



**For the History of the Relationship of the Kingdom of
Kakheti with Jerusalem in the XVI Century**

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Abstract

In the XVI century, the moderate foreign policy and diplomatic moves of the political rulers of the Kingdom of Kakheti led to the relatively stable and peaceful development of Kakheti throughout the century. It greatly contributed to economic and cultural reconstruction within the country, and abroad, especially in the "Holy Land" and "Holy City of Jerusalem" to the support of the Georgian churches-monasteries, the Georgian monastic community and to the protection of the greatest Christian sanctity, the "Tomb of Christ" and the rights of the Georgians there. Beena Cholokashvili, who was sent to the court of the Mamluk sultans of Egypt by the king of Kakheti, Avgiorgi (1511-1513), became an energetic defender of Georgian rights in the first decades of the XVI century. Then the kings of Kakheti, Levan (1518/1520-1574) and Alexander II (1574-1605) sent a rich donation to Jerusalem, took care of the restoration of Golgotha, which was damaged during the rule of the Ottomans, sacrificed villages, serfs in Kakheti (Easter, Kisiskevi), built churches and tried to protect the Christian sanctuaries of Jerusalem and the rights of Georgians on their way to the "holy land" as soon as the political weather was favourable. All

said above in addition to the already known historical sources, have been confirmed by Arabic and Ottoman documents discovered in recent decades.

Keywords: Kingdom of Kakheti; Jerusalem; Monastery of the Cross; Golgotha; Georgian Monastic Community; Church Serf-manor.

Introduction

At the end of the XV century feudal Georgia was divided into kingdoms and principalities. From now on, individual "Georgias" conducted independent domestic and foreign policies, however, regarding the protection of the holy places of Jerusalem, the Georgian principalities tried to act unitedly and protect common interests. Due to its stable political and economic situation, the Kingdom of Kakheti was able to do this best, which was confirmed by Georgian and foreign historical sources. It is known that in the XVI century various factors and, among them, the flexible diplomacy of the kings of Kakheti led to the peaceful and stable development of the kingdom. It was reflected in economic growth or cultural reconstruction. The kings of Kakheti were also active in protecting the Georgian churches-monasteries, monks and nuns and general Christian holy places, including the "Tomb of Christ" (Golgotha, Easter, Tomb of Christ). Foreign (Arabic, Ottoman) written sources that have entered scientific circulation in recent decades allow for more in-depth coverage and research of individual issues of the relationship between the Georgian kingdoms and principalities with Jerusalem.

Methods

The methodological basis of the research is the universal scientific principles of objectivity, comprehensiveness and systematicity. The critical analysis of sources and scientific literature (searching for cause-and-effect relationships) and historical-comparative and synthetic methods have been used in the creation of the paper.

Discussion

Prevailing in the "Holy Places" of Jerusalem was extremely important for Christian communities of various nations and denominations throughout the centuries. They spared no effort to conquer the "Holy Sepulcher" (Golgotha, Christ's Tomb, Resurrection). Georgians were among them. It should be noted that in the XIV-XV centuries during the rule of the Mamluks, the Georgian monastic community of Jerusalem reached the peak of its power, and in the "Holy Land" Georgians owned dozens of churches-monasteries, as well as chapels of the "Holy Sepulcher" (Peradze, 1995:43; Zhaneni, 1992:10), which together with other possible factors (the Caucasian origin of the Mamluk sultans, filling the ranks of the Mamluks, safe transportation, etc.) were caused by the tolerant policy of the Georgian kings-principals towards the Muslims (Japaridze, 1994:209-211). The continuation of this policy was a necessary condition for everyone interested in the maintenance of Georgian and, in general, Christian holy places in Jerusalem. At the same time, the sultans of Egypt considered themselves to be the protectors of Muslims in all countries and thus were interested in the fate of Muslims living in Georgia. Consequently, Georgians also decided to take advantage of this situation and protect their community in Jerusalem and Palestine, to expand its immunity (Japaridze, 2018:139-141), but European Catholics - "the French" - tried to gain the same right. That is why it became necessary to fix the rights obtained by Georgians in written form. Still in 1400 according to one letter of "Svinaksar of Golgotha", the rights of the Georgians and the "French" on the Church of the Resurrection and Golgotha were separated as follows: "This is what you all Georgians have to know - a church of the Resurrection and a house, where Adam's bone and Golgotha are, given from God, kings, sultans...there are two houses: towards the French theirs, and us ours, there are two doors, on the right to the door of the church Resurrection there is where the Georgians sit..." (Metreveli, 2007:131-132).

