against them. Also hostile to the regime, however, were people who blamed communism for its brutality, absence of democracy, or for the many privileges bestowed upon the new ruling class – the nomenclature (or *nomenklatura*). Conversely, many in the West saw communism as the future of humanity and as a less dangerous alternative to capitalism. These were, first and foremost, underclasses, headed by the workers who were threatened by unemployment and social injustice but also the intelligentsia who sympathized with the left, especially after the student movements of 1968. Finally, Italy, liberated by the Western Allies, had chosen the Western bloc in (more or less) democratic elections, with a minimal difference in votes. Yet, Italy had retained a strong Communist presence throughout the period and was decidedly favorable (at least until the Prague Spring) to the Soviet Union.

Complicating the situation were Russian, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Romanian, and Polish émigrés who fled (in several waves)

in the face of the Communist advance and were living in the "West". Western scholars likewise ventured for study, but often also for ideological reasons, into the USSR. Finally, there were, scattered almost everywhere in the "West" – with large communities in France and the United States – the Armenian diaspora. Vast communities had formed over the centuries, but most of the exiles had left their homeland after the genocide of 1915. This international community was open to Armenians who had fled the USSR. With the borders of the Soviet bloc effectively closed for those who wanted to withdraw, a secretive escape – with the risk of ending up killed by border guards – was often the only way to leave.

Studying the art of Armenia and Georgia – states belonging to the Soviet Union –, therefore, necessitated confronting burning political issues in the post-war era, as this chapter shows. Thus, the scholars' chosen methodology indicated their ideological orientation. A social history of art, unpacking the workshops' labors and those who executed the monuments, was viewed as a "leftist" Marxist orientation, while the study of the sumptuous art of the elites indicated a position aligned with the ideals of meritocratic capitalism. Art of the collective was thus pitted against the "best", or most meritorious, art. At the same time, Western institutions studying artifacts and monuments located in the USSR could be labeled with a pro-communist political orientation, a suspicion that at certain junctures of the Cold War, especially in the 1950s, became a real stigma. Obtaining a visa for the Soviet Union was very difficult for those who openly opposed the communist regime, yet openly supporting it from outside was an extremely difficult social and political position.

Within the Eastern bloc, however, censorship was unquestionably much stronger than in the capitalist bloc (perhaps because the regime took the sciences – not just the humanities – more seriously and feared them). The great purges of the 1930s had passed, but those of the 1950s, especially in Central Europe, were dramatic and cost many art historians their jobs, freedom, or even, in some dramatic cases, their lives. In this context, researchers aligned themselves – through pragmatism or fear – much more clearly with Marxist theory (and rhetoric). Fear of enforced censorship pushed scholars to choose a method that exposed them as little as possible to the eye of the regime. Willingly or unwillingly, many entered a kind of inner exile – a self-censorship.

The following pages thus show a polyphony that was not always symphonic: while studying the same monuments scholars belonging to

different cultural horizons took up a common position for ideological reasons, and conversely people originating from the same linguistic milieu could belong to very different fronts.

The bipolar world of the "Cold War" made the exchange of ideas and methods between the two blocs very difficult. It is evident in some cases that those who lived in the "West" did not know the texts published in the "East" and vice versa due to this divide. A relatively homogeneous narrative emerged in the Soviet bloc – which, as in the first half of the twentieth century, often followed the politics of nationalities in the country as well as Marxist dogmas – while the voices published in Europe and the United States are more diverse.

Contributing to this diversity was a great population of mobile scholars. Outstanding figures (incidentally often Russian or Armenian émigrés) were active on both sides of the Atlantic, published only in very cosmopolitan situations and where language permitted. However, this applied not only to migrant communities: for example, the young Hans Belting, whom we will briefly discuss below, trained in West Germany, and, in a second moment, at Dumbarton Oaks, the research institute affiliated with Harvard University in the United States. He was thus inundated from the outset with the knowledge and diverse experiences of exiles from all over pre-war Europe and American scholars. He then approached the Caucasus through a 1967 trip beyond the curtain. He published the results of his research in 1979, in French, in *Cahiers archéologiques*, a periodical formed at the end of the Second World War by Russian émigré André Grabar. Conversely, the most important international texts on Georgian art – in East Germany and Italy – were written by Giorgi Chubinashvili. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this eminent scholar trained in Germany and Saint Petersburg before the revolution and lived his entire life in the USSR. Nevertheless, it was he who largely formed the "Western" gaze on Georgian medieval art and architecture.

Finally, the scholarly position toward and preference for some of the nations formed in the Caucasus must be mentioned. This overview demonstrates that in the second half of the twentieth century, in "Western" capitalistic scholarship, it was Armenian studies that dominated over Georgian studies. This situation can be explained in three ways. First, the economic strength of the larger Armenian diaspora pushed such studies forward. Second, economic institutions, such as the Manoukian and Gulbekian foundations, or scientific ones, such as National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), started to systematically promote Armenian studies. Finally, the legacy of previous years gave Armenian studies greater (memorializing)

weight. The Armenian genocide was both physical and cultural. It remained a key subject not only for the Armenian diaspora, especially after the Jewish genocide during the Second World War, but for many interested activist parties. Moreover, although marginalized for his racist views, Strzygowski had made Armenian art a subject of global importance. Thanks to his publications, Armenian art had been framed within an artistic lineage that was more aligned with the canons of European and North American art history than Georgian art, which remained on the margins since it was not afforded the same "relevance" to the dominant powers during these tense years. The story of scholars' decisions about how to tell Armenian and Georgian art history is a narrative that reveals the imbalanced networks of power distributed throughout the Cold War world.

RUSSOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *IVAN FOLETTI*

After the end of the Second World War and especially following Stalin's death in 1953, the USSR underwent major political and social transformations.[1] After Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) came to power, the process of de-Stalinization was launched in the country, at the same time some of the reforms implemented during the war years were reconsidered. Thus, for example, the freedoms acquired by the Orthodox religion were scaled back.[2] At the same time, since Stalin's death, the idea of limiting the Russification policy found support within the party. The process was not as radical as Lavrentij Beria (1899–1953) would have liked it to be – in the few months he was in power Beria proposed laws in favor of the de-Russification of the country –, but after the war years, the national policy became decidedly less centered on Russification.[3]

Sedrak Barkhudaryan's (1898–1970) studies are emblematic of this context. A gifted scholar, Barkhudaryan was arrested in 1938 and exonerated in 1954 **[1]**. After 17 years in the camps, he can only be described as a victim of the Stalinist regime, freed almost by chance through the trial launched by Beria and continued by Khrushchev. Shortly after his release he spoke at a conference, reflecting on one of his main themes, the Armenian *khach'k'ar*:

> "Khach'k'ar occupy a significant place among the monuments of medieval Armenia. The earliest prototypes of them are the menhirs, which received their perfect design in the Urartu era and continued to be erected

1 Plokhy 2017, pp. 449–471.
2 Pospielovsky 1987.
3 Plokhy 2017, pp. 451–453.

[1] Portrait of Sedrak Barkhudaryan

until the nineteenth century. These khach'k'ar steles were erected with very different goals: as monuments of victories, as boundary stones, as architectural patterns, etc. On the basis of rich illustrative material, the speaker shows the development of khach'k'ar from ancient times. A large number of dated khach'k'ar bear the names of authors-artists and therefore are important for the study and dating of architectural ornamentation and architectural structures, as well as for identifying schools of carving artists".[4]

These are very interesting words, linking the whole tradition specifically to the Armenian culture, with ancient origins. What the author

4 Martirosyan 1957, p. 124.

omitted here is the central element of each of these stelae: namely, the cross that dominates it. It is hard to imagine that this is an accident: Barkhudaryan was intimately familiar with the repression of the regime and was also aware of how problematic religion was in Soviet Marxist doctrine. He therefore neglected to mention an essential element. In all likelihood out of fear of the regime, the scholar self-censored and thus "falsified" the data in this way.[5] Certainly this was not the first or only instance of such self-censorship. The years of Stalinist terror and state anticlericalism had a heavy impact on studies of Armenian (religious) art and many other subjects.

The late 1950s and the 1970s witnessed a growing impact of Marxist ideology on the questions formulated and published by scholars. For the aforementioned ideological reasons, religious art experienced a muted moment. What was promoted was research on other aspects of pre-modern life. As an example, we can mention studies on the Armenian city, where increasing attention was paid to streets, latrines, and the dwellings of ordinary people **[2]**.[6] In short, an art history developed in Russophone scholarship that focused on social actors outside of the historically dominant elite, which became typical for the Marxist intelligentsia.

The years between Khrushchev and Brezhnev were also characterized by an important interest in the formal datum of the artwork.[7] Such an approach was not exclusive to the study of Armenian and Georgian art or even to that of the USSR and corresponded to the scholarly trends of the early twentieth century, a fundamental moment in the study of the country's art history.[8] Isolated almost hermetically from the "Western" world, Soviet scholarship was not always abreast of the latest trends and therefore tended to be conservative. However, it is likely that the USSR's authority was not the only reason why the formalist approach dominated. It was also a method that was difficult to expose to possible political and cultural problems because, unlike iconography and iconology, the study of "artistic evolution" was less subject to changes in mood within the party. However, one gets the impression that Khrushchev and Brezhnev correspond to a moment of great stagnation in artistic history. Direct evidence of this fact are the entries "Armenian Art" and "Georgian Art" in the third edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. If, in fact, between the first and second editions we witnessed a real change of direction, this does not happen at all with the third edition.[9] This one remains in perfect harmony with the second edition but considerably increases the amount of data presented.

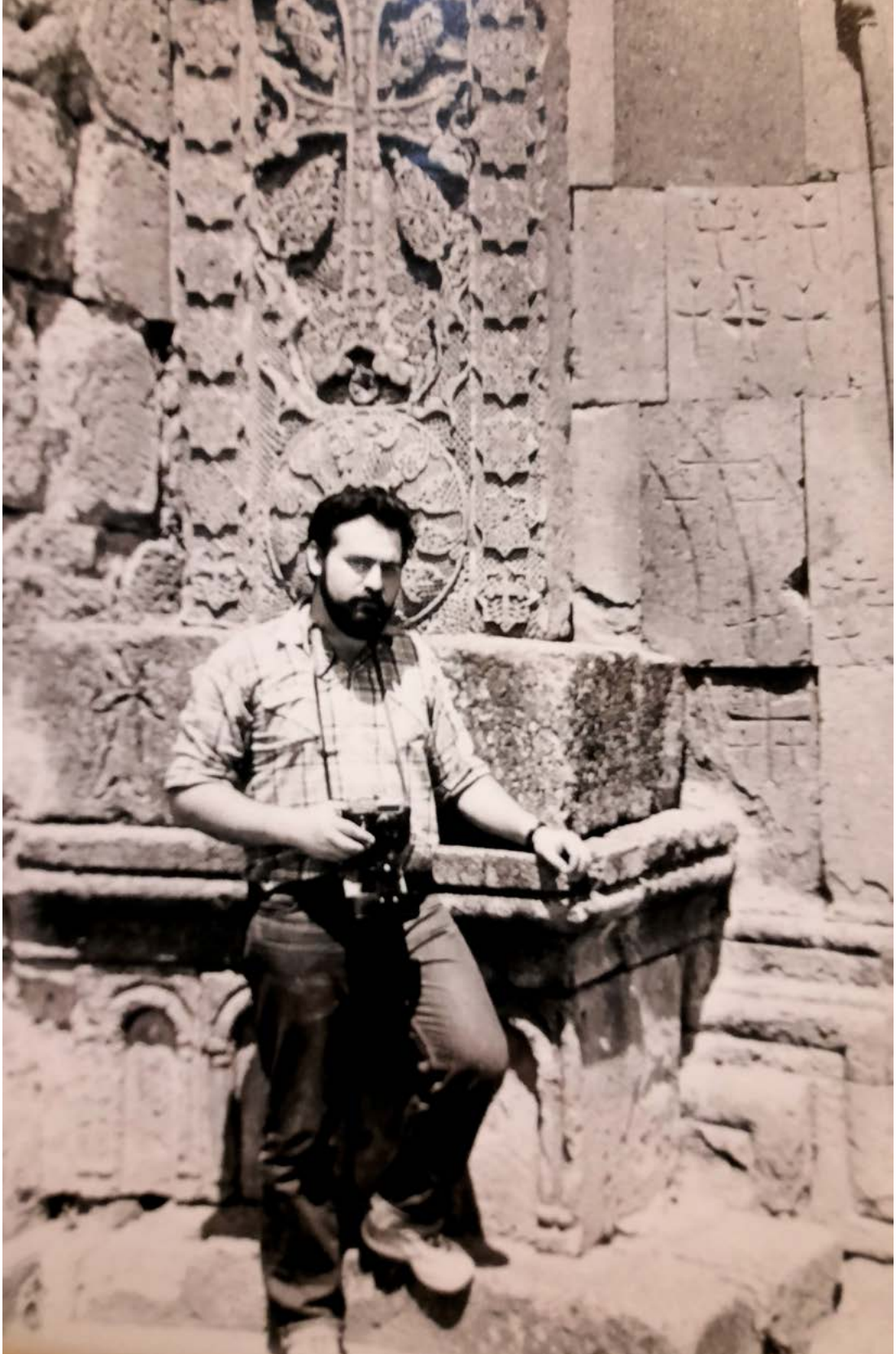
5 Grigoryan 2005, p. 193.
6 Halpahchan1971.
7 See, e.g., Tokarskij 1961; Amiranashvili 1968.
8 Filipová 2018.
9 Drampjan 1970; Beridze/Virsaladze 1972.

