

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

Alžběta Filipová
(Ivane Djavakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia)

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

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

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

1 Introduction

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

The composition of the Treasure is a result of a generally growing interest the Georgian intellectual elite had for the tangible past of their country in the last third of the nineteenth century. This is, of course, not an isolated phenomenon, but rather is typical of the nineteenth-century flourishing of national histories in the period of

proliferation of nationalism all over Europe.¹ It should nevertheless also be understood as part of the establishment of the scientific discipline of archaeology in Europe and Russia, and thus the systematic exploration of the past, reflecting different aims and claims in the present (cf. Schnirelmann 2001; Olin 1994). The Southern Caucasian lands, inhabited since the dawn of humanity, marked by constantly shifting borders and dominations, became a battlefield of interpretation in terms of their cultural heritage. As Eric Hobsbawm rightly pointed out in his now classic work *The Invention of Tradition*, "the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement, is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so" (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983, 13). Starting in 1801, the numerous Georgian monarchies, divided since the

I would like to express my gratitude to the Swiss National Fund for giving me the opportunity to conduct my research in Georgia, under the auspices of the program *Early Post-doc Mobility*. I would also like to thank Prof. Zaza Skhirtladze for his warm and hospitable welcome in Tbilisi and his constant willingness to help me with my research, Prof. Oliver Reisner for the fruitful discussions and his valuable insights on the problems of cultural heritage in the Caucasus, and Papuna Chivadze for his assistance with Georgian references.

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

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

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

2 Discovering the Southern Caucasus

The earliest modern accounts of travel to the Caucasus, starting in the seventeenth century, were mainly focused on describing the unfamiliar dramatic mountainous landscapes and the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 Russian Collectors of Georgian Medieval Artefacts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

4 Georgian Archaeology: Dimitri Bakradze and Ekvtime Taqaishvili

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

(2015, 96). This was done with a flourishing literary production in the Georgian language, which was first restricted and then totally excluded from state school curricula, and also by founding numerous cultural societies, starting in the 1860s. The most important of these, a real key organization for the national movement, the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians⁶ was founded in 1879 and organized mainly by Ilia Chavchavadze, Dimitri Kipiani and Iakob Gogebashvili (Gabisonia 2012, 73). Although the Georgian language continued to be repressed, the Society, entirely dependent on membership fees, was successful in opening numerous elementary schools and libraries on the Georgian mainland, and in places with a considerable presence of ethnic Georgians (Vladikavkaz or Baku) (Reisner 2004, 160-74).

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

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

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

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

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

In 1875, Bakradze published his work *The Caucasus in Ancient Monuments of Christianity* (Bakradze 1875). This extensive study of some 320 Christian monuments in the Southern Caucasus does not follow a chronological, regional or thematic approach; the different Armenian and Georgian monuments are placed in strict alphabetical order and the book is written in Russian. This could be understood as an implicit way of projecting the contemporary political unity of this region onto the unity of the artistic production of the Middle Ages. As indicated, Bakradze did not have a specifically art historical or archaeological education, he was mainly a theologian and historian. In 1879, he joined Dimitri Kipiani and Ilia Chavchavadze in the establishment of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians and actively participated in its activities (cf. Dumbadze 1950). In 1889, he published, in Georgian, the *History of Georgia from Ancient Times until the End of the Tenth Century* (Bakradze 1889). Nevertheless, despite his enormous efforts to organize scientific and cultural life in Georgia, despite his pub-

lication of an extensive work on Georgian history in the Georgian language, and in spite of the fact that the Georgian national liberation movement was in a full swing, Bakradze's major archaeological publications (including his assistance to Kondakov) reflect Russian colonial policy to a certain extent, because they were sponsored by the state, under the auspices of the Imperial Archeological Commission, in a period of thorough russification.

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

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

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

11 Cf. Schnirelmann 2001; for Armenian historiography of medieval architecture see Maranci 2001.

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

5 Georgian National Treasure

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

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

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

The Church Museum at the Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi was preceded by the establishment, as early as 1852, of the Museum of the Caucasian Department of the Russian Imperial Geographic Society, the very first museum in the whole Caucasus region, located in Tbilisi. On the initiative of the German explorer Gustav Radde, this museum converted into a more broadly focused Caucasus Museum in 1865.²⁰ Like its predecessor, the museum had a bias towards ethnography and natural history, but it enriched its collections with objects from the past, as archaeological research progressed throughout the Caucasus (Gamqrelidze 2012, 9 and 21). It mainly preserved numismatic materials, weapons, armour, jewellery and other archaeological items discovered during the numerous excavations. But officially-led excavations were not the only way to discover treasures from the past. Many casual finds occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century, during heavy rains and earth removals for house constructions, like for example the famous Akhalkalaki Treasure, as-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25 The process of negotiation and selecting the items to be returned is described in Amiranashvili 1978, 3-10. Among the returned artifacts, there were also the gilded and enameled icons from Khakhuli, Jumati and Shemokhmedi from Mikhail Botkin's collection, appropriated by the state after the October Revolution.