In the XV century, the conflict for the ownership of Golgotha became even more intense. Armenians and "Frenchmen" (Franciscans,

Franciscan Order) repeatedly tried to completely take possession of Golgotha. Several royal decrees and Shariat court rulings are known about this dispute. So, for example, in 1366 Golgotha was controlled by Armenians, but according to the decrees of Sultan Barsbai (1422-1438) in 1433 and Sultan Jakmaki (1438-1453) in 1439 these disputes were resolved for the benefit of Georgians (Japaridze, 2018:119). Confrontation with the Franciscans in 1491 under the ruling of the local court was settled so that the northern part of Golgotha belonged to the Georgians, and the southern part to the Franciscans, although in 1493 according to the court's decision, the Georgians could not present the proper documents and lost the chapel completely (Japaridze, 2018:248-255).

The Kingdom of Kakheti tried to turn the formed situation in favour of Georgians and quite successfully. Despite the complex processes in Georgia and Palestine, Kakheti became an energetic and consistent defender of the rights of Georgians in Jerusalem in the XVI century. The efforts of the King of Kakheti, Avgiorgi (1511-1513), were especially noteworthy. His short "ruling" in the history of Georgia has been negatively evaluated (Sin, IV, 1973:94-96), although Beena Cholokashvili, who was sent by him as the Father of the Cross to Jerusalem and the court of the Sultan of Egypt, did a great job as a tireless defender of the rights of the Georgian monastic community in Jerusalem. The wills-inscriptions of the Georgian manuscripts of Jerusalem preserved information about his activities (Gabashvili, 1956:085; Metreveli, 1962:123). Beena Cholokashvili's work in Jerusalem and the truly unrelenting struggle for the rights of Georgians (especially in Golgotha) can be discussed in more detail with the Arabic-language documents that have entered historical circulation in recent decades (Japaridze, 2011: 83-138). As it turns out, in the second decade of the XV century Beena Cholokashvili tried to use the conflict between Egypt and Catholic Europe, which was caused by some political and economic factors, for the benefit of the Georgian monastic community (Japaridze, 2011:85-89). In 1510-1511, Egypt's relations with Europe became extremely intense, and the wrath of Sultan Kansav al-Ghawri

fell upon the Christian pilgrims and monks in the holy land and the holy city of Jerusalem (Japaridze, 2011:90). Considering these reasons in 1511 on June 7, by the Sultan's decision, the Church of the Resurrection was completely closed for pilgrims.

In the current difficult situation, Beena Cholokashvili was tasked to reach an agreement with the Sultan of Egypt that would generally protect the interests of the Georgian Church in the "Holy Land" and at the same time, one of the main subjects of the negotiation was the protection of the status of the St. Cross Monastery and the security and rights of Georgian pilgrims. In the situation when the danger of Ottoman aggression against Georgia and Egypt was increasing, when an anti-Ottoman coalition was being formed and a large part of European countries sympathized with it (only France, for some reason, refrained from pursuing an anti-Ottoman policy), the stirring of anti-French sentiment in Jerusalem, which was under the control of the Egyptian Mamluks, and the use of it for certain purposes would not have been difficult... It seems that the Georgians conveniently used this circumstance to harass the rival Franciscans in Jerusalem (Mamistvalishvili, 2016:151-153).

It should be noted that on August 14, 1511, the Georgian ambassador arrived in Cairo, whose name is not known, nor the identity of the king who sent him. However, it seems that disturbing information about the closing of the Resurrection Temple in Jerusalem was spread in Georgia right after his return. From the point of view expressed in recent times in Georgian historiography, Beena Cholokashvili, who arrived in Cairo only ten months later, was not an unknown Georgian ambassador (Japaridze, 2011:90). The ambassador of the king of Kakheti to the throne of Egypt aimed to restore and strengthen the Georgian monastic community in the current situation and protect the rights of Georgians, including Golgotha, but European diplomacy was also active to open the "Holy Places" in Cairo. After the successful and generous visit of the ambassador of Venice, in addition to solving other political, trade and economic issues, the sultan allowed the Franciscans to return to Jerusalem and open the Church of the Holy Sepulcher