[2] Oganes Halpahchan, *Graždanskoe zodchestvo Armenii. Žilye i obchchestvennye zdanya*, Moscow 1971

To experience an essential change in the tone one must skip to the very last years of the USSR's existence, which corresponded to the years of major cultural and political reforms linked to Mikhail Gorbachev and the keywords *perestroika* (reconstruction) and *glasnost* (transparency). Gorbachev reacted to a profound crisis in the Soviet world, which was also shaken, with increasing insistence, by nationalist tensions, with an attempt at liberalization – the Caucasus was a particularly agitated region in this regard.[10] In this frame, it is particularly revealing to read the words of Alexej Lidov who, in his doctoral thesis, published in 1991, on the Akht'ala church, writes **[3]**: "At different times the region was part of the Kingdom of Georgia but it remained a stronghold of Armenian culture".[11]

The building thus belongs, in the words of the Moscow scholar, to both cultures, a fact, in his view, also proven by the formal aspects of the building:

10 Carrère d'Encausse 1978; Plokhy 2017, pp. 481–507.
11 Lidov 1991, p. 332.



[3] Alexej Lidov in Armenia, 1987

> "In accordance with Georgian tradition, the façades of the church are decorated with large ornamental crosses with elongated windows at their base. There are also typically Armenian elements in the decor of the portals and individual motifs of the ornament. The combination of these two traditions is the most important characteristic of the architectural treatment of the Akht'ala church".[12]

In the remainder of his text, the Russian scholar presented the cultural, political, and social union between Armenians and Georgians in the thirteenth century as a particularly important moment in their mutual development. In his view, it was this transnational alliance that helped to make the Tamara kingdom strong and resistant to the Mongol invasion.

Interestingly, Lidov was not alone in rethinking the art of the region in a context that today we would call "transcultural". This was what Tiran Marut'yan (1911–2007) also proposed for the churches of the seventh century, the golden age of Armenian architecture **[4]**.[13] According to the words of this scholar, in fact, the flagship monuments of the two cultures – the martyr church of Hṛipsimē, and that of Jvari, belong to the same cultural phenomenon. In Marut'yan's view, it was Armenia that was the "place of origin" for this trend. Nevertheless, his thesis is strongly opposed to that of the national schools elaborated in the 1940s and 1950s by scholars such as Giorgi Chubinashvili.[14]

Are we again facing a reversal in trends? The situation in the 1980s is particularly difficult to summarize given that, because of Gorbachev's reforms weakening of censorship, the chorus of scholarship became much more polyphonic. Increasingly nationalist texts were opposed to examples that sought to promote a multicultural outlook, an opposition that mirrors the ideological stance of the authors.[15] The former were more or less ardent supporters of the dissolution of the USSR into nation-states, while the latter favored continuing the multicultural experience of the Soviet empire. The latter position was also supported, though with diminishing resolution, by the official organs of the party.

In summary, we can therefore say that after the Second World War, in the period of great stability in the USSR, the art of Armenia and Georgia was studied with an increasingly national and thus inevitably self-referential perspective. The Soviet method was a formalist one, focused on questions of social history and nourished by Marxist

12 *Ibidem*, p. 333.
13 Marut'yan 1989.
14 Chubinashvili 1948; Plontke-Lüning 2012.
15 Drampjan 1970; Beridze/Virsaladze 1972.

[4] Tiran Marut'yan, (1911–2007)

reflection. In the 1980s, in the face of the country's severe crisis, and as a reaction to increasing pressure from Soviet nations as far as the South Caucasus was concerned, a more "cross-cultural" perspective appeared on the scene again. This time, however, it is a reaction to tensions within the Soviet world, tensions that would lead shortly thereafter to its collapse, rather than a decision from above, dictated by a strong party or emperor. From the ashes of the empire came the nation-states whose historiography would have a very clear orientation. But that is another story.

This chapter deals with the years after the war, considering the transformations of the 1960s and 1970s and up through to the 1990s. Covering this complex swath of time in a single chapter is necessarily fragmentary since this moment also saw the previously unprecedented internationalization and acceleration of research. The globalization of art history studies through émigrés has been discussed in previous chapters, but this period is marked even more by these dynamics. France had a special relationship with Armenia since the genocide. Paris, in particular, was and still is home to one of the most active and complex diasporic communities, which had a considerable cultural impact beyond the scope of this study.[16] Importantly, in France relations with the Soviet world were not as cool as in the United States, and a friendlier atmosphere was fostered particularly from 1955–1956 with de-Stalinization and then the Détente.[17] Within these relationships, emigrant researchers sometimes acted as a bridge between worlds.

It should also be said that many of the crucial players in Southern Caucasus studies were the same as in the previous period. The emigrants Sirarpie Der Nersessian, between Harvard and Princeton, and André Grabar in Paris, continued Byzantine studies with frequent forays into the Caucasus. Grabar especially was profoundly influential, as a researcher and teacher, on a younger generation of scholars.

Armen Khatchatrian (1909–1967), an architect by training, began publishing on Armenian architecture in the late 1940s, and in 1965 defended his doctoral thesis, supervised by Grabar, on Late Antique Armenian architecture from the fourth to the sixth centuries. His 1962 study of Early Christian baptisteries was in direct continuity with Grabar's *Martyrium*, while his posthumously published study of Armenian architecture endeavored to demonstrate a common early Christian root and highlighted some local specificities.[18] These two works, which would certainly have been continued by the author had he not died prematurely, stand out for their technical precision linked to their author's professional architectural training. They were, nevertheless, perfectly in line with the history of architecture proposed by Grabar and explored in the same years by figures such as Richard Krautheimer.

In the 1950s, Khatchatrian returned to a subject connected with earlier twentieth-century research: that of the relationship between buildings such as the oratory of Theodulf at Germigny-des-Près and

16 See the excellent synthesis by Ter Minassian 1995.
17 Rey 1992, sp. pp. 177–202.
18 Khatchatrian 1962; *Idem* 1971.

selected Armenian architectural edifices.[19] As early as 1904, Strzygowski had posited a connection between the oratory at Germigny and the seventh-century church of Bagaran. Khatchatrian was more moderated in his approach and took into account Germigny's problematic nineteenth-century restorations, and so he instead suggested a more remote link with the fifth-century cathedral of Etchmiadzin, but also with Visigothic architecture on the Iberian Peninsula, such as at San Pedro de la Nave; such filiation would be explained by Theodulf's Iberian origins. More than in Strzygowski's pursuits of genetic-like filiation, the transmission of architectural forms in different parts of the Mediterranean (and hence "Byzantine") world is at the heart of Khatchatrian's concerns, without centralizing the Caucasus in this endeavor. The question reopened by Khatchatrian in the 1950s of the "oriental" origins of architectural forms and their mediation, remains topical – albeit unresolved and likely unresolvable – even in the most recent studies.[20] Another of Grabar's pupils who dedicated part of her career to the arts of the Caucasus is Tania Velmans, a Bulgarian émigré who began collaborating with Grabar in the 1960s on the subject of murals from the Byzantine world and its margins, specializing on the one hand in Balkan murals, but also, later, in Georgian paintings, most notably with studies on those from the Church of the Savior in Ts'alenjikha, Georgia.[21] Like the German art historian Hans Belting a few years earlier, Velmans approached these materials from the perspective of a Byzantinist, for whom Georgia was an important artistic province of the empire – but a province nonetheless.[22]

For Khatchatrian, Armenia was part of the great family of the Late Antique and "Byzantine" Mediterranean, while for Velmans Armenian monuments and art were local visual dialects of the "Byzantine" language spoken across Eastern Europe, up to Georgia. These two pupils of an influential Byzantinist show how, in both cases, the arts of the Southern Caucasus thus continued to be considered and studied – to a greater extent for Georgia than for Armenia – as part of what the Russian émigré Dimitri Obolensky (1918–2001) defined in the 1970s as the "Byzantine Commonwealth".[23]

More complex is the situation of Sirarpie Der Nersessian who, as we have seen, straddles two countries and two major linguistic divides. In 1960, while still teaching in the US, she was part of an attempt at uniting the two blocs, attending the 25th Congress of Orientalists in Moscow. She took this as an opportunity to see the monuments of Armenia and Georgia that she had never seen in person. Invited by

19 *Idem* 1954.
20 On the issue, see Caillet 2016, sp. pp. 73–74.
21 See, e.g., Velmans 1988a; *Eadem* 1988b.
22 Belting 1979.
23 Obolensky 1971, e.g., p. 348: "Byzantine art, which freely crossed all political frontiers, remained the basic international idiom [...] until the end of the Middle Ages. In many of these areas its influence survived well beyond that time [...] The difference between their products [of different workshops throughout the Commonwealth] were less marked than, for instance, those between the various schools of Italian painting in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They were certainly far less significant than their common affiliation to the artistic tradition of Byzantium which, in the words of a distinguished modern scholar, formed in Eastern Europe 'local dialects rather than separate languages'.

the Armenian Academy of Sciences, it was during the same trip that she spent a month at the Matenadaran Institute for Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, realizing the still urgent need for an exhaustive catalog raisonné. Then, in 1968, already moved back to Paris and after her retirement, she returned to Yerevan for one of the many Franco-Soviet Colloquia organized throughout the late 1960s, where she gave a lecture entitled "Byzantium and Armenia: problems and current state of research" – sketching a state of the art dedicated to colleagues still isolated by political circumstances.[24] In addition to her countless publications in English, French, Russian and Armenian, both for a wider public and for experts, not to mention her catalogs that are still invaluable today, Der Nersessian formed, until her death on the eve of the fall of the Berlin Wall, a living link between émigré Armenia, Soviet Armenia, and international research in Europe and the United States.[25] Her synthetic work *L'art arménien. Orient-Occident* (1977) – probably the first such comprehensive synthesis published in French – can be seen as a response to the controversies between East and West that we have encountered in the pages of this book.[26] In the midst of the Cold War, Der Nersessian studied historical Armenia as a crossroads, between the Eastern and Mediterranean worlds, but nonetheless closer to the latter in terms of culture and religion.

It should also be recalled that 1964 saw the revival of the *Revue des études arméniennes*, whose first series had ceased in 1933. Once again, the impetus came not from art historians, but from philologists: arguably Meillet's most famous pupil, the Indo-Europeanist Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) proposed its revival – thanks to the financial support of the Calouste Gulbenkian (1869–1955) foundation created in 1956. The first director was another of Meillet's students, Émile Benveniste (1902–1976), while the list of early contributors included such figures as Grabar, Paul Lemerle (1903–1989), the secretary and scholar Haïg Berbérian (1887–1978), and the ubiquitous Sirarpie Der Nersessian. From its rebirth, the *Revue* once again became a fundamental medium for the study of Armenian culture in the broadest sense, often including articles on the wider Caucasus and serving as a platform between the Soviet world and national perspectives, Armenian diaspora studies, and French and Western researchers. Among the journal's frequent contributors, key figures emerge as fundamental to French-speaking studies of the Caucasus, bridging the gap between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the discipline as it stands today including Jean-Michel (1916–2011) and Nicole Thierry (*1925) and Patrick Donabédian (*1953).[27]

24 See Garsoïan 2000, p. 294.

25 For Der Nersessian's rich bibliography, see Der Nersessian 1973, vol. II, pp. 167–170 and *Revue des études arméniennes*, XXI (1988–1989), pp. 8–11.

