

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

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

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

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

Ivan Foletti recently attempted to explain Kondakov's radical standpoint on the art of the Caucasus by showing that the art historian was writing at the time of Alexander III Romanov (1881-1894) when the region had long since been

militarily defeated and deprived of its own cultural diversity by the creation of the Caucasus Viceroyalty (fig. 1). This transformed it, once again in history, into a peripheral province of yet another empire (Foletti 2016). It seems that Kondakov's studies implicitly anchored this state of affairs in history, suggesting that the situation had never been different. With all the echoes of Byzantine presence in the history of Russia, it was all too tempting not to create another link of continuity between two empires, this time perceiving it in the art of several ancient peoples.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Platon Ioseliani Walking the Borderlines

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

3 Count Gagarin Empire in Style

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

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

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

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

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

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

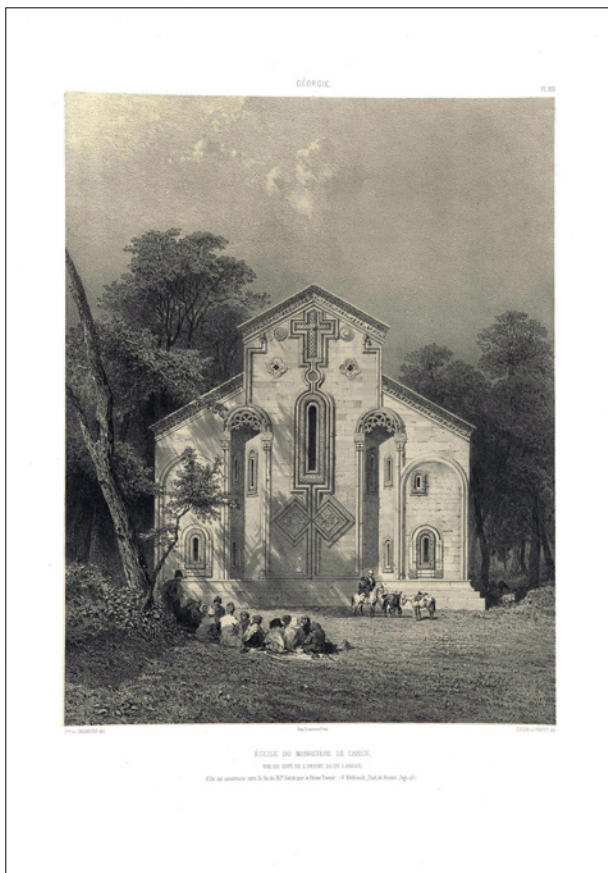
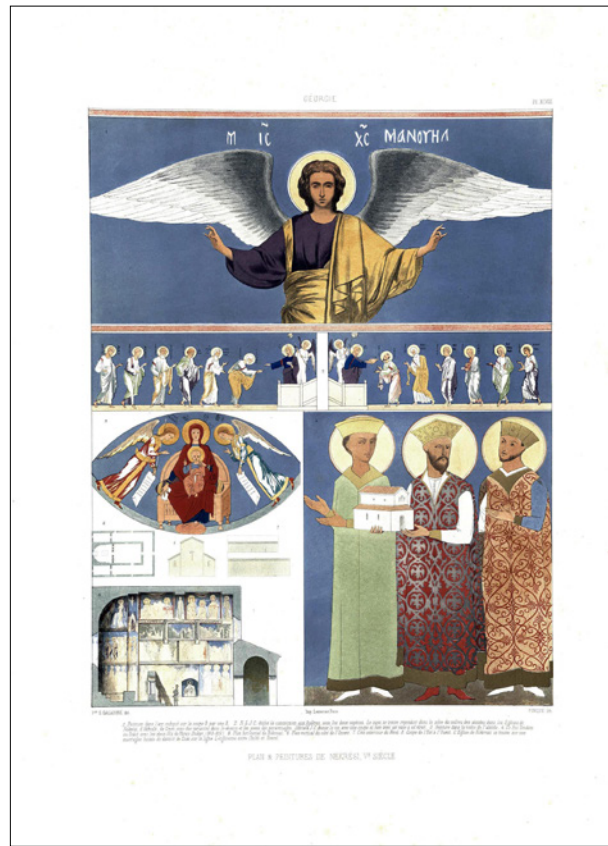
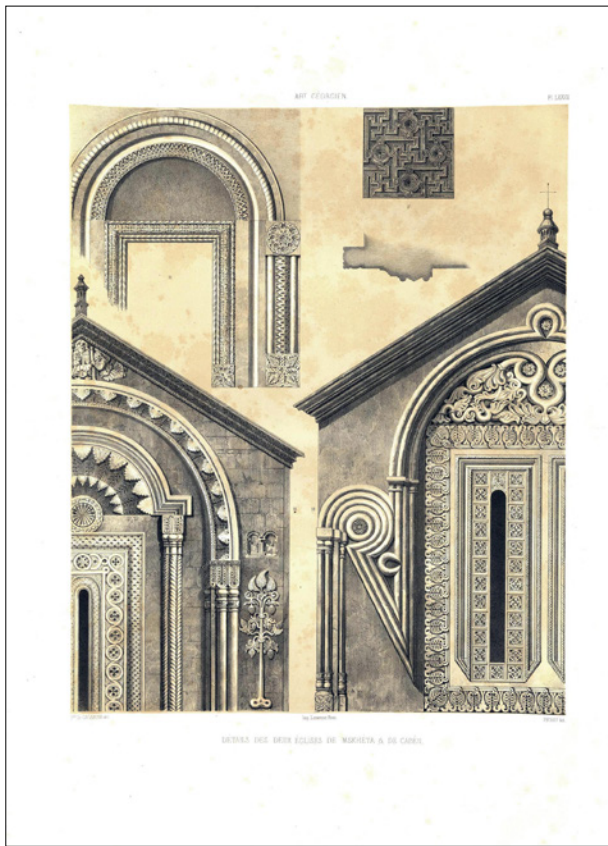