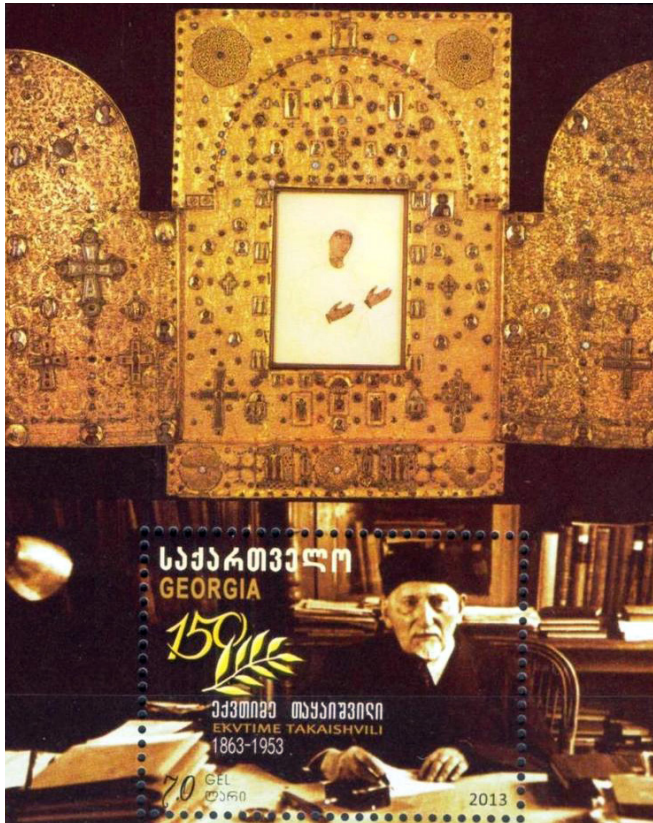


Figure 8. Collection stamp issued at the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Ekvtime Taqaishvili, 2013

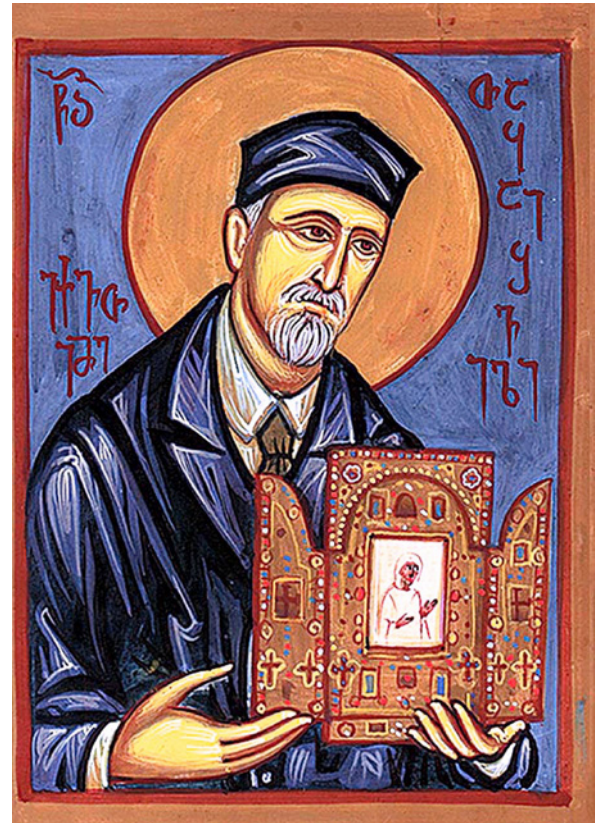


Figure 9. Contemporary icon of Saint Euthymius (Taqaishvili), the Man of God. URL <https://www.holytrinityorthodox.com/calendar/los/January/03-04.jpg>