26 Der Nersessian 1977.

27 Another figure I do not have the space to go into here is undoubtedly Jean-Pierre Mahé (1944), a specialist mainly in texts, trained at the Sorbonne and then at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in the 1970s. Through an interest in ancient texts and the origins of "Eastern" Christianity, Mahé turned to the languages of Eastern Christians, notably Coptic, later becoming an expert in Armenian, Georgian, and Caucasian Albanian, becoming a recognized expert on Armenian and Georgian culture in French-speaking circles.

The Thierry couple **[5]** were both medical doctors who practiced for many years in Étampes, south of Paris. Initially enlightened amateurs, beginning in the 1940s but increasingly in the 1950s, they embarked on what they called their "*voyage archéologique*". In this frame, they undertook a series of trips together to Cappadocia, Eastern Anatolia, and as far afield as Central Asia. In this frame, they crossed the border between Eastern Turkey and Soviet Armenia for the first time in the early 1960s. This happened thanks to the protection of the recently-elected Armenian Catholicos Vazgen I (1908–1994) – a person broadly interested in the restoration of Armenian monuments and memory. The Thierrys went as far as the eastern tip of the Southern Caucasus, into Artsakh, Azerbaijan, and as far as Baku and even Uzbekistan, developing an unrivaled knowledge of the monuments. Jean-Michel Thierry specialized and published extensively on architecture, while Nicole Thierry specialized particularly on the Cappadocian materials, with a focus on parietal painting but also monumental sculpture.

[5] Nicole and Jean-Michel Thierry, ca. 1970s

What we have here, then, is an exceptional case of self-taught scholars who cultivated their passion to the point of becoming recognized specialists in the region, accumulating a considerable body of documentation, drawings, and photographs over a very specific moment, ranging from the late 1950s into the 1990s.[28] In this period, they taught at the École Pratique des Hautes Études and at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), and the results of their research journeys were widely published and made accessible, mainly in the *Cahiers archéologiques,* the *Revue des études arméniennes* and several monographs, quickly drawing the attention of specialists – from Byzantinists to scholars of Cappadocia, Anatolia, Armenia, and Georgia, and beyond.[29] Studies on architectural monuments in Armenia and Georgia entered into a particularly fertile dialogue with contemporary studies by Italian-speaking researchers such as Adriano Alpago Novello and Paolo Cuneo.[30]

Addressing the long-standing question of "Byzantine influence", Jean-Michel Thierry repeatedly upholds the originality of Armenian art in its own right, asserting as early as the 1970s that:

> "if we exclude the Greek influence on Armenian miniature art, which is indisputable and almost constant, the role of Byzantium seems very small. Even at times when Constantinople's political weight over Armenia seemed likely to bring with it a cultural corollary, its influence was only occasional".[31]

28 On Jean-Michel Thierry, see Donabédian 2011. Currently, an important project at the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA) lead by Sipana Tchakérian and Jerôme Delatour is working on the valorization of photographic and textual archives of Jean-Michel and Nicole Thierry, donated to the INHA in 2017. I would like to thank Sipana Tchakérian for taking the time to discuss the topic with me and for providing me with additional information on the subject.

29 The full bibliography of the Thierry is too vast to be synthetized, I would like to point out just a few important titles, on the monuments of the Vaspurakan, published from the 1960s to the late 1970s in several long articles in the *Revue des études arméniennes*; on Mren Cathedral, Thierry 1971; on the Church of the Holy Apostles in Kars, *Idem* 1978; on the Horomos monastery, *Idem* 1980.

30 See below, 192–197.

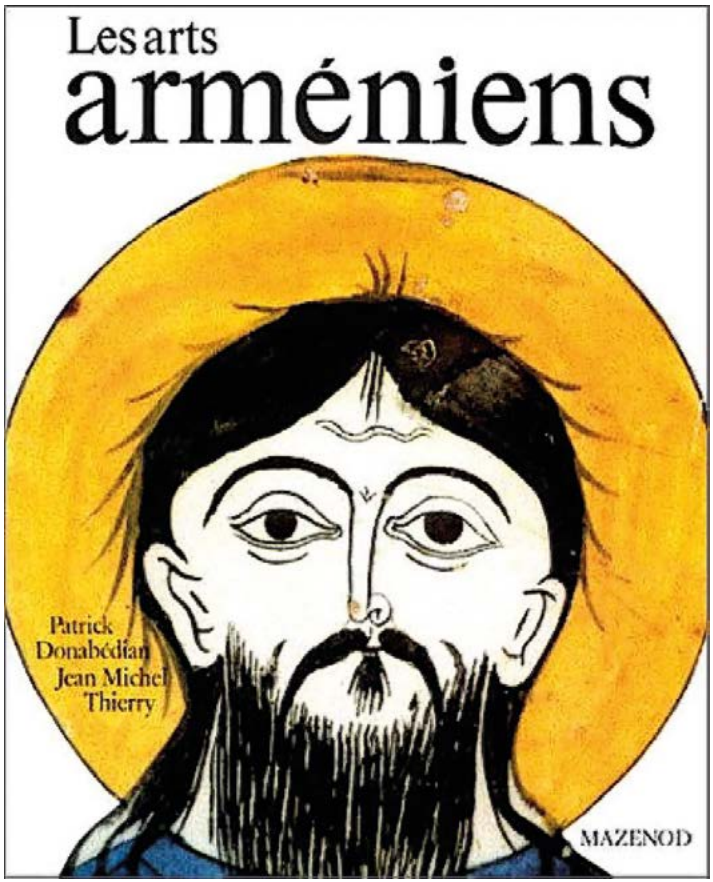
31 Thierry 1996, which synthesizes the position presented in *Idem* 1982.

It was also Jean-Michel Thierry, and later Patrick Donabédian, who developed, on the basis of almost a century of studies on the Caucasus, the notion of the "golden age" of Armenian architecture, i.e., art up to the seventh century in Armenia, both Early Christian and pre-Arab.[32] Such conclusions on the profound originality of Armenian art, especially but not only Late Antique, helped to secure the place of Armenian studies separately from Byzantine studies.

For subsequent studies, and especially in the western regions of historic Armenia (i.e., Eastern Anatolia), the value of the documents collected by Mr. and Mrs. Thierry is inestimable, not least because of the subsequent destruction of monuments and their extremely rapid deterioration – a fact the Thierrys constantly mention in their studies.[33] This was the case, for example, for a number of monuments in the Vaspurakan region, i.e., the Lake Van basin, where monuments such as the ruins of the monastery of Saint James of Kaputkol, which

32 Donabédian 2008.

33 This is also why the project currently led at the INHA on their archival fund is of utmost importance for the study of monuments from Cappadocia to Eastern Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, and up until Iran.



[6] Jean-Michel Thierry, Gerasim Hovakimyan, and Patrick Donabédian sharing a lunch in front of the Marmashen Monastery, ca. 1979–1980

[7] Cover of Jean-Michel Thierry, Patrick Donabédian, *Les arts arméniens*, 1987

housed important frescoes, were destroyed shortly after the Thierrys' visit by the Turkish authorities.[34] Obviously, given the essentially private nature of the trips undertaken by the Thierry family and the tense political situation between Eastern Turkey and Soviet Armenia, there was no possibility of organizing excavations or to promote more concrete actions to protect these monuments. Nevertheless, next to Thomas A. Sinclair's monumental survey published between 1987 and 1990, the travels and studies of the Thierrys quickly became a broad and open gateway for all scholars working on Armenia and the Southern Caucasus materials more broadly – a gateway which still requires further exploration today.[35]

The other figure who profoundly transformed Armenian studies in the last decades before the fall of the Berlin Wall and who still tirelessly contributes today is Patrick Donabédian. Born in Tunis in 1953 to an Armenian émigré family, Donabédian received formation at the University of Provence Aix-Marseille in the 1970s, before going on to study Armenian art history and architecture at the University of Yerevan (1975–1980), then studying in Soviet Armenia, before obtaining two doctorates, one in Saint Petersburg (1981) and the other in Paris (1986). In the 1970s, Donabédian traveled with the Thierrys **[6]**, developing a deep knowledge of monuments that was evident already in his early work and further nurtured by traditions of Armenian, Russian, Soviet, and Western erudition on the region. In 1987, together with Jean-Michel Thierry, he published a work of prime importance for Armenian art-historical studies in France. Soberly titled *Les arts arméniens*, this lavishly illustrated work, which focused more on architectural monuments but also "minor" arts than Der Nersessian's earlier syntheses, served as a solid foundation for studies of the Caucasus until the fall of the Wall and paved the way for more recent studies **[7]**.[36]

To conclude this brief overview, I cannot help but to mention a book co-published by Donabédian and Claude Mutafian entitled *Karabagh: une terre arménienne en Azerbaijan*. Published in 1989, this little book appeared at the heart of the conflicts over Artsakh that, from the spring of 1987, led to the 1988 revolution and, in the context of the disintegration of the USSR, to Armenian independence in 1991 and the first post-Soviet conflict in the Caucasus.[37] It would be difficult to close this meditation on Francophone scholarship without mentioning the constant problems entailed by studying historic monuments that lie on either side of modern borders, and which sometimes serve as a veritable battleground for ideological and real confrontation – a question that is far from being resolved in today's geopolitical context.[38]

34 Thierry 1968, sp. pp. 68–76.
35 For Thomas Sinclair, on whom I do not have the space to enter here but which likewise remains an essential account of the broader region's monuments (Roman/Byzantine, Seljuk, Ottoman, Syriac, Georgian, and Armenian sites), see Sinclair 1987–1990.
36 Thierry/Donabédian 1987.
37 Donabédian/Mutafian 1989.
38 On Artsakh and the politic of cultural, physical, and ideological destruction of Armenian heritage in a historical and contemporary perspective, see the essays in Denécé/Yégavian 2022.

After the Second World War, many of the institutions and figures that were crucial for the development of the discipline remained so, as mentioned in the previous section on the Francophone world. This is the case (again) for Sirarpie Der Nersessian, who taught and researched in the United States up until the 1960s, but also for the Dumbarton Oaks Institute – which remained a constant beacon for Byzantine studies and where almost all significant Byzantinists in these years converged at some point or the other. Yet, with the emergence of the Cold War, Byzantine and Oriental studies shifted in the United States: studying historical territories located behind the Iron Curtain became part of a broader power struggle between the Eastern and Western blocks. This brought about not only new attitudes toward "Orientalism", but also institutional renewal which sometimes benefitted studies on the Caucasus.[39] Such a situation occurred during the late 1950s and the 1960s, when Byzantine studies reemerged in the USSR, as they had been previously largely suppressed by the regime. This led to renewed fervor of American – partly émigré – scholarship as a Cold War counterpart.[40] While these strategic imperatives offer very few insights into how the individual disciplines of Middle Eastern studies would develop, this environment nevertheless was instrumental to understanding how large research institutions and universities developed their interests in this direction.

