



ისტორია, პოლიტიკა, წყაროთმცოდნეობა  
HISTORY, POLITICS, PRIMARY SOURCE STUDIES

---

1554-1555 y. Muhimme Defters about Georgia<sup>42</sup>

**Mirian Makharadze**

Doctor of History,

Associate Professor Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

Georgia. 0179. Tbilisi. I. Chavchavadze Avenue N1.

+995599943993mirian.makharadze@tsu.ge

ORCID: 0000-0003-1931-0570

**Zaza Shashikadze**

Doctor of History,

Professor of the Department of Oriental Studies of

Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University.

Georgia, 6010. Batumi, Ninoshvili Str. 32/35

+995999765. zaza.shashikadze@bsu.edu.ge

ORCID: 0000-0002-5406-577X

**Abstract**

One of the most important sources in studying Georgian history is the “Muhimme Defter”. The records kept in them contain many interesting references, which is a novelty for Georgian historical literature.

More than 260 volumes of these records are preserved in the Turkish archives. Most of them are in the Ottoman Archive of the

---

<sup>42</sup> (This research [grant number FR -21-2069] has been supported by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG))

Presidential Archives Division in Istanbul. Documents are written in Ottoman writing. Their publication began in the 1970's with the accompaniment of Latin transcription, however, only a small fraction of several volumes has been published so far.

Reporting to the “Muhimme Defter” kept in the archives of the Council of Ministers of Istanbul begins with 961 year (1553/54) of Hegira. This period coincides with the third siege of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I against Iran. The first records that concern Georgia are mainly the awarding of various individuals for their participation in the Nakhichevan and Oltisi attacks. It also reflects the struggle of the Georgian people against the Ottomans, the struggle in Ilgar and Kiamhis, the establishment of Ottoman rule in Georgian territories.

Translating, publishing, commenting on and publishing the “Muhimme Defters” of great importance for the study of many issues in the history of Georgia.

**Keyword:** Ottoman; Georgia; Muhimme; Defters.

## **Introduction**

The ancient part of Georgia - Meskhethi, which was called Samtskhe-Javakheti since the XIV century, has long played a major role in the domestic and foreign policy of the entire country and in the overall course of its historical development. After the disintegration and fragmentation of the United Kingdom of Georgia, Samtskhe-Javakheti became an independent political entity. Due to its geographical location, it was of great military-strategic importance in the confrontation between the two empires - Ottoman and Persian.

At the beginning of the XVI century, the Iranian empire of the Safavids was formed on the site of the White Sheep Confederate State (Makharadze, 2004: 59-64) From this point the confrontation between Sunni Ottoman and Shiite Iran begins. The disintegrated kingdoms of Georgia became the battleground of these two empires.

As early as in 1514, while attacking Iran, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I. asked the Atabeg of Samtskhe for food aid (Svanidze, 20008: 35), and the Shah of Safavid Iran, Ismail I was asking the Georgians for help with live force. In 1515, Mzetchabuk and Shah Ismail signed a mutual aid act against the Ottomans (Mamistvalishvili, 1981: 42-43).

The Georgian political elite was acutely aware of the impending Ottoman threat, recognizing that the Samtskhe territories could be strategically utilized for their objectives. Consequently, in 1535, King Bagrat III (1510-1565) of Imereti launched a campaign against Atabag to counter the looming Ottoman invasion originating from Samtskhe. On August 13, near Akhalkalaki, adjacent to the Mujakheti village, he engaged and defeated Kvarkvare, ultimately capturing him. A substantial portion of Saatabago fell under the dominion of the Kingdom of Imereti. In return for their support, Gurieli regained control of Chaneti and Adjara, while Bagrat ceded Javakheti to King Luarsab I (1527-1556) of Kartli. This settlement marked a temporary pause in hostilities (Shashikadze, 2023: 36).

The issue of Georgia became more acute during the period of the subsequent rulers of these empires. Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I and Iran's Shah Tahmas I. confronted each other three times and the last two battlefields turned into Samtskhe- Saatabago.

Until the 1540s, neither Ottoman nor Iran had an active fighting position against Samtskhe. Both were confined to interference in his internal affairs. It was in the late 1540s, when another confrontation struck for the office of Samtskhe's Atabag, the Ottomans began to interfere in the domestic affairs of Samtskhe-Saatabago ate and occupy its territories. Since that time, the territories of southern Georgia have become the battlefield of centuries-long confrontation between Ottoman-Iranian relations.