(Japaridze, 2011:94). On June 29, 1512, Beena Cholokashvili appeared before the Sultan (Arabic sources specifically indicate that the Georgian king's ambassador gave the Sultan a lot of furs and other gifts, although much more modest than the Venetian ambassador...) and with his consent, he left for Jerusalem. While in Cairo, the ambassador of the King of Kakheti (according to Arabic sources: Biina Bik or Biina Bik Ibn Shuluka - Beena Cholokashvili) had other issues to deal with. According to Avgiorgi's request, in 1512 by the decree of July 15, the sultan ordered the judges of Jerusalem to protect St. Monastery of the Cross, its property and Georgian pilgrims and not to impose excessive taxes (Japaridze, 2011: 99-100). The Sultan took into account the relationship with the Georgians, "there is love and correspondence between us and the king of Georgians... Muslims enjoy the highest respect for them..." (Japaridze, 2011: 102; Mamistvalishvili, 2016:152-153). Based on the above-mentioned historical sources, it becomes clear that Beena Cholokashvili, who was sent as the king of Kakheti's courtier and father of the cross, began his work in the holy city in 1512 and not in 1511 as it was considered in Georgian historiography (Japaridze, 2011: 95-99).

Arriving in Jerusalem, Beena had to protect the rights of Georgians on Golgotha, along with solving various issues related to the Georgian monastic community. The legal dispute with the Franciscans over Golgotha took place in three stages. The first stage was won by the Georgians, the second stage by the Franciscans and the third stage ended with a compromise in 1513 by the decision of the Shariat court (Japaridze, 2018:171-172; Georgian Christian Community in the Holy Land, 2022: 89-96). The Georgians got the northern side of Golgotha, and the French got the southern side (Japaridze, 2011:114-115). The Georgian manuscripts of Jerusalem kept the reports depicting these processes, in which the efforts of Beena Cholokashvili to protect the rights of Georgians in the holy city are visible. "Brothers, following God's will I threw the French and the candle and the things belonging to them out of the Golgotha, I am a sinner Beena..." It seems that Beena did not shy away from hand-to-hand confrontation with the

Franciscans. "On the day of Tuesday, at 2 a.m.." he closed the doors of the Resurrection chapel (Gabashvili, 1956:085; Metreveli, 1962:123).

The doors were closed at night because pilgrims used this entrance during the day and the Georgians could not lock it (Japaridze, 2011:128). 1514 Beena Cholokashvili left Jerusalem, but the problems surrounding Golgotha ownership did not end there. Already in 1515 Zosime from Kumurdo, who came to Jerusalem from Samtskhe, redeemed Calvary with "400 florins" from the French and "did a great deed" (Metreveli, 1962:81; 122).

In 1516 the Ottomans conquered Palestine. Jerusalem was also in their hands and the conflict around Golgotha was renewed again. In the new political and ideological situation, King Levan of Kakheti (1518/1520-1574) took care of protecting the Christian holy places in Jerusalem. He entrusted the "reconstruction" of the Holy Sepulcher and Calvary damaged by the Ottomans to Joakim, who was sent to Jerusalem in 1536 or 1538 as the Father of the Cross. Information about Joakim is found in the inscription of the patriarchal throne of Jerusalem (Metreveli, 1962:37) Timote Gabashvili saw this inscription and indicated that ... in 1538 Joakim arrived in Jerusalem. "Leon, the king of Kakheti sent him as the "Father of the Cross" and entrusted him the construction of Christ's tomb and Golgotha (Gabashvili, 1956:78). According to Timote, the remembrance of King Levani was written in Greek synaxarion under the date of September IG (13) (Gabashvili, 1956-79). Also, Levani redeemed the tomb of Christ and Calvary and "had the holy places built with marble" (Gabashvili, 1956:78). The merits of Levani, the king of Kakheti, were so important that Timote included his colourful picture in his report. Lavrenti Okribeli also saw the above-mentioned inscription of Joachim on the foot of the patriarchal throne of Jerusalem in 1806. it, but in 1808 this throne and the inscription were destroyed by fire (Tsagareli, 1888:112-113). Probably, this merit of King Levani of Kakhta was reflected on the frescoes of the Church of the Virgin (Akhali Shuamta) and of the Gremi Church of Archangels in Kakheti, where King Levani and Queen Tinatin were presented with Jerusalem built by them in their

hands" (Teimuraz Batonishvili, 1848:288-289). Also, Levani donated three Sapolnes of silk to the Monastery of the Cross and Golgotha every year, and his successor, Alexander II, in 1586 only two Sapolnes (SCA, F.1450, 51/180). During the Ottoman era, there was also a conflict over the ownership of the dividing arch between the northern and southern parts of Golgotha. 1541 According to the ruling of the Sharia court, the dispute was resolved in favour of Georgians. However, the conflict between the two communities continued. It is interesting that Joakim, who was sent from Kakheti as the Father of the Cross, might have stayed there until the end of the 50s. In any case, he was mentioned in the minutes of the court at the beginning of August 1559 when the dispute took place between the Georgians and Franciscans around the Amudi (Pillar) monastery (Japaridze, 2018:174-175). It should be noted here that in addition to the protection of the Christian sanctuaries of the "Holy Land", the kingdom of Kakheti took great care of the chapels of Mount Athos. In particular: King Levani of Kakhta (1518/1520-1574) and his son Alexander (1574-1605) carried out restoration works in Philoteos Monastery, where their portraits are also preserved on the wall; It is also known that King Levani helped the Monastery of Iviron at mount Athos (Gabashvili, 1956:37-38; Menabde, 1980:227-228).

