

The Political Situation in Georgia at the End of the 50-ies and Beginning of the 60-ies XI Century

პოლიტიკური ვითარება საქართველოში XI ს-ის 50-იანი წლების ბოლოსა და 60-იანი წლების დასაწყისში

Vasil Mosiashvili

Associate Professor, LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University

106 Rustaveli str. 0800, Akhaltsikhe, Georgia

ORCID: 0000-0002-3975-2723

vasilmosiashvili@gmail.com

+995555386493

Abstract. The represented work refers to the political situation existing in Georgia at the end of the 50-ies and beginning of the 60-ies of the 15th century. The work has been done taking into consideration the approaches given in our historiography, and also, basing on the available historical sources This period is characterized by opposition between the royal power and noble people, the character of the Byzantine-Georgian political relations, the role of Turk-Seljuks in the regulation of the relations between Byzantium and Georgia, the reasons of returning Bagrat IV from Byzantium to Georgia, the role of church in returning Bagrat IV to Georgia, his intensive actions in the domestic and foreign policies of the country, the steps made towards the church reforms such as inviting the religious figure and scholar Giorgi Mtatsmindeli to Georgia, settling the problem of Tbilisi (the capital), strengthening the royal power, unite different politically opposed groups, settling peace throughout the country, solving numerous other problems existing at that time.

This work analyzes the following issues: why the Byzantine Empire changed its policy towards the Georgian kingdom? What were the circumstances that contributed to the release of Bagrat IV from “honorable captivity”? How did the king of Georgia overcome the resistance of Abazasdze and Baghvashi families? How did he fight for accession of Tbilisi? The arrival of George of Mtatsminda to Georgia and his Church reform is also referred to in the work. It is shown, how powerful Georgia was politically before Alp Arslan’s invasions. This work argues that the further development of Georgia on her way to political progress had been suspended by Turk Seljuk military campaigns under the command of Alp Arslan.

Key words: Georgia, Bagrat IV, Liparit Bagvashi, Turk-Seljuks, Byzantium, Alf-Arslan

ვასილ მოსიაშვილი

სამცხე-ჯავახეთის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის

ასოცირებული პროფესორი. მის: 0800,

საქართველო, ქ. ახალციხე, რუსთაველის ქ. #106

ORCID: 0000-0002-3975-2723

vasilmosiashvili@gmail.com

+995555386493

წინამდებარე ნაშრომში საისტორიო წყაროებისა და ისტორიოგრაფიაში არსებული თვალსაზრისების გათვალისწინებით განხილულია საქართველოს პოლიტიკური ვითარება XI საუკუნის 50-იანი წლების ბოლოსა და 60-იანი წლების დასაწყისში, სამეფო ხელისუფლებასა და დიდგვაროვან აზნაურთა დაპირისპირება, ბიზანტია-საქართველოს პოლიტიკური ურთიერთობების ხასიათი, თურქ-სელჩუკების როლი ბიზანტია-საქართველოს პოლიტიკური ურთიერთობების დარეგულირების საქმეში, ბაგრატ IV-ის ბიზანტიიდან საქართველოში დაბრუნების მიზეზები, ეკლესიის როლი ბაგრატ IV-ის საქართველოში დაბრუნების საქმეში, ბაგრატ IV-ის აქტიური საშინაო და საგარეო პოლიტიკა, მის მიერ საეკლესიო რეფორმის გასატარებლად გიორგი მთაწმინდელის საქართველოში მოწვევა, თბილისის პრობლემის მოგვარება, სამეფო ხელისუფლების გაძლიერება და ქვეყნის პოლიტიკური გაერთიანება, ქვეყნის შიგნით მშვიდობის დამყარება, ამ პერიოდის სხვა მნიშვნელოვანი საკითხები.

ნაშრომში გაანალიზებულია თუ რატომ შეცვალა ბიზანტიის იმპერიამ პოლიტიკა საქართველოს მიმართ; რა გარემოებამ შეუწყო ხელი ბაგრატ IV-ის „საკაპიო ტყვეობიდან“ გათავისუფლებას; როგორ დაძლია საქართველოს მეფემ აზნაურთა და ბაღვაშთა წინააღმდეგობა; როგორ იბრძოდა იგი თბილისის შემოსაერთებლად; გიორგი მთაწმინდელის საქართველოში ჩამოსვლა და მისი საეკლესიო რეფორმა. ნაშრომში ნაჩვენებია თუ რამდენად ძლიერი იყო პოლიტიკურად საქართველო ალფ-არსლანის ლაშქრობების წინ.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: საქართველო, ბაგრატ IV, ლიპარიტ ბაღვაში, თურქ-სელჩუკები, ბიზანტია, ალფ-არსლანი