In the second half of the XVI century the Ottomans managed to conquer the territories of southern Georgia and subjugate to the empire. These conquests can be divided into two stages in chronological order. The first stage took place from the 1540s until 1561,

when the Ottomans occupied Adjara as the last one (the Adjaristskali River Valley) among the territories of southwestern Georgia. By this time the Ottomans had already had Artaani, Adjara, Shavshet-Machakheli, Klarjeti and both sides of Tao. The Georgian territories conquered at that time were mainly united in the Erzurum Eyalet created in 1535.

Historical documents show that by the 1560s these territories constituted separate Sanjaks of the Beglarbega of Erzurum, or the Administrative division, the main part of which was later merged into the Gurjistan vilayet. These included: Speri, Basiani, Mamirvani, Akchakale, Oltisi, Tortomi, Pertekreki, Taoskari, Kemkhisi, Panaskerti, Artanuji, Livana (Ligani), Artaani, Small Artaani, Kurtkale (MgELTSIKHE), Batumi, Shavsheti, Adjara, Machakheli and Imerkhevi.

The second stage of the conquest of the Georgian territories by the Ottoman Empire began in 1578 with the eastern invasion of Lala Mustafa Pasha. Lala Pasha managed to defeat the Iranians and raided the entire Caucasus, but failed to maintain it. Eventually, the Ottoman Sultan created a new Akhaltsikhe Eyalet at the expense of the newly conquered territories in 1579, where he merged the administrative divisions of Akhaltsikhe, Khertvisi, Akhalkalaki, Chaldiri, Potskhovi, Petre, Panak and Greater Artaan (Svanidze, 1971:187-188) Later, in the early XVII century, most of the above-mentioned Georgian territories were united in Gurjistan vilayet.

After subordinating to the Ottoman Empire, information on Georgian territories has been mainly available in Turkish sources.

## **Methods**

In this study, the research approach employed historical cognition and comparative analysis methods. We critically evaluated historical sources and relevant scientific literature pertaining to the research topic. This meticulous examination and comparison of these sources are essential for ensuring an accurate and unbiased assessment of historical events.

## Results

The research has yielded several significant findings of considerable scientific interest, shedding light on previously unknown aspects of historical relevance. Muhimme Defter is one of the most important sources for studying the history of Georgia among the many sources preserved in the Turkish archives today. The texts contained therein contain many interesting references that are new to Georgian historiography.

## Discussion

"Muhimme" is translated from Ottoman as *noteworthy, very important*. These defters are one of the types of documents on the Sultan's door. "Muhimme Defter" in turn are of several types. One category reflected the events in the Supreme Sultanate (Divan), where all incoming references and orders issued throughout the empire were registered in chronological order.

The defters of particular importance were also referred to as the "Divan Registry of August issimuss", which contained a brief summary of the orders (firmans and berats) of the sultan trained at Divan. Until 1649, the "Muhimme Defter" contained all the firmans and orders of the contents. Since then, only state documents have been recorded in them, and issues related to disputes between individuals have been fixed in the "List of Claims" (Şikayet Defterleri). Since 1742 the latter has been recorded in separate registries under the vilayets, which were called "Verdicts of Claims" (Ahkamı Şikayet) or "List of Orders" (Kütükoğlu, 2006: 520).

The Turkish archives contain more than 260 volumes of the "Muhimme Defter". Much of it is stored in the Ottoman Archive of the Presidency Archives of the Republic of Turkey in Istanbul<sup>43</sup>. The documents are drawn by Ottoman writing. Their publication began

---

<sup>43</sup>Until recently, the archive was referred to as the Ottoman Archive of the Archives Division of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey.

in the 1979s with Latin transcription, though only a few volumes have been published so far.

In Georgian historiography, the “Muhimme Defter” was first touched upon by professor Nodar Shengelia who published several articles on the existing “Mühimme Defter” (Shengelia, 2018: 256-261; Shengelia, 2006: 373-393; Shengelia, 2008: 267-301; Shengelia, 2019: 81-88). Several recordings of “Muhimme Defter” on Adjara, Klarjeti and Tao has also been published by Zaza Shashikadze (Shashikadze, 2019: 63-80). The information contained therein is often a novelty to Georgian scholars. They help us to study many unknown issues, to specify events and dates.