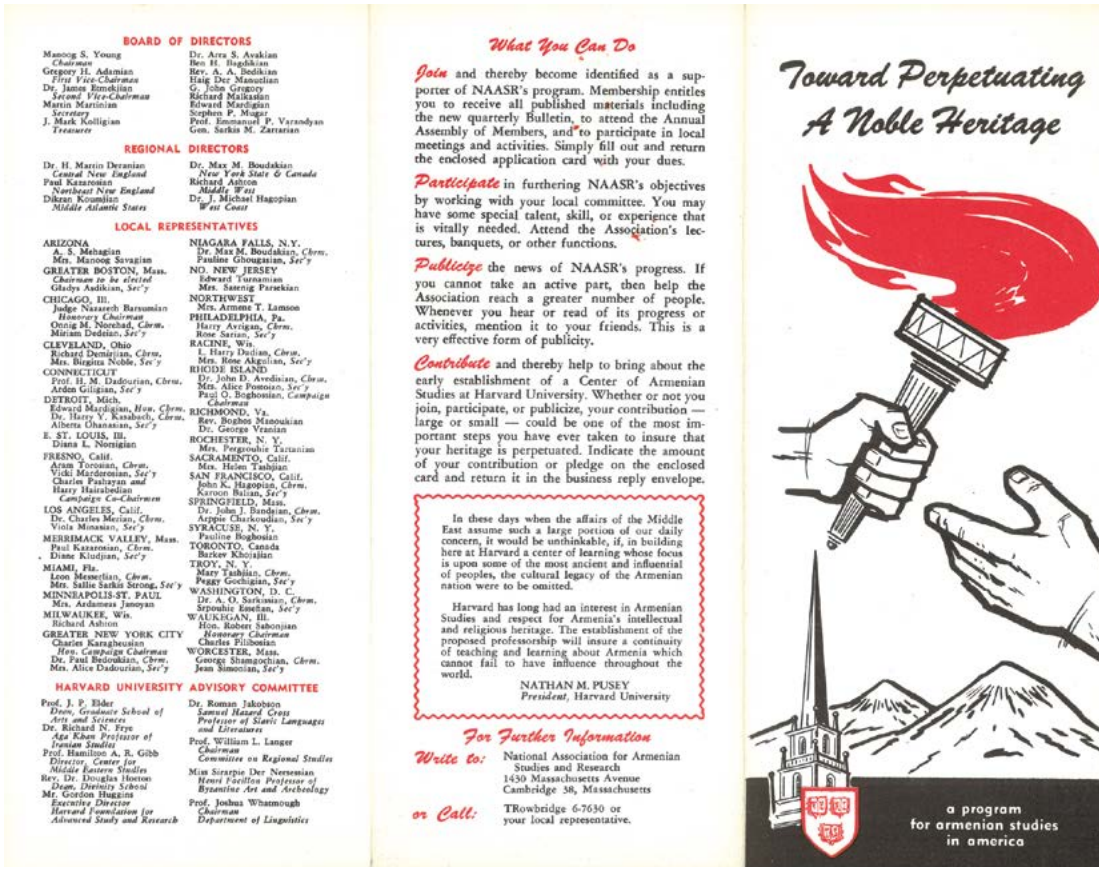
A palpable result of this newfound political interest in historical scholarship on the Middle East, coupled with the interests of the Armenian diaspora, was certainly the foundation, in 1955, of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) in Boston. The primary goal of the association was to work for the establishment of an endowed professorship or chair for Armenian studies at a leading university **[8]**. Harvard University was chosen as the seat for the chair due to the earlier presence of one of the American founders of the discipline, Pierpont Blake, and the presence there of his student Richard N. Frye (1920–2014) who advocated for a Center for Armenian studies.[41] To foster the creation of this chair and fundraising for its expensive foundation, the NAASR began organizing lectures and symposia focused on the field, such as "Armenian Studies and Research: Problems and Needs" in 1955 and "Searchlight on Armenian Studies: Conference on Problems and Areas of Research" in 1956. By May 1959, thanks to final support from the Gulbenkian Foundation, the goal of raising $300,000 for the chair was attained and by 1969 literary scholar Robert W. Thomson (1934–2018) was

[8] National Association for Armenian Studies and Research promotional brochure from 1958

39 On the question of the new Orientalism, see broadly Klein 2003.

40 Important insights in this regard in Meyendorff/Ševčenko/Alexander 1970.

41 Frye was fundamental to the foundation of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) in 1954 at Harvard and was later the Aga Khan professor of Iranian Studies at Harvard, see Babai 2004.



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NATHAN M. PUSEY
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Toward Perpetuating A Noble Heritage

a program for armenian studies in america

nominated to the first Chair – later renamed the Mesrop Mashtots Chair – until 1992.[42]

Contingent on this success, the NAASR fostered the creation of several other fully or partially funded positions. The association also supported the publication of studies, the first being Der Nersessian's monograph on the Church of the Holy Cross at Aght'amar in 1965 – illustrated by remarkable new photographs **[9]** – and introduced by the chairman of the texts and studies committee and scholar Avedis K. Sanjian (1921–1995) as "a beautiful resurrection of a long-dormant and unseen witness of an ancient culture".[43]

Amidst this institutional effervescence in the 1950s–1960s, another eminent Armenologist was hired first as a visiting professor and then tenured professor of Armenian studies at Columbia University from 1969: Nina Garsoïan (1923–2022).[44] Born in Interwar émigré Paris and

42 Thomson took the Calouste Gulbenkian Professorship at Oxford University, which had been created in 1965. Later holders of the Mashtots Chair include James Russell (from 1993) and, since 2023, the art historian Christina Maranci.

43 Der Nersessian 1965.

44 For a broader account of Garsoïan's life, see and her memoirs in Garsoïan 2011.

trained in the United States, Garsoïan was the first woman to receive a tenured professorship at Columbia and an influential teacher to several generations of students of the Southern Caucasus. With other influential scholars such as Richard G. Hovannisian, Dickran Kouymjian, Avedis Sanjian, and Robert Thomson from the universities of California, Columbia, and Harvard, the foundation of the Society of Armenian Studies was founded in 1974 and welcomed Garsoïan as its first director. The Society received its own journal in 1984.[45] Whilst not an art historian, Garsoïan's historical studies are fundamental since they effectively shifted the Eurocentric approach to Armenian

45 In 1982, on a similar model as created the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes, also supported by the Gulbenkian Foundation.

[9] Photograph from Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Aght'amar: Church of the Holy Cross*, 1965

studies. Fascinated by the place of Armenia between two "empires", she contributed to highlight, in their complexity, the manifold relationships between Armenia, its western neighbors, the Byzantine world, and the East: the Iranian dynasties, the Arabs, the Turkic and Mongol invasions, the Turko-Persian successor states and the later Safavid-Ottoman and Russian rivalry.[46] Garsoïan's studies, always based on a rich array of historiographical sources, also inspired art historical studies to refocus on the broader question of Armenia, and by extension the Southern Caucasus', geopolitical situation.[47]

Two important figures from within the field of art history deserve mention here. Firstly, there is the American Byzantinist Thomas F. Mathews (*1934). Graduated from New York University with manuscript specialist Hugo Buchthal, Mathews wrote a dissertation on Byzantine churches in Constantinople with architectural expert Richard Krautheimer. From the 1980s onward, Mathews turned his attention, at least partially, to Armenian materials. In 1980, together with Garsoïan and Thomson, he organized the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium "East of Byzantium" refocusing the so-called "formative period" – here reconsidered until the ninth century – of the Christian tradition in Syria and Armenia.[48] In the volume, Mathews confronts the Etchmiadzin Gospels, which had already been discussed by some major authorities in the field, from Macler to Der Nersessian. In this paper, Mathews provided a new and insightful study of the four scenes, related to their theological interpretation, and provided firm argumentation for the originality of tenth-century Armenian artistic creation.[49]

The second figure that must be mentioned is the Romanian-born Armenian-American Dickran Kouymjian (*1934), perhaps one of the most multifaceted scholars on Armenian culture writ large. Son of Armenian genocide survivors, he graduated in the late 1960s at Columbia with a study on Armenian numismatics, and then taught in Beirut, before becoming, in 1977, director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno.[50] While his scholarly production was increasingly important after 1991 and characterized by great originality, an important article that unites several of his interests was published earlier. This was cosigned in 1986 with Jurgis Baltrušaitis on the funerary monuments of Julfa on the Arak's, a premodern Armenian city whose ruins are today located in the Nakhchivan exclave of Azerbaijan, on the border of Turkey and Iran.[51] Baltrušaitis had the chance to visit and broadly photograph the site of the cemetery in 1928, providing unique photographic documentation for the 1986 paper at a time when the cemetery still had many standing *khach'k'ar* dating

46 See, in particular, Garsoïan 1985.
47 See Kouymjian 2012–2013.
48 Garsoïan/Mathews/Thomson 1982.
49 Mathews 1982. Broadly on the topic, see also Kouymjian 1993.
50 See Der Mugrdechian 2008.
51 Baltrušaitis/Kouymjian 1986.

from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth century **[10]**. The Julfa funerary monuments were studied by Baltrušaitis and Kouymjian as invaluable documents standing as witnesses, carved in stone, of the vanished city, providing a unique body of data on a late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Armenian agglomeration. At the end of their thorough article, which was the first to deal with the complexity of this site, the authors expressed a clear wish:

[10] Photograph by Aram Vruyr (1863–1924) of the Armenian cemetery of Julfa, 1915

> "In this essay, besides publishing the valuable documents carefully assembled half a century ago by one of us, we have tried to underline the richness of this group of carved funerary monuments and their nearly inexhaustible potential for study and analysis. In addition to the thorough archaeological survey we called for at the beginning of this study, we also suggest that a khach'k'ar museum be organized specifically for this material, perhaps at Julfa itself. For the moment one can only hope there is no further deterioration or abuse to the site and that the Azerbaijani authorities allow scholars to thoroughly survey the existing monuments in this Armenian region".[52]

The scholarly desire and hopeful message expressed here were usurped by hateful ideology. In the late 1990s, the Azerbaijan government began a systematic campaign to destroy the Julfa monuments. Evidence collected since the early twenty-first century shows that the cemetery has been entirely destroyed, almost entirely erasing the memory of Julfa's dead. Some late nineteenth-century photographs, the 1915 photos by Aram Vruyr, Baltrušaitis' own pictures from 1928, a sprinkling of more recent snapshots, and a few surviving *khach'k'ar* from Old Julfa are all that remain today...

GERMANOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *KLÁRA DOLEŽALOVÁ*

The events of the Second World War had a significant impact not only on the political organization of Europe but also on the scientific contacts between Germany and the West as well as the Soviet Union in the East, whose sphere of influence included the South Caucasus until its dissolution in 1991. Postwar Germanophone historiography, especially since the 1970s, was characterized by a growing interest in Caucasian art and architecture, progressive internationalization of Caucasian studies as well as the rise of the fields of art history and archaeology in the Caucasian republics. The scope of this section is therefore necessarily selective and aims only at outlining the main currents of Germanophone research on Caucasian artistic heritage.

Although Strzygowski's *Die Baukunst* (1918) was still recognized as the most exhaustive overview of Armenian architecture and its development, his pan-Aryan theories as well as his assessment of the key role played by Armenia in shaping the medieval architecture of the West was largely passed over in post-war Germanophone

52 *Ibidem*, pp. 52–53.

research. Leafing through *Byzantinische Kunst*, written by Wladimir Sas-Zaloziecky (1896–1959) and published posthumously in 1963, one discovers Armenia being rendered as "the most important oriental province besides Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, connected with the art of the Byzantine metropolis".[53] Sas-Zaloziecky was an Austrian Byzantinist who was Strzygowski's contemporary from the University of Vienna. The post-war Germanophone historiography thus largely continued to view Southern Caucasia as a provincial region receiving artistic stimuli from the Byzantine Empire. Interestingly, Sas-Zaloziecky's book points to a recurring element of Caucasian studies, only reinforced by Strzygowski's *Baukunst*: the creative superiority of Armenian art to the art of Georgia, which the Georgian art historian Giorgi Chubinashvili spoke out against as early as 1922.[54] Nor did the traveling exhibition of Georgian art of 1930 seem to have had a great academic impact – apart from a few brief mentions, Georgian monuments are essentially absent from Sas-Zaloziecky's work.[55]

Although based in Tbilisi, Chubinashvili made a significant contribution to the shape of Western historiography in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1968, he authored a fairly comprehensive entry on Georgian art and architecture for Wolfgang Fritz Volbach's volume of the new Propyläen Kunstgeschichte series entitled *Byzanz und der christliche Osten* **[11]**.[56] As the chapter on the arts of Armenia was entrusted to the Italian Byzantinist Fernanda de' Maffei, the volume testified to a growing internationalization of European research and, at the same time, pointed to a certain dependence on German post-war Caucasiology on foreign scholarship.[57] In a similar fashion, the entries on Armenia and Georgia in the *Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst*, founded in the 1960s on the initiative of Klaus Wessel (1916–1987) and Marcell Restle (1932–2016), were authored by Armen Khatchatrian, mentioned above, and by Vasilij Ponomarev (1907–1978), a Russian archaeologist who fled to Western Germany after the Second World War and took a position at the University of Marburg.[58] Here the entries show great progress in the field of archaeological research and the recording of Caucasian cultural heritage which enabled a more advanced assessment of all branches of artistic creation, rather than the singular architectural focus the field had perpetuated in the past.

In socialist East Germany, the research was more aligned with Soviet scholarship due to ideological and political ties. The most important centers of research on the Caucasus became the *almae matres* of Giorgi Chubinashvili, and the universities of Leipzig and Halle, which were also the main centers of Byzantine history and art history in East Germany.[59] Already during his time in Leipzig, Chubinashvili developed

53 Sas-Zaloziecky 1963.

54 Cfr. the previous chapter, pp. 143–147.

55 Similar approach can be seen in the work of Richard Krautheimer (1897–1994), a German architectural historian and student of Paul Frankl (1878–1962) who was forced to leave Germany in 1933 to escape Nazi persecution and settled in Italy and, subsequently, in the United States. In the first edition of his *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Krautheimer 1965), Krautheimer included only Armenian examples. The text remained unchanged even in the 1986 revised edition, although the title of the subchapter was changed to "Armenia and Georgia" (*Idem* 1986 [1965], sp. p. 327).