Figure 5. Decorations in Mtscheta. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. LXXVII

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

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



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

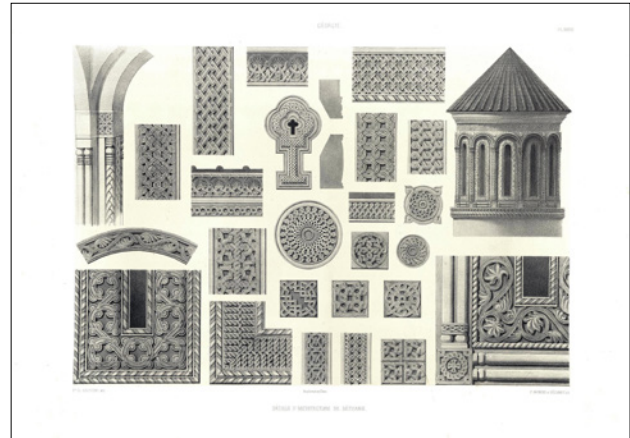


Figure 9. *Decorations in Bethanie*. Illustration from: *Le Caucase pittoresque dessiné d'après nature par le Prince Gregoire Gagarine*. Paris, 1847, pl. XXXVII

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 Conclusion

In 1801, Alexander I promised – while incorporating Georgia into the Russian empire – true liberty for the country, while presenting it as a cultural stronghold. The reality was quite different: a strong force of russification pushed to include the country in the Russian world. In the 1840s, Ioseliani and Gagarin – a Georgian cleric and a Russian count – present us with how, after two generations, the country had really integrated into the empire. Orthodoxy – which became one of the three key words for autarchic power under Nicholas I: Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nation – is perceived as a place of cohesion from both points of view. The Georgian intellectual justified the union with a theological situation: Georgians, true ancient Christians, agreed with the Greeks on everything, so it is logical that they were in perfect communion with the

Greco-Russian church. There is little doubt that Metropolitan Bolkhovitinov, the historian Ioseliani, Metropolitan Filaret and the artist and Count Grigory Gagarin truly believed in a sacred authority of the past glories of the Empires. The cosmopolitan and Russian count, on the other hand, sees Georgian antiquities as proof of it being a Byzantine outpost in Russia. Actually, for him, the Caucasus is the place where Byzantium and Russia overlap in some way. In his monumental album of illustrations, he puts forward a series of monuments that show a clear continuity going from Constantinople and Ravenna, through Georgia to Moscow. Notably, this idea, certainly in sync with the 1856 imperial decree, was not favoured by most of the Russian elite in the 1850s, still too attached to a perspective that was determined by at least neoclassical, if not Westernist, tastes. When Kondakov claimed the pre-eminence of Byzantine art in the history of Russian art towards the end of the nineteenth century, he continued to elaborate on the same strategy, without which the annexation of Georgia would look like occupation or colonization, but with which this small country can be perceived as a crossroads of two mighty powers, or as a double province, squeezed between the all-powerful and real Russia and the elusive but nonetheless as present and powerful ghost of Constantine's realm.

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