The information contained in the “Muhimme Defter” kept in the archives of the Council of Ministers of Istanbul begins with the year of Hegira 961 (1553/54). This period coincides with the third siege of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I against Iran. It is noteworthy that the Ottomans began active annexation of Georgian territories during the second Iranian invasion of Suleiman I. On July 27, 1548, he took over Tabriz and seized the provinces of Safavid Iran. Suleiman invaded the Georgian territories in 1549. On September 13, they besieged Tortum Castle and seized it. In addition to Tortum, the Ottomans seized Nikhakh, Akhchakhala, Amirakhori, Panaske-rti, the Second Akhchakala, Talkhisa, Livana, Dedeli Side, etc. (Jikia, 1964: 27-28). According to Hasan Rumlu: “This year the Ottoman ruler Suleyman sent the second vizier Ahmed Pasha with forty thousand cavalry and infantry to Georgia. They took over Dad Eli that belonged to Khvarkhvare and went to their country.” (Puturidze, 1966: 26).

Suleyman I's army also invaded Georgia during the third Iranian invasion, in 1454. The first “Muhimme Defter” on Georgia, preserved in the archives of the Council of Ministers of Istanbul, refer to this period. The first report on Georgia relates to the transfer of land to Mehmed, the son of Masyan in Bozok Baylık during the Nakhichevan and Oltisi siege (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-185).

This report is dated to the first Shawwal of Hegira 961 (30<sup>th</sup> August, 1554). Although the Ottomans seized Oltisi on September 9, 1454, the aforesaid person was already rewarded for his service. There are about 40 documents dating back to 961, which reflect the reward history of various individuals for participating in the Oltisi seizure (BOA,BA,MD: d-1, g-184; d-1, g-234; d-1, g-240; d-1, g-266; d-1, g-268; d-1, g-274; d-1, g-305; d-1, g-311; d-1, g-826; d-1, g-847; d-1, g-1044; d-1, g-1103; d-1, g-1107; d-1, g-322; d-1, g-326; d-1, g-337; d-1, g-395; d-1, g-478; d-1, g-567; d-1, g-576; d-1, g-582; d-1, g-602; d-1, g-603; d-1, g-609; d-1, g-616; d-1, g-617; d-1, g-621; d-1, g-638; d-1, g-641; d-1, g-733; d-1, g-774; d-1, g-796). Here is also reported the histories of awarding various individuals with land for the conquest of Artanuji and other Georgian territories (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-950; d-1, g-782). The lands on the Georgian territories are not only due to participation in the Oltisi seizure. For example: on granting Timar and Zeamet to Giorgi Melik by Hassan in Artaan (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-144). There are also documents of exchange of land in the Ottoman Empire, where different individuals leave their land in another Ottoman province and in return receive new land in the newly occupied Georgian territory (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-138; d-1, g-167; d-1, g-173). It is noteworthy that during the Ottoman conquest of Oltisi on Shawwal 11, 961 of Hegira (9 September 1554), Oltisi Qadi was ordered not to oppress the non-Muslim community of the village of Samohin (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-124; d-1, g-141). It is possible that the mentioned Ottomans conquered the village without a fight. We also find from "Muhimme Defter" that some of the Georgian villagers moved to the Ottomans side and participated in their military operations. According to an order issued by Erzurum Beglarbeg on September 16, 1554, the Ottoman authorities demanded that the property of the people who had gone to war from Oltisi's Nahiyah not be seized (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-144). Also, Timar was raised to Georgian Prince, some Rotan, because of his

Ottoman service, and this was done on the basis of the suggestion of Giorgi Melik (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-147; d-1, g-307).

The “Muhimme Defter”, dated 961, also mentions the struggle of the Georgian people against the Ottoman invaders. The reference of the 7<sup>th</sup> of Shawwal, 961 (5 September 1554) reports on Ahmed Pasha's “Conquest of the Ilgar Division from Gurjistan Lands” (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-138). Mountain Ilgaris located between Potskhovi and Damali. It is noteworthy that the area had been invaded before the conquest of Oltisi, which indicates that Ahmed Pasha headed towards Oltisi through Potskhovi-Artaani route.