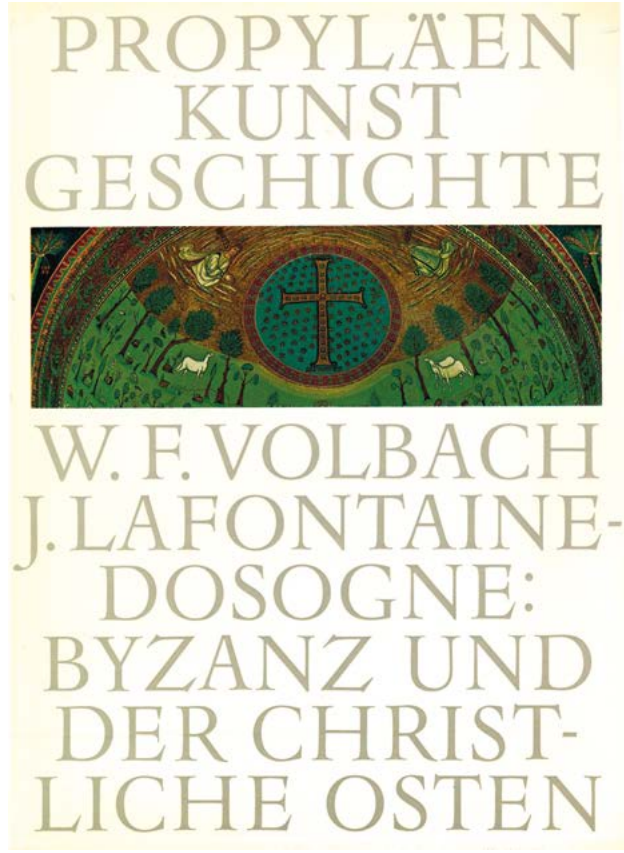
56 Chubinashvili [Tschubinaschwili] 1968.

57 De' Maffei 1968.

58 On the works of Armen Khatchatrian, cfr. the paragraph on the modern French gaze by Adrien Palladino in the present volume, pp. 173–174 or Maranci 2001, pp. 194–207. On Ponomarov, see Kohn-Korolev *et al*. 2019, pp. 237–241.

59 Irmscher 1974.

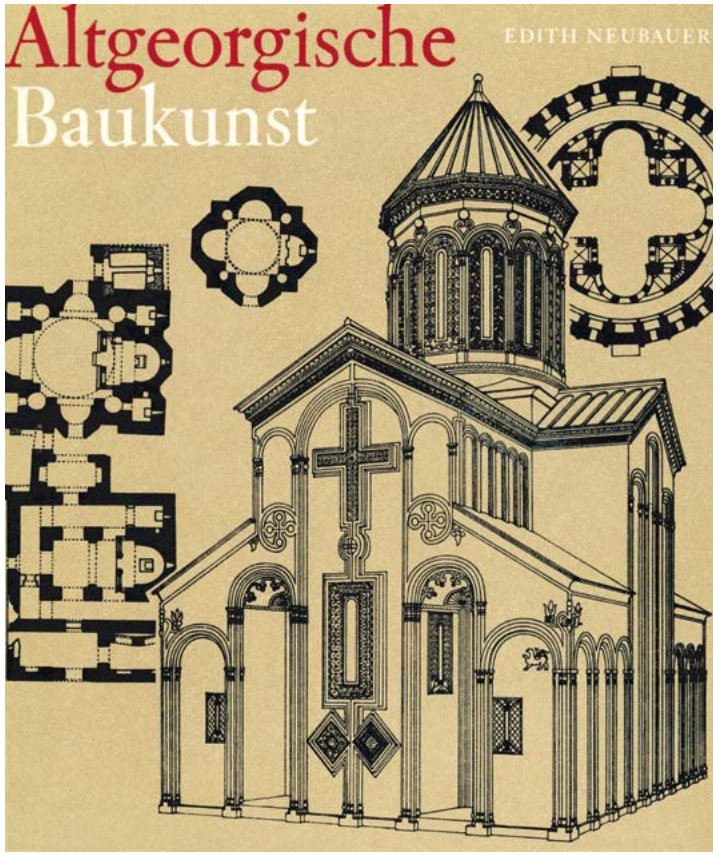
[11] Cover of *Byzanz und der christliche Osten*, Berlin 1968



friendly relations with Johannes Jahn (1892–1976), later head of the local art historical institute, who was instrumental in awarding Chubinashvili an honorary doctorate in 1959.[60] At the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg were the archaeologist Burchard Brentjes (1929–2012) and especially the Byzantinist Heinrich Nickel (1927–2004), author of the pioneering German overview of the history of South-Caucasian art and architecture.[61]

One of the most prominent East German researchers on the arts of South Caucasus was Edith Neubauer (*1934), who later was appointed professor of Eastern European, Caucasian, and Byzantine Art at the University of Leipzig. Working on Romanesque tympana in Germany during her doctoral studies at the Humboldt University and the German Academy of Sciences, Neubauer's attention was drawn to the sculpture of Georgia and Armenia in the early 1960s.[62] The anticipation of Romanesque forms in Caucasian architecture was a lively topic in European scholarship – e.g., the work of Baltrušaitis can be

60 Neubauer 2007, pp. 19–20.
61 Brentjes 1973; Nickel 1974.
62 Neubauer describes the beginnings of her research in Neubauer 2007.



[12] Cover of Edith Neubauer's *Altgeorgische Baukunst*, Leipzig 1976

recalled – and was briefly addressed by the Austrian art historian Hans Sedlmayr (1896–1984).[63] Unlike Sedlmayr, who had no chance to consult Caucasian monuments in situ, Neubauer conducted two study trips to the Caucasus where she personally met with Chubinashvili who, since 1941, held a position of a director of the Institute for the History of Georgian Art at the Georgian Academy of Sciences. Meeting Chubinashvili instrumentally outlined the main directions of Neubauer's later research and the medieval architecture of the Caucasus and Old Russia eventually became one of her lifelong research interests.[64]

Outstanding among the list of Neubauer's publications are those popularizing and richly illustrated overviews of the development of Caucasian medieval architecture. As early as 1970, Neubauer published a short study mapping the history of Armenian architecture, followed in 1976 by the *Altgeorgische Baukunst* which encompassed the development of Georgian architecture between the fourth and the

63 Sedlmayr 1967. On the work of Baltrušaitis, see the summaries of French historiography by Adrien Palladino in the present volume, pp. 135–137 or Maranci 2001, pp. 178–194.

64 Chubinashvili encouraged Neubauer, among other things, to examine the national character of Georgian and Armenian architecture, to proceed closer investigation of Georgian monuments, and to critically reassess the persistent claim about the subordination of Georgian art largely reinforced by Strzygowski's *Baukunst*. See the personal correspondence in Neubauer 2007, pp. 22–24.

eighteenth centuries.[65] What comes to the fore in these undertakings is not only Neubauer's personal familiarity with Chubinashvili's research outputs but also a strong adherence to Soviet scholarship and a Marxist view of art history.[66] In a short conclusion to the *Altgeorgische Baukunst*, Neubauer summarized the post-war development of Caucasian studies as follows:

> "After the Second World War, interest in the Caucasian cultural circuit was occasionally renewed. Here, the bourgeois art studies followed J. Strzygowski, not the new Marxist presentation of the developmental issues of Georgian art, as published by G. Chubinashvili in the 1930s. Thus, in the few studies that appeared at that time, the 'Armenian problem' again dominated, and Georgian art found no separate attention. [...] Another misinterpretation was to see in national Georgian monuments the end point of Byzantine art development on a provincial level. [...] The Marxist research of Georgian art was and is carried out primarily by scholars from the socialist countries, Hungary, Romania, and the GDR, but first of all by the Soviet scholars. [...] Systematic scientific research was also directed to the Armenian cultural circle. Thus, today a comprehensive Marxist account of the paths of development of Georgian and Armenian medieval architecture is available, their similarities and their peculiarities are characterized".[67]

The Marxist interpretation of cultural history, promoted mainly by Soviet scholars and based on a narrow interconnection between the economic and social conditions and contemporary artistic production, is clearly perceptible from the very structure of Neubauer's book, which periodizes Georgian architectural history in relation to the feudal system **[12]**. The impact of contemporary Georgian scholarship is evident throughout the book: Contrary to Ponomarev, Neubauer does not portray the Jvari Church as a "schematic simplification of the Byzantine eight-pillar church" but as a "successful creation of a national architectural form".[68] Similarly, Christianization as an important factor in the development of Georgian architecture is presented as a pragmatic decision of the upper class:

> "The Christian religion [...] was the ideology of resistance, the expression of national liberation aspirations and

65 Neubauer 1970; *Eadem* 1976.
66 On the summary of the Russian and Soviet historiography, see the chapters of Ivan Foletti in the present volume.
67 Neubauer 1976, pp. 221–222.
68 Ponomarew 1971, p. 670; Neubauer 1976, p. 38.

> unification efforts. It thus served the political and economic interests of the ruling class and did not emanate from the oppressed and destitute classes as in Rome. This aspect had important implications for the character of Early Christian art in Georgia, which from the outset served primarily to represent the ruling class".[69]

Neubauer continued to focus on Georgian architecture, having later published a joint monograph with Vakhtang Beridze (1914–2000), Chubinashvili's successor at the Georgian Academy of Sciences.[70] Not least of all, she also published several articles in the journal *Georgica*, issued annually since 1978 in collaboration with the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena and the University of Tbilisi.[71] Building on close relations between socialist Germany and Georgia, the journal, published exclusively in German and focusing on a wide range of mainly historical disciplines, aimed for closer cooperation between the two countries and the dissemination of Caucasian studies in Germany.[72]

Throughout the 1970s, an international platform for sharing research results emerged with the establishment of symposia of Georgian and Armenian art, the first of which was held in Bergamo in 1974 and 1975 respectively. The geopolitical situation did not favor equal research opportunities; as Neubauer recalled, "West German, Austrian, and Italian colleagues had always played a decisive role in exploring areas with Armenian and Georgian architectural monuments, which were closed to East Germans and Soviet colleagues for political reasons".[73] Such areas were typically the northeastern regions of Turkey. Progressively more international research on Caucasian art, along with expanding translations of scholarly literature brought to light the schism between the view of the Caucasus as a site of lively cultural interactions and the local, progressively more nationalist, historiography, which tended to view the development of Caucasian art as an isolated phenomenon, as shown by Klaus Wessel's (overall positive) review of Rusudan Mepisashvili's and Vakhtang Zinzadse's monograph published in a German translation in 1977.[74]

Also in the 1970s another study that must be mentioned is the article published in 1979 by Hans Belting (1935–2023) and dedicated to the painter Manuel Eugenikos.[75] In his essay Belting – an outstanding Byzantine art historian, who over the years would become one of the most cosmopolitan and versatile art historians with studies ranging from the Late Antique world to contemporary global art – presents the work of a Constantinopolitan artist active in Georgia in

69 Neubauer 1976, p. 18.
70 Beridze/Neubauer 1980.
71 Neubauer 1981; *Eadem* 1982; Neubauer/Badstüber 1990/1991.
72 Gobar 1983. It is also worth mentioning that in the late 1980s, archaeological reports by Annegret Plontke-Lüning (*1955), a German archaeologist and art historian who is nowadays one of the foremost specialists in Late Antique Caucasian architecture, began to appear in the *Georgica* journal. See, e.g., Mikaberidse/Plontke-Lüning 1986; Plontke-Lüning 1987.
73 Neubauer 2007, p. 35.
74 Wessel 1978, sp. p. 236.
75 Belting 1979.

[13] Hans Belting, 1971

the fourteenth century. Belting's central idea could be defined today as that of "cultural transfer" operated by the Byzantine painter who allegedly brought art from the imperial capital to Mingrelia. Belting's work was based on the belief in the existence of a "united" Mediterranean world that transcended traditional frontiers. This perspective mirrored his upbringing: raised in West Germany, he then spent two crucial years in the cosmopolitan environment of Dumbarton Oaks. Once back in Germany, he would study across a vast horizon of subjects from Southern Italy to Constantinople to Flemish art and the Caucasus. The same article mentioned here was published in French, in keeping with Belting's polyglot nature **[13]**.[76] The medieval art of Georgia that the German scholar presents is thus an art linked to the

76 This is the only exception to the rule presented here in the introduction, as Belting's essay, written in French, is presented in the German-speaking world. This is due to the fact that Belting wrote the article in German, while what appeared in French was a translation.

most prestigious international circles. At the same time, with Belting's approach, the impact of the incredible economic growth of West Germany (and Western Europe in general) in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s is palpable. For scholars of those years, an increasingly global world was opened since they could travel, albeit with slight difficulty, beyond the borders of the Soviet world.[77]

As this brief summary has aimed to show, in post-war Germany, research on the Caucasus may not have reached the same level of academic significance as in France, the United States, or Italy where cooperation with the diaspora was much closer or where the well-established discipline of Byzantine art history prompted scholarly interest in the region.[78] However, the situation in East Germany in particular shows that the German academy did not completely lose its role as a "bridge" between Eastern and Western scholarship. It was also in Germany – compared to the rather Armenophile research centers abroad – where there was an attempt at a balanced study of Georgian cultural heritage, which, as previous chapters have shown, has been stigmatized from the beginning with the dismissive assessment of creative inferiority.