Although the donations sent from Georgia were not enough, in the second half of the XVI century the Georgian monastic community of Jerusalem kept under its control many chapels, churches-monasteries of the "Holy City" and Georgians were still mentioned with respect in the records of foreign pilgrims and merchants (Feradze, 1995:57-60). However, the situation of the Georgian monastic community in the "Holy Land" became more and more difficult: debts, confrontations with other Christian communities due to the affiliation of churches and monasteries, and coercion from Ottoman officials increased. Therefore, the Georgian kings decided to donate real estate - church manors - to the Jerusalem Cross Monastery and the Tomb of Christ to generate more or less systematic income. This is how the land ownership and other properties belonging to the Monastery of the Cross of

Jerusalem and the "Tomb of Christ": churches, houses, shops, etc. emerged in Georgia in the second half of the XVI and XVII centuries (Khutsishvili, 2007; Katamadze, 2013). This extremely timely initiative was traditionally supported by the Kingdom of Kakheti. In addition to the sacrifice of serfs, donations were also sent continuously. The care of the kings of Kakheti for the Georgian churches-monasteries of Jerusalem, the monastic community and "Holy Places" was very important, that is confirmed by Georgian historical sources: in 1586, the successor of King Levan, King Alexander II (1574-1605) issued a certificate of donation (SCA, F.1450, 51/180), by which he donated "two sapalnes (one sapalne is about 147 kg) of silk to the Monastery of the Cross of Jerusalem and Golgotha, and here he indicated that his father donated three sapalnes. It is also interesting that the certificate was written by "Barnaba, the archbishop of the royal city". Archbishop Barnaba should have been Barnaba from Tbilisi, who died in 1570. In the testament of one manuscript from Jerusalem, he was mentioned as the father of the cross. He came to Jerusalem together with Vlasi Urbneli and made a great contribution to the work of restoration and preservation of still-existing Georgian manuscripts and preserving them for posterity (Metreveli, 1962:37; Menabde, 1980:118-120). Even after returning to his homeland, Barnaba Tbileli tried to get financial assistance from the Georgian authorities to support the Georgian hermitage in Jerusalem, which is confirmed by the above-mentioned certificate of Alexander II (1574-1605). In addition to this donation, it is also worth noting that in the Kingdom of Kakheti, the village of Aghdgoma and serfs in the villages of Kisiskhevi and Gugunauri belonged to the monastery of the Cross of Jerusalem. In the middle of the 70s or the second half of the XVI century, at the end of Gremi, Alexander II (1574-1605) built the Church of Resurrection and the village was named Aghdgoma (Resurrection) after that (Khutsishvili, 2007: 46-52). These estates also are mentioned in the historical sources of the XVII-XVIII centuries. Another fact shows that the support of the kings of Kakheti to "Holy places" was active and systematic. According to Vakhushhti, during the reign of Alexander II (1574-1605),

in 1602 "the Patriarch of Jerusalem asked the king for silver to pay off the debts, that's what Alexander told Kakhta (the people of Kakheti)" ". The locals collected 5 thousand drachmas and assigned Alaverdeli, Otar Cholokashvili's brother, to take it to Jerusalem, but Alaverdeli loved Alexander's beloved sister and escaped to Imereti with her... and the same gold was presented to Alexander himself and the Patriarch cursed Alaverdeli" (Vakhushti, 1973:579-580). This patriarch of Jerusalem must have been Sophronius V (1579-1607), who lent money to indebted Georgians and received part of Golgotha belonging to them to secure the loan; It is obvious that the Georgians could not pay their debt and lost Golgotha (Zhanen, 1992:13). At least in 1646, due to the current situation in the "Holy Land", Georgians are no longer mentioned on Golgotha (Japaridze, 2018:171-172; Georgian Christian Community in the Holy Land, 2022: 89-96).