According to “Muhimme Defter”, we find that on September 13, 1554, a clash took place between the Georgians and the Ottomans at Kiamhis (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-129 BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-129). In this clash, the Ottomans were assisted by the governor of Artaan, Mehmed and the brother of the governor of Pertekreki, Ali (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-124; d-1, g-129) Pertekreki was captured by the Ottomans as early as 1549 and they appointed their faithful person as a governor. The clash ended with the victory of the Ottomans and they captured a lot of people. The “Muhimme Defter” states in detail the promotion of those who took part in the interrogation of prisoners (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-246; d-1, g-247; d-1, g-639; d-1, g-730).

We also find in the “Muhimme Defter” that Ottoman administration has already been established in certain areas of Georgia during this period. For example, Mamirvani Sanjak Beg and Qadi were ordered to discuss the complaint of the residents of the village of Samai against former Sanjakbeg, Suleiman (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-203; d-1, g-208; d-1, g-235; d-1, g-1020; d-1, g-325; d-1, g-367; d-1, g-370; d-1, g-411; d-1, g-498). Here is also discussed the appointments to various positions. For example: Former Sanjakbeg of Mamirvani was appointed to Aksar Sanjak (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-837), and a part of some Delhi Kilichi's income who could not control the

border in Oltisi would transfer to some Rustem (BOA, BA, MD: d-1, g-360).

### **Conclusions**

The presented documents give a very clear picture of the hitherto unknown seizure for the history of Georgian historiography and the events that took place at that time.

There are numerous references to the Georgian-Ottoman relations in the “Muhimme Defter” in general. Their translation and publication will greatly help Georgian scholars to study and clarify a number of issues in the history of Georgia.

### **REFERENCES:**

- Kütükoğlu, Mühabat S. (2006). *Mühimme Defterleri*, *Islam Ansiklopedisi* v. 31, Ankara.
- Mamistvalishvili, Eldar. (1981). The Italians of the XV Century about Georgia (By Mamistvalashvili, Eldar), Tbilisi. (in Georgian).
- Makharadze, Mirian. (2004). Relations of Ottoman and Sefevi Iran in the Beginning XVI Century, *The East and Caucasus* 2, Tbilisi. (in Georgian).
- Shashikadze, Zaza. (2019). *Mühime Defter* describing XVII century of Georgia (*Mühime Defters* of XVII century documents about Batumi and Gonio), Tbilisi (in Georgian; in Turkish).
- Shashikadze, Zaza. (2023). The final seizure of Batumi and the establishment of Ottoman administrative authority, *Herald of Oriental Studies*, v. 6, # 2, Batumi. <https://hos.openjournals.ge/index.php/hos/issue/view/861>
- Svanidze, Miheil. (1971). The Relations Between Georgia and Ottoman (XVI-XVII c.), Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Svanidze, Mikheil. (2008). Selim's Campaign against Iran, International Relations in the Near East During the Ottoman-Iran Wars and Georgia (XVI Century) (in Georgian).

- Shengelia, Nodar. (2006). Five documents from Mühime defters on Simon king of Kartli, Shota Meskhia 90, Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Shengelia, Nodar. (2008). Four documents from Mühime Defters about Tbilisi, Davit Kobidze 100, Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Shengelia, Nodar. (2018). Mühimme defter, Oriental Studies 7, Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Shengelia, Nodar. (2019). Several Ottoman documents Mühime Defter describing XVIII century of Georgia, Tbilisi (in Georgian; in Turkish).
- Jikia, Sergi. (1964). İbrahim Peçevi's record concerning Georgia and the Caucasus (By Jikia Sergi), Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- Puturidze Valdimer. (1966). Hasan Rumly's record concerning Georgia and the Caucasus (By Puturidze Vladimir and Kiknadze Vaja), Tbilisi (in Georgian).
- BOA, BA, MD, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (BOA), Bab-ı Asafî (BA), Mühime defterleri (MD) - d-1, g- 124; 129; 138; 141; 144; 147; 167; 173; 184; 185; 203; 208; 234; 235; 246; 247; 268; 274; 305; 307; 311; 322; 325; 326; 337; 360; 367; 370; 395; 411; 478; 498; 567; 576; 582; 602; 603; 609; 616; 617; 621; 638; 639; 641; 730; 733; 774; 782; 796; 837; 847; 950; 1020; 1044; 1103; 1107.