ITALOPHONE PERSPECTIVE / *BEATRICE SPAMPINATO*

In Italy, during the postwar period, interest in Armenian art and architecture was affected by the bond between Armenian culture and the pro-Nazi theories of the Austrian scholar Josef Strzygowski. In 1977, Giuseppe Zander (1920–1990) effectively summed up this connection by asserting that, in the minds of scholars, Armenian architecture recalls only the great flowering of the early Middle Ages and the fundamental problems surrounding that epoch first raised by Strzygowski.[79]

Few articles were written in Italian between the forties and sixties – a symptom of the popular lack of interest in Armenia. Entries on Armenian art published during the Fascist period in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* were left unchanged after the Second World War. Starting from those entries in 1948 the archaeologists Enrico Josi (1885–1975) and Guglielmo Matthiae (1909–1977) briefly summarized the information on Armenian art and architecture that had been superficially written by Italian scholars in the first half of the twentieth century, themselves repeating errors and providing only scant bibliographic references.[80] A relevant and more inspired contribution to Italian historiography came from the Georgian art historian Giorgi Chubinashvili.

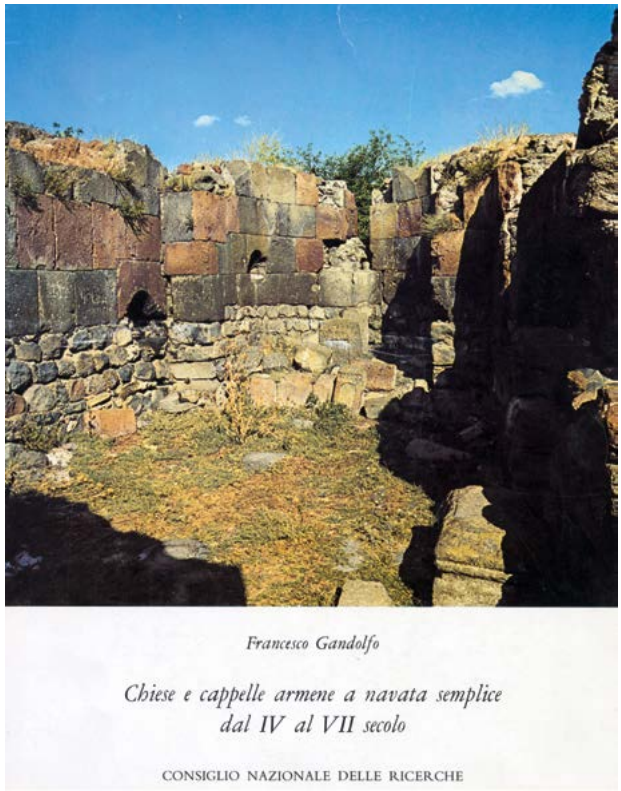
77 Foletti 2021.
78 Another cluster of research to which I cannot dedicate more space, starting in the 1970s, must also be mentioned in the figures of Heide and Helmust Buschhausen in Austria, where the presence of the Mekhitarist library had prompted targeted studies and exhibitions on the topic of book illumination in the Caucasus, see Buschhausen/Buschhausen 1976.
79 Zander 1977, p. 375.
80 Josi 1948; Matthiae 1948.

In 1958, Chubinashvili wrote the encyclopedia entry on Armenian art for the *Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte*.[81] Following a typological evolution of the history of Armenian architecture, Chubinashvili presented a long list of sites and introduced the Italian public to new aspects of Armenian art, such as the *zhamatun*, the stylistic richness of illuminated manuscripts, and the variety of minor sacred and secular art objects. The bibliography was dense, and as Italian authors had never worked on first-hand documentation, they were not mentioned to make way for the most up-to-date Russian, German, and French critical literature. Up to this point, the major Georgian ecclesiastical monuments such as the Bagratuni Cathedral in Kutaisi, the church of Jvari in Mtskheta, and Bana Church, had often been named as examples of Armenian architecture. Chubinashvili corrected this misperception by writing a specific entry on Georgian art and culture.[82] Strzygowski introduced the theory of a hierarchical relationship, wherein Armenia was the creator and giver and Georgia the passive receiver in a state of cultural subordination.[83] The total disinterest shown by Italian scholars in Georgian art and architecture and the inclusion of Georgian monuments in essays on Armenian heritage can be directly traced back to Strzygowski's theorizing.

In 1962, Ugo Monneret de Villard (1881–1954) reframed Armenian architecture as avant-garde domed construction systems, piquing Italian readers' interest.[84] Within the almost unanimous chorus of Romanists, he had been a pro-Strzygowskian from the beginning and, even in the post-war decades when his Austrian colleague underwent considerable demonization, he remained in agreement with his position regarding the origin of the Christian arts while distancing himself from the somewhat paradoxical developments of Strzygowski's theses.[85] Monneret de Villard's 1962 contribution terminated the first small waves of interest in Armenian architecture in Italy. An important caesura occurred in the mid-1960s when Armenian architecture began to be observed at close quarters, resulting in a broad inquiry into the documentation collected during the first half of the twentieth century.

Armen Zarian (1914–1994) initiated and led two missions that, during the mid-1960s, traveled synchronously from Italy to Soviet Armenia. The first mission was organized by the medieval section of the Institute of Art History of the University La Sapienza in Rome with the support of the National Research Council, while the second mission was conducted by the Milan Polytechnic and funded by the Foundation of the Manoukian family. Both took place at the official invitation of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia and with the

81 Chubinashvili [Tschubinaschwili] 1958a.
82 *Idem* 1958b.
83 Strzygowski 1918, p. 275. See also Maranci 2001–2002, pp. 290–93.
84 Monneret de Villard 1962.
85 Monneret de Villard 1921, p. 211.



[14] Cover of Francesco Gandolfo, *Chiese e cappelle armene a navata semplice dal IV al VII secolo*, Studi di architettura medioevale armena 2, Rome 1973

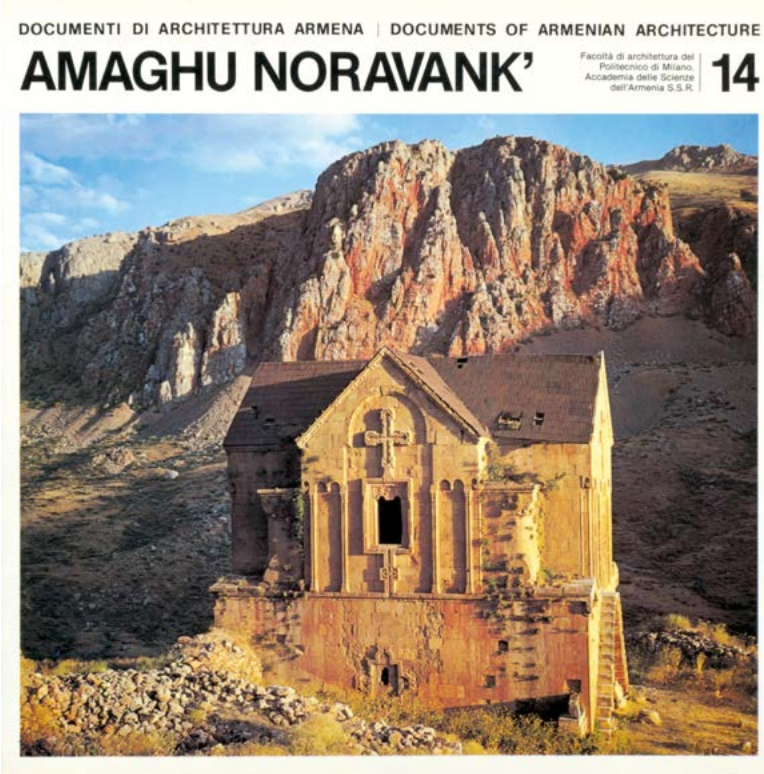
support of the Committee for the Preservation of Historical Monuments of Soviet Armenia.[86] First to travel to Armenia were the architects Tommaso Breccia Fratadocchi (1936–2023) and Paolo Cuneo (1936–1995), whose earlier trip to the Middle East, reaching the region of Van, inspired their desire to delve into Armenian medieval architecture. Fratadocchi and Cuneo left Rome for Yerevan in 1966. A few months later, in 1967, the architects Adriano Alpago Novello (1932–2005), Herman Vahramian (1939–2009), Armen Manoukian (1932–1995), and the engineer Harutiun Kasangian (1909–1994), traveling from Milan, also embarked on a study campaign in Soviet Armenia. It did not take long for both research groups to realize that restricting the scope of their investigation to medieval structures within Soviet political boundaries would be limiting and anachronistic. In 1967, scholars working on the "Study and Survey of Medieval Armenian Monuments" project at La Sapienza ventured into the territories of historic Armenia to investigate eastern Anatolia and northern Iran. Meanwhile, at the Milan Polytechnic, scholars continued

86 For a list of the destinations of the Roman and Milanese missions in the 1960s, see respectively Breccia Fratadocchi/Cuneo/Monti 1969; *Ricerca* 1970. For an account of the missions from Rome, see De Francovich 1968; Paribeni 2012; Bevilacqua 2018; Bevilacqua/Gasbarri 2020; Lala Comneno/Papasogli 2022. For an account of the missions from Milan, see Bonardi 2014; Zekiyan 2005; Manoukian 2014; Riccioni 2020.

their exploration of Soviet territory on their second mission of 1969, adding 22 sites to the 55 already documented the previous year. In 1970, three further missions were launched by Alpago Novello and his colleagues to Anatolia and Cilicia and then, between 1973 and 1976, to Iran and Georgia. The paths of the two projects seemed to cross but never really met each other or clashed. Each working group published extensively and exhibited the documentation collected during their respective missions. The key to explaining the scientific interest and commitment shown by both the group led by Alpago Novello and the one directed by Géza de Francovich and Fernanda de' Maffei (1917–2011) is undoubtedly the personality of Armen Zarian,[87] who was fundamental in his role as diplomatic mediator and inspired interest in exchange between Italy and Armenia. Zarian's mediation can be observed above all in the scientific collaboration between Italian academic institutions and Soviet Armenian institutions, such as the proceedings of the five Symposia of Armenian Architecture organized and published by the group based in Milan. At the University of Rome, the publication of *Studi di architettura medioevale armena* represents the most valuable scientific output of the study campaigns **[14]**. The five volumes of the series were structured homogeneously and comprehensively, with particular attention paid to historical sources, archaeological findings, and stylistic data to provide a reasoned dating of the complexes and reinsert them, with a more secure profile, within a local genealogy. As a result of the vertical documentation collected on each monument, the research team's objective was to arrive at a final issue of the series that would include an examination of the style, chronology, origin, and the resulting overall assessment of Armenian medieval architecture. The project was interrupted before this final volume was complete.[88] Cuneo, Breccia Fratadocchi, Francesco Gandolfo (*1941), Mario D'Onofrio (*1943), and Maria Adelaide Lala Comneno worked on a catalog of Armenian medieval architecture and an inventory, survey, and analysis of Armenian heritage. The group aimed to search for a local thread that might help to provide a global definition of Armenian style.

Paolo Cuneo was the Italian scholar who, together with Adriano Alpago Novello, most greatly impacted the history of the study of medieval Armenian architecture.[89] The premise of Cuneo's work was his choice to continue the Soviet approach. That is, he sought to better define an 'Armenian style' and trace its peculiarities, while also investigating the relationship between architecture and the identity of the Armenian people.[90] His priority was constructing an inventory of monuments and recording their state of preservation.

87 Zarian 2009.
88 De Francovich 1971, p. 10.
89 Among Cuneo's most important publications, see Cuneo 1977; *Idem* 1988. Among Alpago Novello's most important publications, see his articles in Alpago Novello 1986.
90 Cuneo 1988, p. 16.