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

6 Conclusion

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

Serrano has accurately argued that “links with Russia, Westernization as well as the development of national-liberation movement against Russian colonialism facilitated the development of national consciousness and secularization of the society and religion, which in turn helped to transform religious relics into secular cultural symbols of the nation” (Serrano 2010, 282). On the contrary, hand in hand with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Georgian Orthodox Church progressively gained a very strong position within Georgian society, to such an extent that the

modern-day Georgian nationalism has been remodelled around religious categories (cf. Zedania 2011). As a proof of it may serve that The Holy Synod of the Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church canonized Ekvtime Taqaishvili on October 17, 2002, and proclaimed him a ‘Man of God’.²⁶ To conclude, no case could illustrate better the process of the secularisation and nationalisation of religious heritage and, at the same time, the sanctification of national heroes than the history of the Georgian National Treasure (figs. 8, 9).

Bibliography

- Amiranashvili, Shalva (1972). *Khakhulis karedi* (The Icon of Khakhuli). Tbilisi.
- Amiranashvili, Shalva [1968] (1978). *Sakartvelodan skhavadaskhva dros gatanili samuzeumo gandzeuloba da misi dabruneba* (Georgian Museum Treasures Taken away and Returned in Different Times). Tbilisi.
- Bakradze, Dimitri (1875). *Kavkaz v drevnikh pamiatnikakh khriastiantsva* (Caucasus in the Ancient Monuments of Christianity). Tbilisi.
- Bakradze, Dimitri (1878). *Arkheologicheskoe puteshestvie po Gruzii i Adjare* (Archaeological Excursions in Georgia and Adjara). St. Petersburg: Izdat’el’stvo Akademii nauk.
- Bakradze, Dimitri (1889). *Istoria sakartvelosi. udzvelesi droidan me-X saukunis dasarulamde* (History of Georgia from the Ancient Period to the End of the 10th Century). Tbilisi.
- Barnett, Richard, D. (1972). “Sir Robert Ker Porter: Regency Artist and Traveller”. *Iran*, 10, 19-24.
- Baumgartner, Bruno (2009). “Unknown and less Known Georgian Monuments in Northeast Turkey”. *The Proceedings of the International Symposium ‘Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures’* (21-29 June 2008). Skinner, Peter; Tumanishvili, Dimitri; Shanshiashvili, Anna (eds.). Tbilisi: Georgian Arts & Culture Center.
- Bedianashvili, Giorgi; Bodet, Catherine (2010). “Koban Necropolis, Tombs 9 and 12: The Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age of the Northern Caucasus”. *Tüba-ar: Turkish Academy of Sciences Journal of Archaeology*, 13, 227-92.
- Braund, David (1994). *Georgia in Antiquity. A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 B.C.-A.D.* Oxford : Clarendon Press.
- Breyfogle, Nicholas (2005). *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia’s Empire in the South Caucasus*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Bubulashvili, Eldar (2006). “The Georgian Exarchate, 1850-1900”. Grdzeldze, George, Vischer 2006, 135-69.
- Buckton, David (2001). “Stalin and Georgian Enamels”. Eastmond, Anthony (ed.), *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*. London: Routledge, 211-8.
- Chantre, Ernest (1886). *Recherches anthropologiques dans le Caucase*, vol. 2, *Période protohistorique*. Paris: C. Reinwald.
- Cheishvili, Ana (2013). “Le baron Joseph de Baye, un archéologue Français dans le Caucase”. *Canard du Caucase*, 2(11), 13-15.
- Chkhvitunidze, Tengiz (1980). *Kartvelta shoris cera-kitkhvis gamavrcelebeli sazogadoebis sabiblioteko da sagamomcemlo moghvaceoba* (The Printing and Librarian Activity of the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians). Tbilisi.
- Cracraft, James (2003). *The Revolution of Peter the Great*. Cambridge (MA); London: Harvard University Press.
- Díaz-Andreu, Margarita (2007). *A World History of Nineteenth-Century Archaeology. National-*

