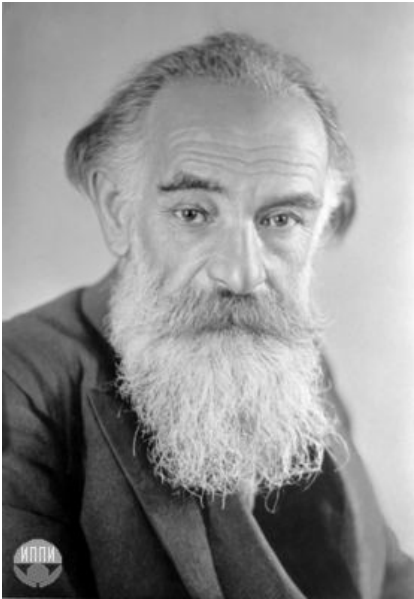


**HOVSEP ORBELI (JOSEPH ORBELI)  
(1887-1961)**



Hovsep Orbeli was born on March 20, 1887 in Kutaisi (Russian Georgia) to the family of Abgar Orbeli and Varvara Arghutinskaya (both representatives of ancient aristocratic families). In 1904 he graduated from the Third Men's Gymnasium in Tbilisi with a Gold Medal, and in 1911 from the Faculty of History and Philology of the University of St. Petersburg. At the same time, he was attending the courses of the Armenian-Georgian-Persian department of the Oriental Faculty of the University. He was involved in research since he was a student, and wrote articles on art for Brockhaus and Efron's new encyclopedic dictionary.

In 1906-1917, H. Orbeli participated in the excavations of Ani and other archaeological expeditions under the leadership of N. Marr, his teacher. The excavations at Ani were a great archaeological school for H. Orbeli. From these campaigns he gained a deep knowledge of the archaeological material and its interpretation. Views of the monuments of Ani gave rise to a number of new and important ideas that soon became the basis of his works on the cultures of the Near East. Becoming the closest employee of N. Marr, he, along with other responsibilities, managed the Ani Archaeological Museum. In 1908 the museum's new building was completed. H. Orbeli prepared and published a guide to the excavated city, then compiled a scientific list of materials of the museum. Later, summarizing all the knowledge he had accumulated about the history of Ani and its monuments, he published another popular science book entitled "The Ruins of Ani".

In 1909, he also studied the Armenian inscriptions in Artsakh. In 1911-1912, on a scientific trip organized by the Russian Academy of Sciences, he studied the dialect and folklore of the Armenians and Kurds of Moks (Western Armenia), the architectural monuments of Erzurum, Bayazet, Van, Akhtamar, Bagavan, and carried out archaeological excavations in Toprakkale and Haykaber.

Hovsep Orbeli taught archaeology, History of Armenia and Kurdish language at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of St. Petersburg since 1914. In 1916, he participated in a Russian archaeological expedition around the Lake Van region; it was here that he discovered an inscription attributed to the Urartian king Sarduri II. In 1917-1918 he carried lectures at the Petrograd University, at the Institute of Archaeology and the Lazaryan Institute of Oriental Languages, Moscow.

He wrote a fundamental monograph entitled as "Akhtamar", where he studies medieval historical monuments of Western Armenia. The study of the works of Pavstos Buzand, Shapuh Bagratuni, Anania Shirakatsi, the translations of Yeghishe and Ghazar

Parpetsi's works, as well as the "Fables of Medieval Armenia" are also connected with his name.

In 1919 H. Orbeli was awarded the title of Professor.

He was also the Head of the Chairs of the History of Armenian-Georgian philology (1925-1929), History of Material Culture (1929-1931) and History of the Near East (1956-1961).

The best pages of his biography are related to the Hermitage. In 1920-1951 H.Orbeli worked at the State Hermitage, first as a museum keeper, then as the founder and head of the Eastern Department, and from 1934 as the director of the Hermitage (1934-1951).

In 1934, as a member of the Soviet delegation, he went to Iran for the Ferdowsi millennial celebrations and visited the cities of Tehran and Mashhad.

In addition to administrative work, he continued his scientific activities. In 1936 H. Orbeli studied the pagan temple of Garni, explored the monuments of Armenia - Ptghni, Ashtarak and Amberd.

During the World War II, he personally supervised the evacuation of the Hermitage's treasures and their reversion after the war. During his free time, he read lectures for Soviet soldiers on the front. In 1946, during the Nuremberg Trials, H. Orbeli spoke as a witness.

He was also the director of the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the USSR Academy of Sciences (1937-1939), a senior researcher at the Institute of Linguistics (1953-1956). In 1956, he founded the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences and headed it for the rest of his life.

H.Orbeli was a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences (he was elected Corresponding Member in 1924 and member of the Academy in 1935). In 1938 H. Orbeli was elected President of the Armenian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences (1938-1943). Despite the war, on November 29, 1943 he was unanimously elected the first president of the Academy of Sciences of Soviet Armenia (1943-1947). At the same time, he headed the Institute of History of the Armenian Academy of Sciences (1943-1947).

While still working in Leningrad, he took special care of Armenian students and graduate students, and in fact educated an entire generation. H. Orbeli was an unusually bright personality, a unique orator, a brilliant scholar dedicated to his work. He served science for more than half a century.

H.Orbeli also organized exhibitions on significant anniversaries: the millennium of the birth of Ferdowsi, the classic of Persian poetry, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Alexander Pushkin, the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shota Rustaveli's "Vagrenavor ("The Knight in the Panther's Skin")" and the millennium of the Armenian heroic epic David of Sassoon.

H. Orbeli also made a significant contribution to the study and publication of Armenian lithography, Armenian dialectology, and Kurdish lexicography. Orbeli stood out not only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Soviet Union, not only in Oriental studies, but also in

social science in general, with his great talent as a science organizer, rare charisma, courageous social attitude, unwavering devotion to science and work, uprightness, honesty, kindness and humanity.

H. Orbeli was an Honored Scientist of the Armenian SSR (1938). In 1935 he was awarded the title of Honorary Professor of the University of Tehran, in 1944 he was elected an honorary member of the London Archaeological Society, and in 1945 a corresponding member of the Iranian Academy of Sciences. He was awarded 2 Lenin Orders and 2 Red Banners of Labor, the Order of the First Degree of Scientific Services of Iran.

The Orbeli Brothers (Levon Orbeli, Ruben Orbeli, Hovsep Orbeli) Museum (1982) operates in Tsakhkadzor, Republic of Armenia.

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