[15] Cover of Adriano Alpago Novello, Giulio Ieni, *Amaghu Noravank'*, Documents of Armenian Architecture 14, Milan 1985

The Roman study missions to historical Armenia ended by 1969, while publications on the heritage and culture of the South Caucasus directed by Alpago Novello, first in Milan and then in Venice, continued up until 1992. Among all the activities led by the latter, it is worth citing the series *Ricerca sull'architettura armena* which was published in the aftermath of the missions. This series was an internal departmental documentation tool for a very select audience of lecturers, collaborators, and interdepartmental students. The series *Documents of Armenian Architecture*, meanwhile, organized in individual monographs and accompanied by a valuable photographic apparatus, was intended for a specialist audience but enjoyed wider circulation than the previous publication **[15]**.[91] The photographic exhibitions *Armenian Architecture from the 4th to the 18th Centuries and Georgian Architecture* as well as their respective catalogs were the most popular outputs of the research missions **[16]**.[92] The group intended to make concrete research gains in overcoming the historiographical diatribe that had separated the East from Rome in academic discourse over the first decades of the century. They aimed to fill a gap in studies on medieval

91 For details on publishing activities, see Manoukian 2014, pp. 234–239; Riccioni 2020, pp. 208–213.

92 For details on exhibitions, see Spampinato 2020.

[16] Adriano Alpago Novello during the inauguration of the exhibition "Armenian Architecture" in Bari, Pinacoteca Corrado Giaquinto, 1969

art, fueled both by the practical difficulty of analyzing monuments directly in situ and also by academic simplifications that relegated the Armenian tradition to a provincial facet of Byzantine art. Together with Giulio Ieni (1943–2003), Alpago Novello took an interest in Georgian art and architecture, publishing the first monographs on the subject in Italian.[93]

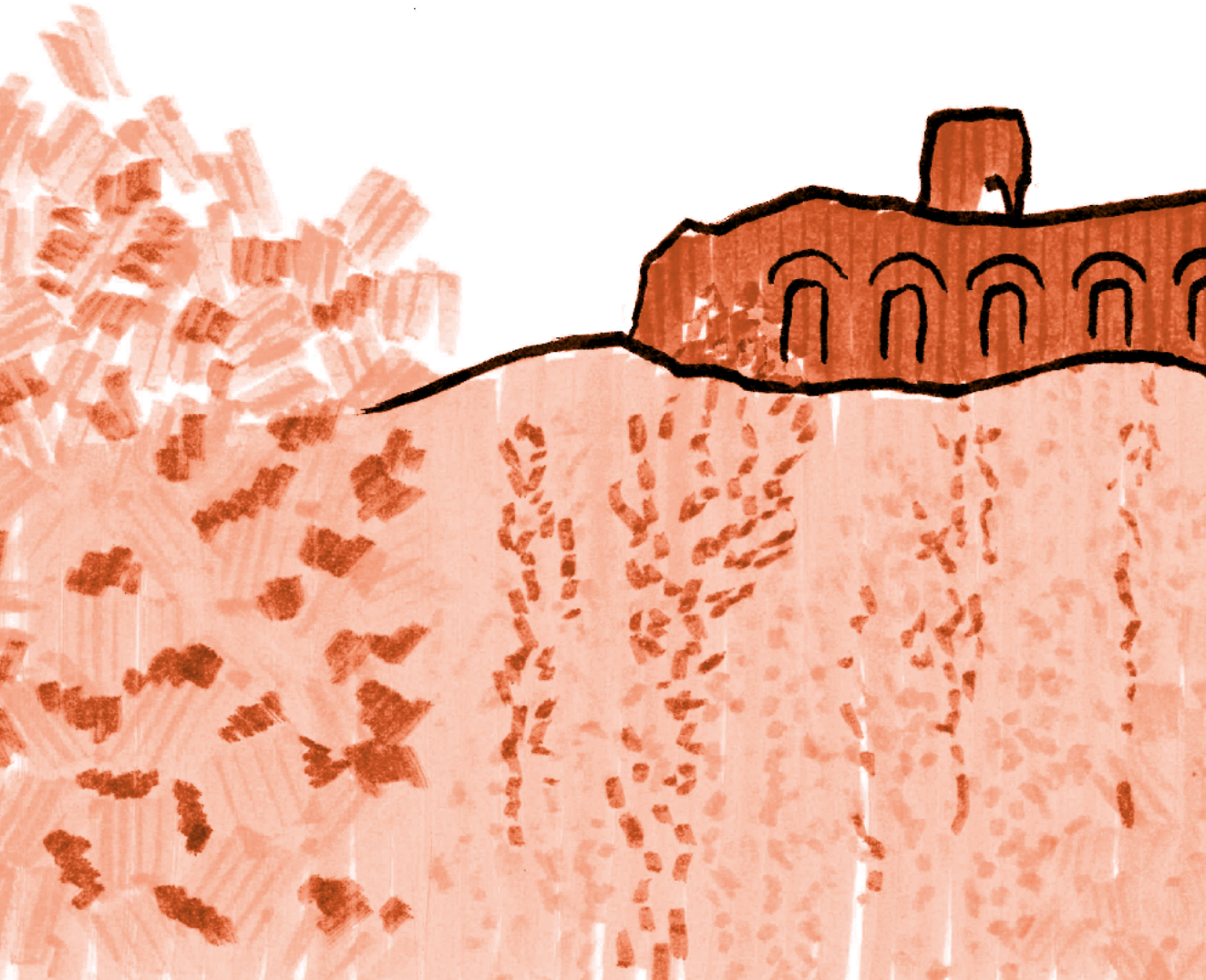
The two projects born under the leading role of Armen Zarian looked at Armenian architecture through two distinct lenses. By eschewing the compilation of a corpus and questioning the evolutionary approach, Alpago Novello opened considerations that went beyond "mere measurement" to examine the unprecedented issues in both Armenian and extra-Soviet historiography. According to Cuneo, Armenian architecture was located in an impermeable Armenia where it was possible to distinguish fixed stylistic figures and reiterated architectural modules. On the contrary, according to Alpago Novello, Armenia was within osmotic boundaries and could, therefore, be decoded through methodologies of observation and study applicable to the analysis of any community's historical landscape.

93 Alpago Novello 1980; Velmans/Alpago Novello 1996.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Ivan Foletti, Adrien Palladino



Just as the writing of history, suggesting the formulation of a more nuanced and critical historiography is never an unbiased act. Nonetheless, we hope that this volume might inspire historiographers from diverse backgrounds to approach this subject from new angles and with new insights. Indeed, it is only through such wide explorations that we can ultimately revise the "grand narratives" of art history written *from* and *for* the perspectives of powerful "Western European", patriarchal, and eugenicist actors. Such a pursuit is too great for a single three-year project to achieve, but we believe it has taken a meaningful step toward that future.

The novel contribution that this book has made was to take a plurality of perspectives by many different authors in the historiography of the South Caucasus and condense them into an accessible narrative and reasonably brief volume to encourage this future work. It is up to the readers to take the next steps in this labor toward a new historical narrative for the region. We are not only calling for future collaboration but also aware of the gaps in the narrative presented here, an awareness which perhaps represents a significant step in changing the way in which histories and historiographies of art must be written going forward.

After summing up some of the main results of the volume below, we will conclude with a brief reflection that contextualizes the making of this volume and the possibilities that it opens for future endeavors.

THE CREATION OF A PERIPHERY: BIOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND IMPERIALISM

Our view of the discipline itself has dramatically shifted through close study of the lives and ideologies of those involved in the construction of the disciplinary foundations over the nearly two centuries of artistic history under scrutiny in the previous chapters. These 190 years encompass not only a genocide and two world wars but also the coexistence of research that was outwardly presented as "objective", yet was funded and supported by imperialist, sometimes even totalitarian regimes. This research clearly shows how, in the face of pressure from political authorities, research has frequently and willingly told the narratives desired by those in power.

During the nineteenth century, this also accumulated into an adherence of research to the great philosophical ideas in vogue in continental Europe. Studies of the artistic (and cultural) history of the South Caucasus then became a reflection of evolutionary ideas, which in turn shaped scientific inquiry into the biological evolution of species. Here we speak of "evolutionary" in the sense of an unfolding of or

development of some inherent potential coupled with the meliorist idea of "progress". Eventually, this evolutionary perspective shifted away from the concept of innate inherence toward the end of the period studied here, as discussed in the previous chapters. From about the 1990s to the present day, this methodology has denounced its previous ideals while still dominantly validating the Darwinian approach as a method of inquiry in the humanities.[1] Thus, a vague eugenicist ideology remains in the subtext behind this denunciation and thus haunts the classrooms of our discipline.

The early form of evolutionary inquiry had the clear merit of sometimes leading to plausible chronological and "stylistic" classifications. Yet it developed many problems whose consequences we continue to be confronted with even today: the homogeneity in cultural development that evolutionism applied to art history (from, of course, a Eurocentric perspective) clashes with the reality of the facts – craftsmen and patrons could have had a dissonant personal taste (or technical knowledge), especially in a region at the crossroads of cultures such as the one studied in these two volumes. One of the leitmotifs of this evolutionarily based research was the notion of "races" and this idea's development in the cultural sphere. Once again, theoretical issues were anchored in the biological thinking of Europe in those years with dramatic consequences – from slavery to genocide. Another notion rooted in "Western evolutionist" thought during the nineteenth century was a profoundly colonial and orientalist look at the cultures of the Christian East (and beyond).

Finally, early Russian studies of the region – perceived by Saint Petersburg increasingly as a colony – show the extent to which science could serve the interests of an imperialist power. Leading figures marginalized – tendentiously and with visible tautologies – the importance of the region's medieval art. This art was presented, despite the differences between Armenian and Georgian medieval art, as an indistinct production of the Byzantine periphery. In truth, this attitude was not exceptional, but nearly ubiquitous among colonizers of the nineteenth century. The conclusions of Russian imperialist studies basically confirmed the orientalist ones produced in the "West" and thus contributed to the systematic marginalization of the artistic production of the region.

Implicitly present in the research and reflections of many scholars who have dealt with the art of medieval Georgia and Armenia, these three lines of thought – emergent racial theories (tied to evolutionist research), colonial imperialism, and orientalism – have contributed

1 For an overview of the changing approaches, see Stuart-Fox 1999.

greatly to marginalizing a region that was the beating heart of splendid cultures in the middle of medieval Eurasia.

GENOCIDE, TOTALITARIANISM, AND THE GREAT IDEOLOGIES

Trauma was the primogenitor of the twentieth century. This period responded in kind with the first, bloody world war; the no less brutal Armenian genocide; the Russian revolutions of 1917, and the subsequent civil war that shaped the early 1900s. These events set in motion, among other things, millions of human beings who found themselves emigrants scattered across the world.

This situation had a decisive impact on the history of scholarship: an increasingly monolithic historiography in the service of power emerged in the USSR. This is not surprising given the brutality of the Soviet regime: with millions of victims and an even more impressive number of people sent to camps under the infamous Article 58 of the Soviet Penal Code research was crushed by Marxist-Leninist thought.[2] In the relatively liberal early years of Soviet power, there was still room for some polyphony; from the late 1920s, however, the discourse became increasingly, forcibly, "harmonized". For a country born from the ashes of the tsar's multiethnic empire and as the profoundly multicultural as the USSR, studying the art history of different states became a matter of national politics. Thus, according to the policy promoted in this regard by the Politburo, the perspective adopted also changed. The research presented in the last two chapters of this volume shows that thanks to terror, censorship, and self-censorship, studies on the region meekly conformed to official policy. In moments of crisis, particularly during the Second World War and the years of the Perestroika of Gorbachev, as soon as the regime allowed, nationalist voices rose forcefully. Imperialism stimulates nationalism, and Soviet policy finally followed the imperialist tradition of the country even after the formation of the USSR.

In the "West", the Interwar period corresponded to a much more complex view of South Caucasian art: depending on trends it was included in transcultural projects or integrated into the virulent debate about the origins of Christian art. The opposition between the partisans of Josef Strzygowski – who in Armenia saw the mediation of the arts of ancient Persia, one of the cradles of European civilization – and the promoters of Rome and Greece, or the French formalist school's approach to the primacy of form, show the many possible faces of how the same materials could be read in as many different ways. This was through schools and convictions, but also on the basis of the political position of the involved countries. This was especially striking in the

2 Article 58 of the Soviet Penal Code was an article defined by Solzhenitsyn as allowing a person to be sentenced to at least 10 years in prison for doing anything or for doing nothing at all, leaving all people vulnerable to the whims of the state.

countries where, since the 1920s, the Nazi and Fascist regimes began to assert themselves.