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

- ism, Colonialism and the Past. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dumbadze, M. (1950). *Istorikosi dimitri bakradze (tskhovreba da moghvatseoba)* (Historian Dimitri Bakradze [life and activity]). Batumi.
- Durnovo, Nikoloz (1907). *Sud'by gruzinskoj cerkvi* (The Fates of the Georgian Church). Moscow.
- Foletti, Ivan (2016). "The Russian View of a 'Peripheral' Region. Nikodim P. Kondakov and the Southern Caucasus". Foletti, Ivan; Thunø, Erik (eds.), *The Medieval South Caucasus. Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia, Convivium supplementum*, 21-35.
- Foletti, Ivan (2017). *From Byzantium to Holy Russia. Nikodim Kondakov (1844-1925) and the Invention of the Icon*. Rome: Viella.
- Frolov, Eduard D. (2006). *Russkaya nauka ob antichnosti. Storiograficheskie ocherki* (Russian Science of Antiquity. Historiographical Essays). St. Petersburg: Izdatel'skii Tsentr 'Gumanitarnaya Akademiia'.
- Gabisonia, Aleksandre (2012). "Formation of the Georgian National Discourse". *Identity Studies*, 4, 66-81.
- Gamqrelidze, Gela (2012). "The Archaeology in Georgia". *Researches in Iberia-Colchology: History and Archaeology of Ancient Georgia*. Tbilisi: Georgian National Museum, 5-37.
- Geary, Patrick J. (2002). *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Grdzeldze, Tamara; George, Martin; Vischer, Lukas (eds.) (2006). *Witness Through Troubled Times. A History of the Orthodox Church of Georgia 1811 to the Present*. London, Bennett & Bloom.
- Hewitt, George (2003). "Western travellers to the Caucasus". Speake, Jennifer (ed.), *The Literature of Travel and Exploration*, vol. 1. New York; London: Fitzroy Dearbon, 199-202.
- Hille, Charlotte M.L. (2010). *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*. Leyden: Brill.
- Hobsbawm, Eric; Ranger, Terence (1983). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Ken Porter, Robert (1822). *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia During the Years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, vol. 2. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown.
- Kharatishvili, Nona (2014). "Ekvtime Takaishvili and Dimitri Shevarnadze". Kharakadze, Nana; Tskhadadze, Badri; Tsutskiridze, Dारेजान (eds.), *Ekvtime Takaishvili - 150 jubilee scholarly conference "The path from layman to the man of God"*. Tbilisi: Georgian Technical University, 105-9.
- Khatchadourian, Lori (2008). "Making Nations from the Ground Up: Traditions of Classical Archaeology in the South Caucasus". *American Journal of Archaeology*, 112, 247-78.
- Khrushkova, Ljudmila (2011). "Geschichte der Christlichen Archäologie in Russland vom 18. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert (1. Folge)". *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*, 106(3-4), 229-52.
- Kondakov, Nikodim Pavlovich (1890). *Opis' pamjatnikov drevnosti v nektorich chramach Gruzii* (The Description of the Ancient Artifacts in some Sanctuaries in Georgia). St. Petersburg.
- Laloy, Jean (1982). "À Moscou: entre Staline et de Gaulle, décembre 1944". *Revue des Études Slaves*, 54(1-2), 137-52.
- Lang, David Marshall (1962). *A Modern History of Georgia*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Lazarev, Viktor (1925). *N.P. Kondakov*. Moscow.
- Manning, Paul (2008). "Materiality and Cosmology : Old Georgian Churches as Sacred, Sublime, and Secular Objects". *Ethnos : Journal of Anthropology*, 73(3), 327-60.
- Maranci, Christina (2001). *Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation*. Leuven: Peeters. Hebrew University Armenian Studies 3.
- Megrelidze, I.V. (1960). "O zhizni i epigraficheskikh rabotakh E. S. Takaishvili" (About the Life and Epigraph Works of E.S. Takaishvili). *Epigrafika vostoka*, 13, 3-10.
- Metreveli, Roin (2010). *Ekvtime Takaishvili (1863-1953) Biobibliography*. Tbilisi: National Scientific Library.
- Moretti, Simona (2009). "Gregorio Stroganoff. Il collezionismo russo e l'arte bizantina a Roma tra il XIX e il XX secolo". Maria Lucia, Tonini (a cura di), *Il Collezionismo in Russia da Pietro I all'Unione Sovietica = Atti del Convegno internazionale* (Napoli, 2-4 febbraio 2006). Formia: Artistic & Publishing Company, 115-29.
- Olin, Margaret (1994). "Alois Riegl: The Late Roman Empire in the Late Hapsburg Empire". Robertson, V.R.; Timms, E. (eds.), *The Hapsburg Legacy. National Identity in Historical Perspective, Austrian Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Paliashvili, Ketevan (1995). *Sakartvelos saezarkhoso 1900-1917* (The Exarchate of Georgia 1900-1917). Tbilisi.

