

Heritage in Greater Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Brno, 29–30 Sep 25)

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, Sep 29–30, 2025

Deadline: Mar 30, 2025

Alzbeta Filipova

Shared and Contested Heritage in Greater Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, 1870–1991.

We invite contributions for an international conference exploring the role of medieval cultural heritage in the construction of new identities across the states of the former Inter-Imperial zone (Russian, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian) and the Soviet geopolitical orbit, from the last quarter of the 19th century to the fall of Soviet Union. While medieval is a fluid term – a historiographic myth in itself, varying across regions and historiographies – this conference will focus on monuments, sites, and objects traditionally linked to the medieval past that have played a crucial role in modern territorial and national disputes.

Medieval monuments in these regions have been subject to systematic and repeated scholarly reinterpretation, architectural reconstruction, erasure and partial or total destruction, often to serve nationalist or imperialist narratives. Sometimes, these processes were driven by local groups seeking to assert their power and influence. At other times, as it occurred e.g. in the USSR, official state policies actively promoted the notion of 'titular nations', even in ethnically diverse territories. The heritage interpretation was thus shaped to fit state ideologies. Shifting borders and ethnic conflicts served to further eliminate superposition, syncretism, and shared cultural histories embedded in the history of these monuments. Art history has thus played a critical role in these processes, sometimes reinforcing exclusive claims to heritage and, in extreme cases, contributing to broader geopolitical tensions and armed conflicts.

This conference seeks to critically engage with these dynamics by addressing themes including:

- Art historical, historical and archaeological scholarship and its role in legitimizing or contesting territorial claims
- The political instrumentalization of medieval monuments in nation-building processes
- Architectural restorations as acts of historical erasure or rewriting
- The impact of border shifts on heritage interpretation and preservation
- The entanglement of art history with ethnic conflicts and ideological agendas
- State heritage policies and their effects on contested medieval sites

Although the core of the conference is expected to focus on contested historiographies, we also welcome papers that bring a perspective of hope, highlighting peace-building initiatives in these regions through mutual respect for cultural heritage.

The conference will be held at the Hans Belting Library, Department of Art History, Masaryk Univer-

sity in Brno, Czech Republic, from September 29 to 30, 2025. The organization will cover the costs of accommodation, meals, and offer reimbursement – within reasonable bounds – for travel expenses. This conference is organized within the project “Demarginalizing Medieval Georgia: History of Art History between Colonial Perspective and Nationalist Appropriation (1921–1991)”, Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions.

Organizers:

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We welcome submissions from scholars across disciplines, including art history, history, heritage studies, cultural studies, and related fields. Please submit an abstract (300 words) and a short bio (150 words) by March 30, 2025 to alzbeta.filipova@phil.muni.cz.

Reference:

CFP: Heritage in Greater Eastern Europe and the Caucasus (Brno, 29-30 Sep 25). In: Arthist.net, Feb 11, 2025 (accessed Jun 11, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/43924>>.