Introduction. In the end of the 1050's and the beginning of the 1060's The Royal Court of Georgia achieved certain success regarding domestic and foreign policy. After aggravation of Turk Seljuk interests towards Anatolia and the South Caucasus the Byzantine Empire had to reckon and establish the alliance with Georgia. We suppose that this time Byzantium gave priority to the robust king of Georgia Bagrat IV, instead of Liparit Baghvashi. The king of Georgia took advantage of this situation successfully. For the 1060's he managed to establish peace within the country, temporary overthrow the powerful feudal lords -Abazasdze and Baghvashi and consolidate the Georgian lands. We argue that Lord Parsman Tmogveli became

devoted to the king after the defeat of the Abazasdze and Baghvashsi families. It is not casual that according to the Chronicle of Kartli by the 1040's Parsman had been in the camp of Bagrat's opponents and according to "Mirashkhani inscription" during destroying of Akhalkalaki (1064.) he was devoted to the king and died among the fortress guards.

The serious foreign political situation stipulated by Turk Seljuk military campaigns under the command of Alp Arslan hindered further political progress in Georgia.

The author of the Chronicle of Karli indicates the enormous power of the Georgian Royal Court before these invasions: "And Bagrat became the mightiest all over the kings in his country. And he took possession of all the fortresses of Hereti and Kakheti, and Kveteri and Nakhchevani, too. And after that the Great King had done great affairs."

Methodology. When investigating the represented issue, we used the following methods: description, comparing, methods of critical and systematic analysis (dividing the material into some parts, evaluating each part, reaching the result). The works of the well-known Georgian and foreign historian scientists became the basis of our work.

Discussion/results. In the XI century, at the end of the 50-ies and beginning of the 60-ies, the Georgian royal power achieved considerable success in the fields of the domestic and foreign policies. At the background of activities of Turk-Seljuks towards Anatolia and Trans-Caucasus, the Byzantium Empire was enforced to face the reality and choose the allied position with Georgia. Byzantium needed a strong Christian state in the Trans-Caucasus which could oppose Turk-Seljuks. It seems to us that Byzantium changed his accent and shifted it on Bagrat IV, the king, young and energetic, instead of the nobleman Liparit Bagvash. So Bagrat IV after three years of being the honorable prisoner was freed and he returned to Georgia. Z. Papaskiri considers that Constantinople altered his political course towards Georgia because of the changes taking place in the international situation in the Ancient Near East (Middle East) (Papaskiri, 1990:209). We believe that besides the existing international situation, the fact of releasing Bagrat IV from prison was conditioned also the long-time anarchy which had taken place in Byzantium Empire beginning from the year 1057. We suppose that Georgian Church had also played certain role in the fact that Bagrat IV returned to Georgia; our supposition especially refers to the most important figure of those times, Giorgi Mtatsmindeli. As A. Abdaladze notes, "Just like the fact that in the 50-ies of the XI century this prominent figure defended autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church from the attacks made by Antioch Patriarchy, it is extrapolated that Giorgi Mtatsmindeli played certain role in the political deal of the Caesar and Bagrat IV.

In this point of view it could be worth to pay attention to the fact that during the years when Bagrat IV was forced to spend years in Constantinople Giorgi Mtatsmindeli used to visit the capital of Byzantium quite often" (Abdaladze, 1988:278). According the historical note of those times, made by Vakhushti Batonishvili the representative of the royal family of those times, during all the three years of his honorable detention, he knew that "Giorgi Mtatsmindeli was with the King" (Vakhushti Batonishvili, 1973:148).

N. Berdzenishvili supposes that the Caesar sent Bagrat IV to Georgia in "agreement" with Liparit Bagvash (Berdzenishvili, 1974:21). As for us, we consider that the view of Z. Papaskiri is nearer

to the reality. According the author “It seems less near to the reality that Caesar of Byzantium sent Bagrat to Georgia in agreement with Liparit Bagvash. Had it been depended on Liparit Bagvash’s will to return Bagrat to his country, he would oppose this decision by all means” (Papaskiri, 1990: 206).