- Papulashvili, Nugzar (2003). "Obsk'urant'izm v gruzii" ("Obscurantism in Georgia". Religion and Society). *Religia i obshchest'vo*, vol. 2. Tbilisi: Tsent'r k'ul't'urnykh vzaimosvjazej.
- Passini, Michela (2012). *La Fabrique de l'art national: Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne (1870-1933)*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'homme.
- Pokrovskij, T. I. (1911). s.v. "Kondakov". *Enciclopedia teologica*, vol. 12. Ed. by N.N. Glubokovskij. St. Petersburg, 3-11.
- Rakitin, Pavel (2013). "Byzantine Echoes in the Nineteenth Century Press and in the Writings of Russian Intellectuals". *Opuscula Historiae Artium, Suppl.*, 62, 98-109.
- Rapp, Stephen H. (2003). *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts and Eurasian Contexts*. Turnhout: Brepols. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 601; Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Subsidia, 113
- Reisner, Oliver (2004). *Die Schule der georgischen Nation - eine sozialhistorische Untersuchung der nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der 'Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung der Lese- und Schreibkunde unter den Georgiern' (1850-1917)*. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Reisner, Oliver (2009). "Travelling between Two Worlds - the Tergdaleulebi, Their Identity Conflict and National Life". *Identity Studies*, 1, 36-50.
- Reisner, Oliver (2015). "Georgian Student Encounters with Russian and European Universities, 1861-1917. A Generational Approach". In: "Introduction to European Encounters with Georgia in past and present", ed. by Françoise Companjen. *Anthropological Researches*, 2, Special issue, 88-102.
- Rayfield, Donald (2012). *Edge of Empires. A History of Georgia*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Schnirelmann, Viktor (2001). *The Value of the Past. Myths, Identity and Politics in Transcaucasia*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Sagona, Antonio (2018). *The Archaeology of the Caucasus: From Earliest Settlements to the Iron Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schnapp, Alain (1993). *La conquête du passé. Aux origines de l'archéologie*. Paris: Éditions Carré.
- Semyonova, Natalya; Iljine, Nicolas (eds.) (2013). *Selling Russia's Treasures. The Soviet Trade in Nationalized Art (1917-1938)*. Paris: The M.T. Abraham Center for the Visual Arts Foundation.
- Serrano, Silvia (2010). "From Culture to Cult : Museum Collections and Religion in Contemporary Georgian National Discourse". Tsitsishvili, Nino (ed.), *Cultural Paradigms and political change in the Caucasus*. S.l.: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor (1994). *The Making of the Georgian Nation. Second Edition*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor (2001). "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations". *The Journal of Modern History*, 73(4), 862-96.
- Taqashvili, Ekvtime (1905-1915). *Arkheologicheskie ekskursii razyskanija i zametki* (Archaeological Excursions. Investigations and Notes). Tbilisi: Tipografija K.P. Kozlovskogo.
- Taqashvili, Ekvtime (1937). *Arkheologiuri mogzauroba Lechkhum-Svanetshi 1910 cels* (Archaeological travel to Lechkhumi-Svaneti in 1910). Paris. Reprinted: Tbilisi, 1991.
- Taqashvili, Ekvtime (1938). *Arkheologiuri expedicia kola-oltisi da changlshi 1907 cels* (Archaeological Expedition to Kola-Oltisi and Changli in 1907). Paris.
- Taqashvili, Ekvtime (1952). *Arkheologicheskaja expedicia 1917 goda v iuzhnye provincii Gruzii*. (Archaeological Expedition in the Southern Provinces of Georgia in 1917). Tbilisi.
- Taqashvili, Ekvtime (1991). "Samusulmano sakartvelo" (Muslim Georgia). Sharadze, Guram (ed.), *Dabruneba: emigrantuli nashromeli* (Return: the works from emigration). Tbilisi.
- Taqashvili, Ekvtime (2016-2017). *Tkhzulebani* (Works). 4 vols. Edited by Roin Metreveli. Tbilisi: Artanuji.
- Thomson, Robert W. (1996). *Rewriting Caucasian History: the Medieval Armenian Adaptation of the Georgian Chronicles; the Original Georgian Texts and the Armenian Adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tonini, Maria Lucia (a cura di) (2009). *Il Collezionismo in Russia da Pietro I all'Unione Sovietica = Atti del Convegno internazionale* (Napoli, 2-4 febbraio 2006). Formia: Artistic & Publishing Company.
- Zedania, Giga (2011). "The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia". *Identity Studies*, 3, 120-8.