

The objective of this project is an insightful analysis of the development of the national style idea in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russian Empire, as well as an attempt to systematize Russian thought of architecture theory; with a particular emphasis on its representative, and at the same time, a scholar, Grigory Grigorievich Gagarin (1810-1893): his views, postulates, and artistic achievements.

An analysis of Gagarin's writings shows two major threads: the first one is bound with an amplified discourse on defining a new national style in architecture of Russian Empire – it was Gagarin who first attempted to formulate clear theoretical groundings of a new, so-called Russian Byzantine style. At the same time, he did not avoid a confrontation of Russian and Western European art, trying to point out the connections between evolution of certain styles and their mutual influence. The other important thread pertained to the heritage of the Caucasus region, a southern frontier of the Russian Empire at the time. Gagarin appreciated especially the architecture of Georgia, to the point of portraying it as the exemplar of the art untainted by external influence, rooted in an old tradition. Gagarin studied the culture of the region, what can be seen in albums published by him, showing, among other things, local clothing, genre scenes, weapons, and craftsmanship. He was also, especially at the beginning of his studies, searching for clear influence of Byzantine art on Georgian or Armenian traditions.

The planned research will, therefore, address the issue of searching for the proper national style in the environment of the Russian elite of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in the context of the tension associated with the choice between the Eastern and Western traditions. At the same time, it is necessary to overcome bias in both "Russian-centric" and "Eurocentric" research, due to which the achievements and tradition of both circles are mutually ignored.

Recognition of these issues on the basis of archival, museum and library inquiries will bring closer the answer to the question that Josef Strzygowski will soon put in relation to the alleged sources of ancient art: "Rome or the East"? In the case of Gagarin's quest, it is a postulated source of an ideal pattern for Russian national art.

The results of the actions set out above should have the following benefits: outlining the nature of the search for the national style in Russia against the European background, including archives and works by Gagarin and preserved in Georgia, which so far have not been taken into account, also the undertaken research will provide insight into the activity and discourse of nineteenth-century architects and theoreticians of architecture in the Russian Empire of that time, practically currently poorly researched or completely undiscovered, especially in relation to program assumptions and their implementation in main centers and peripheral regions. It is also necessary to show theoretician impact on formation of policy Russian Empire in the context for the integration of lands under the authority of the Empire.

The fact of particular importance is that there will be the recognition of Gagarin's artistic and scientific biography, which was a model example of a learned Russian aristocrat during the apogee of the development of the Russian Empire, will allow to understand the mechanisms of shaping new elite enlightened layers that are the link between the thinkers of the European Enlightenment and the cadres of state universities of modern Europe. Consequently, Gagarin's contribution to the systematization of knowledge about the Caucasus cultures, their chronology and its popularization through regularly published volumes devoted to architecture, costumes, everyday life, published in Russian and French, not only in Russia but also in France, will be revealed.