After the Second World War, studying the Caucasus remained a problematic issue: in a world split by the Cold War, the monuments of medieval Armenia and Iberia – located between the USSR and eastern Turkey – were by no means neutral ground. Those who wanted to deal with them were potentially suspected of Marxism, which was particularly dangerous in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. At the same time, in eastern Turkey, a second wave of the destruction of Armenian monuments began and was met with silence by the international community. Only a few, mostly personally connected to the region, studied it until the late 1960s. This situation can be explained in part by the legacy of Strzygowski, who had suffered a *damnatio memoriae* because of his racial ideas – banished from art history after the horrors of the 1930s and 40s. Yet, banishing Strzygowski in effect banished also for a while the South Caucasus from critical inquiry. We are convinced, however, that the role played by the Cold War in the matter was most decisive: it is therefore not surprising that "Western" scholars returned to the region chiefly in the years of Nikita Khrushchev and de-Stalinization.

Complementing the impression that has emerged from our research on nationalist scholars is the large community of Armenian émigrés – many of whom escaped the genocide – and ancient citizens of the Russian Empire – who left the country in fear of revolution. For these, the study of Armenian and Georgian art and culture corresponds, at least in part, to a desperate attempt to rebuild a lost homeland. Many of them were, moreover, hostile to the Soviet regime. For the duration of the twentieth century, they continued to resolutely study the art they regarded as "theirs", and they did so, especially on the Armenian diaspora's side, by seeking (and gaining) institutional positions and recognition. It is in many cases, these exile communities have kept, in Europe and the United States, research on the region alive.

If the picture that this monograph paints of studies on the Caucasus in the past is often dreadful and harrowing, the last chapter of this book bridges with a present that bears many nuanced and fertile investigations into the arts and cultures of the Caucasus. From the later 1990s on, besides the studies of scholars in Armenia and Georgia, we must cite the continuous efforts of devoted scholars such as the Thierry couple, Patrick Donabédian, Armen Kazarjan in the Russian-speaking milieu, Annegret Plontke-Lüning, but also the vital studies of Antony Eastmond centered on Georgia.[3] Compared to the

3 E.g., Eastmond 1998; Plontke-Lüning 2007; Kazarjan 2012–2013.

linguistic perspective chosen throughout this book, these endeavors radically go beyond the soil in which they may have originated. In recent years, we might even speak of a boom ininterest in studies on the Caucasus in international scholarship. Especially after the exhibition at the Louvre in 2007, innovative and in-depth research has been supported in various spaces of art-historical geography.[4] The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, with a team lead by Annette Hoffmann, Manuela De Giorgi, and Gerhard Wolf, in collaboration with Barbara Schellewald in Basel and Marika Didebulidze in Tbilisi, dedicated significant resources to a photographic campaign in Georgia. Michele Bacci, professor at the University of Fribourg, and his research group have encouraged important studies, linking the reality of the Caucasus with the entire Mediterranean space.[5] The present book and its twin written by the Fribourg team, are the result of a project held between Brno and Fribourg. 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.[6] At Ca' Foscari University in Venice, Aldo Ferrari and Stefano Riccioni have likewise promoted regular meetings and publications dedicated to the arts of the region.[7] Besides Antony Eastmond's more recent works which constantly broaden the scope of his inquiry towards the interplay of the Southern Caucasian cultures with Arab, Seljuk, Timurid, and Safavid impulses, one can also mention Patricia Blessing's efforts at exploring what is still sometimes called the "East of Byzantium".[8] We should here mention, again, the colossal work of Christina Maranci who, with her wide-ranging reflection, is bringing one medieval Armenian monument after another back to the knowledge of the international audience.[9] In this frame, in September 2018, an exhibition dedicated to Armenian art was opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.[10] Often venturing far beyond the disciplinary boundaries of art history, to cite just a few, figures such as Timothy Greenwood, Theo van Lint, Emilio Bonfiglio, Claudia Rapp, Lynn Jones, Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev, Robin Meyer, but also scholars such as James Baillie, John Latham-Sprinkle, Kate Franklin, Tara L. Andrews, Nicholas Matheou, Kevin Tuite, Stephen Rapp and others have contributed to disentangle the Caucasus and to consider it as a vibrant and complex cultural entity throughout the medieval period.[11] Likewise, scholars of Persian and Islamic art such as Yuka Kadoi and Finbarr Barry Flood have started to approach the intermingling of cultures and borrowings of objects across medieval Georgia and Armenia more systematically. We cannot mention all scholars involved in this new historiography here, but there's no denying an increasing

4 Durand/Rapti 2007.
5 E.g., Bacci/Kaffenberger/Studer-Karlen 2018 and the second volume of the present joint endeavor.
6 Foletti/Thunø 2016.
7 Foletti/Riccioni 2018a; Ferrari et al. 2020; Ferrari/Haroutyunian/Lucca 2021.
8 Eastmond 2017; *Idem* 2023; Blessing 2014.
9 E.g., Maranci 2001; *Eadem* 2015; *Eadem* 2018.
10 Evans 2018.
11 To cite just a few recent endeavors, see Bonfiglio/Rapp 2023; Alpi *et al.* 2022; Baillie 2022; Latham-Sprinkle 2022; Dorfmann-Lazarev 2022; Matheou 2021; Franklin 2021; Andrews 2016; Greenwood 2015; *Idem* 2005; Rapp 2014.

vitality in studies that are steadily seeing the Southern Caucasus not just as a passageway or a subordinate entity, but rather as a vital hub of the pre-modern world. Above all, it seems that a real dialogue – with all actors being equals and colonial dynamics giving way to international collaborations – is starting to be established between "East" and "West".[12] These are positive signs for a brighter future.

MAKING A "LABORATORY OF HUMANITIES"

To conceive and write this volume, a dedicated research team including master and doctoral students, post-doc researchers, and the project coordinator for the Brno team, Ivan Foletti was formed. As the reader will perhaps discover, a primary result of this volume is therefore not only the results achieved, the "substance" encountered in the body of the book, but also partly the changing mechanisms of the system in which this research was conducted.

Indeed, the level of collaboration achieved here is visible not only in the structure of the multi-author chapters but also in the individual subchapters which often required intensive collaborative writing on behalf of two authors. The book's structure itself required systematic coordination of the "laboratory" leader: Ivan Foletti, the head of the Czech part of the project which has focused on historiography. Adrien Palladino, postdoctoral fellow within the project, frequently assisted in coordinating the research. Structurally, the project required close coordination and oversight of the research conducted by younger colleagues. This was a decidedly positive point for us since mentorship is always bidirectional: coordinating the research and dealing with the original and innovative research of younger colleagues impressed new ideas and approaches on us.

Furthermore, over the three years of the project, the cohesion and exchange of ideas within the research team were monitored and fostered. Firstly, through two regular annual seminars with colleagues from Fribourg, the progressive results of our shared research were presented before leading international experts who were then invited to give us their feedback. There was also a semester-long master's course in which all members of the research group actively participated as guest lecturers for the students from Masaryk University. Held in virtual form given that we were in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, this course was an exceptional opportunity to collectively confront the various topics we were addressing together. Finally, there were study trips to the region, which not only gave the group greater cohesion but also allowed *in situ* exchanges with some of the actors in this volume on the historiography of sites scattered throughout the region.

12 See the reflection by Donabédian 2020.

Such a complex volume could only have been written with difficulty if the project had centered on the traditionally individualistic structure of the humanities. Furthermore, the "laboratory of humanities" functioning of this research project, as well as the continuous formation and exchange between students and scholars contributed to forming persons capable – and willing – to go beyond the margins of their specific research. It is only through real collaboration that such an effort could be brought to fruition – and this highlights the deep tie between political ideology and the fundamental structure of this (or any) discipline. This opens, we believe, several questions about the future of research in the European Union's framework of the humanities, which seems, unfortunately, to be increasingly dependent on fixed-term external funding designed to finance projects such as this. We hope that such a model of cooperative research can be perpetuated in future projects for, in addition to producing several scholarly outputs, it allowed us reciprocal education in the transfer of knowledge, which is in our view one of the challenges of the contemporary academy.

A MIRROR OF THE PRESENT: RESPONSIBILITY, COURAGE, AND CONFORMITY

A final question must be asked: what can we make of the foggy historiographic strata collected here? The picture that emerges from this volume is multifaceted, with disjointed tiles forming a picture that at first glance is very difficult to read. This entangled historiography is so related and linked that it is impossible to know one part without knowledge of the others and without sketching the whole. More than anything, this volume is thus – alongside all the work currently being done by colleagues around the world on the problematic historiography of the discipline of art history – an invitation to do more and, through the study of the individual parts, to understand the whole. We sincerely hope, alongside all the authors and all persons who were involved in this endeavor, that this text will thus open new perspectives and a debate about the role played by the discipline of art history in the preservation and politics of the region's art and culture.

In this frame, like any good mosaic, a glance at a distance reveals some obvious aspects more clearly. One that emerges with strength is the great conformity of most research. Between one regime and another, we can perceive, thus, how closely studies are tailored to fit the political and cultural climate. This was very strong in Soviet Russia, where there was no alternative: those who did not submit to the regime did not publish unless they produced samizdat – i.e.,

clandestine publications. The West was more diverse: during the interwar years, within Nazi and Fascist regimes, we see evidence of true academic courage. For example, the Italian art historian Lionello Venturi (1885–1961) openly disagreed with the positions imposed by the fascist regime with his writings. There was also open opposition to Nazism by (mainly) émigré art historians abroad. After the Second World War, an increase in plurality allowed different positions to be put forward depending on the political (and cultural) ideas of one and the other. Yet sadly, in most cases, it is striking to observe that, for almost two centuries, the history of the arts of the region was at the mercy of social, philosophical, and political moods, often without a firm and clear consciousness in this regard. Thus, pausing for a moment to gaze at the "world of yesterday" and how politics, mainstream scientific thinking, and Eurocentric perspectives profoundly impacted medieval art in the South Caucasus and its perception to the present day, it seems critical to restore the humanities to an active role in the world today.

Indeed, this cannot but raise questions about our own position in society today. In the 1990s, many had believed, despite the dramatic neoliberal economic changes, in the end of the world of ideologies. Art historical research – in free fall, in terms of its prestige, like all humanities – had accepted this trend of apparent apoliticality. Today, however, the situation looks very different as political binarism emerges: conservative nationalist studies and postcolonial studies, gender and queer theories and heteropatriarchal theories have all pushed research toward activism, an activism that is often promoted by private (or at any rate fee-paying) and therefore by nature elitist universities, institutions, and private sponsors. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have revealed a forcefully polarized society, a polarization that is also reflected within academia. Moreover, research is shaped by neoliberal patterns that increasingly push us to follow trends dictated by national and international scientific research agencies, including the diktat – imposed on the basis of alleged objectivity – of algorithms and citations. These trends not only reflect the needs and ideologies of the current regimes but often impoverish research, making it increasingly subservient to the authorities. A scholar who waits until the threshold of fifty for a tenure track job can hardly come up with opinions that break or seriously challenge the research trends promoted by de facto participating entities of neoliberal economics – such as private universities or the public grant agencies that follow the same trends as those prevalent in the

commercial world with increasing frequency due to the overlapping interests of sponsors and corporations.

A look back, however, shows us that conformist research will always be weak in comparison to genuinely critical research. The former brings few new insights when compared with the latter. The critical, genuinely creative spirit needed to make great discoveries does need – as the past shows – freedom, trust, and adequate funding. Utopian as this may seem, research in the humanities therefore needs freedom today as in the past, a freedom that must be won by playing an active role in society.

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INDEX OF NAMES

INDEX OF PLACES

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CHAPTER 1: [1–2, 4], Wikimedia Commons; **[3]**, from *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*, Paris 1847, pl. XLVII; **[5]**, from F. DuBois de Montperreux, *Voyage autour du Caucase*, 1838–1849; **[6–7]**, from C. Texier, *Description de l'Arménie, la Perse et la Mésopotamie*, 1842–1852; **[8]**, British Library, London; **[9]**, V&A Museum, London; **[10]**, from J. F. Blumenbach, *De generis humani varietate nativa*, Göttingen 1795, pl. II; **[11–12]**, Hamburger Kunsthalle / BPK, foto Christoph Irrgang.

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CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN THE MEDIEVAL SUBCAUCASIAN REGION:
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND ART-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES VOL. I

THE OTHERING GAZE:
IMPERIALISM, COLONIALISM, AND ORIENTALISM IN STUDIES ON MEDIEVAL ART IN THE SOUTHERN CAUCASUS (1801–1991)

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Beatrice Spampinato
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