

Ashkharbek Kalantar

(1884-1942)



A.Kalantar was a prominent Armenian archaeologist and art historian, one of the pioneers of Armenian archaeology.

He was born in Ardvin, Borchalu district of the Russian Empire to the aristocratic family of Loris Melik and Arghutyans. After graduating in 1905 the Nersisyan school and gymnasium in 1907 (Tiflis) he continued his education at the Department of History and Philology at the University of Saint-Petersburg. Among the teachers of A.Kalantar was the well-known Orientalist N.Marr.

Between 1912-1917 A.Kalantar participated in the excavations of Ani, the capital city of the medieval Armenian kingdom of Bagratids.

A.Kalantar was elected as a full member of the Archaeological Institute of Saint Petersburg in 1912 and member of the Imperial Archaeological Society in 1914. In that same year he was appointed as the keeper of the Asiatic Museum of Saint Petersburg.

During World War I A.Kalantar participated in the military operations in the Caucasian front as translator and advisor of general Andranik.

A.Kalantar had organizational skills. He was active both in scholarship and endowed with organizational skills. In 1918, during the First Republic of Armenia he organized the evacuation of about 6000 items from Ani to Yerevan, which are currently kept in the History Museum. In the next year he was among those scholars who established the University of Yerevan. This was followed by the establishment of the Commission of Ancient Monuments in 1919 (along with architect A.Tamanyan and painter M.Saryan). Later, in 1922 he opened the chair of Archaeology and Oriental history in the University. In the 1920-30s, until his arrest in 1938, A.Kalantar studied several archaeological sites on the territory of Armenia (about 30 expeditions), held lectures at the university, participated in archaeological conferences.

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