Regardless of the developments in Georgia and the "Holy Land", the Georgian kings and princes, including the King of Kakheti, considered it their permanent duty to take care of the "Holy Places" of Jerusalem, which had passed into the hands of the Ottomans. Therefore, in addition to making donations, they tried to use the favourable international situation in the "Holy City" to preserve Georgian churches and monasteries and protect the rights of Georgians. As it is known, in 1578 The Ottomans broke the Amasia truce and the Iran-Ottoman war was renewed. The Ottomans aimed at the complete expulsion of Iran from Eastern Transcaucasia and tried to use the kings of Western and later Eastern Georgia in the military campaign. After the subjugation of Samtskhe-Saatabago, Mustafa Lala-Pasha had an open road to Tbilisi. The traitor Daud-Khan surrendered the burning capital without a fight. On August 24, 1578, the Ottomans occupied Tbilisi, put a garrison in the castle and started their way to Shirvani. The king of Kakheti Alexander II (1574-1605) met Mustafa Pasha in Sartichala and promised obedience (Vakhushti, 1973:578). It seems that even before entering Georgia, the Ottomans sent a letter to Alexander and promised to hand over Tbilisi in case of loyalty and acceptance of Islam; They also urged him to speak out against Iran and

take part in the invasion of Shaki-Shirvani. In the current situation, Alexander's support was important for the Ottomans. Alexander II (1574-1605) did not respond to the call of the Ottomans until the Ottomans reached the borders of Kakheti (Makharadze, Shashikadze, 2022:137). The king of Kakheti refused to accept Islam, but at the Sartichala meeting, he paid tribute and expressed his readiness to march to Sharvan. However, due to certain reasons, he only took part in the military expedition for Shaka (Mamistvalishvili, 2009:206-216). It seems that in this meeting, in addition to significant military-political issues, one of the main topics of the agreement was the safe movement of pilgrims under Alexander II (1574-1605) to Jerusalem and the "Holy Land" and the protection of the rights of Georgians in Jerusalem (Shashikadze, Makharadze, 2022:139). According to three decrees issued on January 15, 1579, Sultan Murad III (1574-1595) the Amira of Arzrum, Handan Agha, other Begs and the Beg of Jerusalem were ordered "not to stop or delay the Georgian pilgrims under any circumstances... From now on, I issued an order regarding the arrival of Christians in the service of Georgians to pray at the Holy Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem... Don't resist and don't treat them unfairly" (Documents preserved in Turkish archives... I, year 1, 2022: 105; Shashikadze, Makharadze, 2022:142). The governor of Jerusalem also ordered, "From now on, if anyone comes with the above-mentioned [Alexander's] sealed promissory note, no one should oppose him, go to the necessary places near Christ's tomb, visit them and return... Don't offend or frighten anyone" (Makharadze, Shashikadze, 2022:143). It is clear from the Sultan's decrees how difficult and dangerous it was for Georgians to pray in the "holy places" of Jerusalem and how important the protection of Georgians' rights in the "Holy Land" of the Kingdom of Kakheti was in this case.

It seems that Alexander II (1574-1605) still enjoyed the favour of the Ottomans and continued to provide material support to the Georgian monastic community in Jerusalem. His policy was continued by the heirs of the royal house of Kakheti in the XVII century. It should be noted that during the same period, King George II of Imereti

(1565-1586) and the Prince of Guria George Rostomi Gurieli (1564-1583; 1587-1600) tried to protect the rights of Georgians in Jerusalem, who appealed to Sultan Murad III (1574 -1595) with a request that the "shrines of the Georgian tribe" be protected in Jerusalem (Abuladze, 1987:90-92). On April 14, 1577, the sultan issued an order to study the facts of attacks and harassment carried out against Georgian shrines in Jerusalem by Catholics and Armenians and to take appropriate measures (documents preserved in Turkish archives... I, year 1, 2022: 98; Shashikadze, Makharadze, 2022:139). The analysis of the above-mentioned sources reveals that the Georgian kings and princes more or less successfully managed to protect the rights of Georgians and Christian shrines in the "Holy Land" in a foreign and hostile environment, and for this, they used the favourable political situation well; they pursued a tolerant policy towards the Muslims living in their territory; They took diplomatic steps with near or far neighbouring countries, despite different political, military-strategic and ideological interests.

Conclusion

Thus, during the XVI century in the difficult political and ideological situation in Georgia and Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Kakheti was able to protect not only the rights of the Georgian monastic community of Jerusalem and Georgian churches-monasteries from the violence of Christians of different denominations and Ottoman officials, but also to a certain extent save common Christian shrines from destruction ("Christ's Tomb", Golgotha...). The financial resources sent from the Kingdom of Kakheti to the "Holy City" and the serfs donated on the spot were used to extend the work of Georgians on the "Holy Land", which was a traditional continuation of the national policy that Georgian society had been successfully implementing for centuries.

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