There are no notes in the historical sources about the reasons of worsening the relations between the Byzantium Emperor and Liparit Bagvash, but it can be supposed that the Governor of the Byzantium Empire could be discontented because of the dual politics of Liparit Bagvash. The author of the “Matiane Kartlisa” (Georgian Chronicles) clearly notes that Liparit Bagvash “was a man who likely could be a friend to Doghclubeg Sultan at one side and King of Greece at the other” (“Georgian Chronicles, 2008: 287). **(Note: this and other phrases from the Georgian Chronicles all are rendered in English in free, word-based translation).**

It goes without saying that Liparit Bagvash, who was the influential feudal and had “friendly” relations with the Sultan of the Turks (Turk Seljuks), could not have been regarded as a stable friend whom Byzantium trusted. Though, Byzantium Emperor regarded him as a historical ally and considered him somehow worth political figure. With the direct participation of Byzantium Emperor, Liparit Bagvash and Bagrat IV made an agreement with each other on the terms that Bagrat would become the governor of the whole Iberia and Abazgia, and as for Liparit Bagvash, he would become the governor of only one region, Meskheta, until his death. He was obliged to recognize Bagrat as the King and Governor (Kedrane, 1963:68). We cannot agree with the suggestion made by V. Kopaliani concerning the fact that Liparit Bagvash was a desirable choice for Byzantium at that period of time as useful person against Seljuks as well as against Bagrat (Kopaliani, 1969:266).

It should be noted that when a feudal from Meskheta Sula Kalmakheli arrested Liparit Bagvash in 1058, and handed him to the king, the Byzantine Emperor did not make any attempts to free him. And when Liparit took monastic vows, the emperor only gave a shelter to him in Byzantium. One of his sons, Niania, died in Aniss and the second son, Ivane received from Bagrat “the area of Argueti and Kartli” (Georgian Chronicles, 2008:288).

N. Berdzenishvili writes: “Detaining Liparit Bagvash could not be regarded as a strategic victory of the king; in fact, Liparit was defeated by those noblemen who previously had helped him in defeating the king and who then simply “got bored” of his governing. “Thus, if earlier King Bagrat succeeded in ruining Kldekari (the name of the fortress), it was not exactly so, he did not fully succeeded in doing so, even more, he created another Kldekari – this is the fortress Odzrakhe – Tsikhis-Djvari” (Berdzenishvili, 1965:26). But in our opinion defeating Liparit Bagvash became namely the strategic victory reached by the King Bagrat IV. Though, it is true that King presented his ally, Sula Kalmakheli, with rich estates for the help. : „So Bagrat came there and in change for the honest service, Bagrat the King, presented Sula with estates of Tsikhisdjvari and Udzrakhe and many other gifts as he liked” **(in this and other cases, there is only word based free translation from the Georgian source “Georgian Chronicles”, 2008:288).** But unlike the Bagvash family, opposition of Kalmakheli family against the central power is not documented in the historical documents either those times or later. They always were steadfast to the royals. It was a failure of the Byzantian policy that Liparit Bagvash was prisoned and later went to the monastery taking the monastic vows, but the same fact represented the victory

of the Georgian monarchy on the way towards the political unity (Metreveli, 1990:53). It can be supposed that detaining Liparit Bagvashi by Sula Kalmakheli, resulted from the purposeful policy of Bagrat IV. As it is evidenced in the old chronicles, the alliance between Bagrat IV and Sula Kalmakheli aimed against Liparit Bagvash could be noted even earlier to his detention, namely after his defeat at the place Sasireti, in 1047, when Bagrat IV could not succeed in negotiations with this feudal. „Sula, Eristavi of Kalmakhi, Griigol Eristavi of Artanudji, joined and then informed about it other Meskh feudals too, and appealed to the King Bagrat. And he went directly over the ridge of Rkinis Djvari with his army and all of them met at the fortress Arkis Tsikhe. Liparit got the news and gathered his army; his allies came from Kakheti region, and Armenians and Greeks were also among them. He surrounded the Arkhis Tsikhe, there was a great battle and Liparit defeated the King who escaped from the battlefield; as for his allies, they were captured” (“Georgian Chronicles”, 2008:285-286).

According the same source, the fact that the influential feudals of Meskheta could not bear Liparit Bagvash’s governing power, his arbitrariness, became the reason for his detention „After a short while, all the region became bored and dissatisfied of Liparit’s governing. Sula Kalmakheli and other noblemen fled from detention and captured Liparit and his son Ivane” (“Georgian Chronicles”, 2008:287).

We think that Liparit’s detention, his going to monastery life and then his exile reflected the modified policy of Byzantium in Georgia. Because of the changes which had happened on the international arena of those times, Byzantium got interested in strengthening the royal power in Georgia, as in that case, Georgia could become able to oppose Turks Seljuks. Thus, at those times, Turk Seljuks played the positive role in regulating of political interrelations between Byzantium and Georgia.

Z. Papaskiri explains the fact of improving Byzantine-Georgian political relations with the diplomatic skills of Bagrat IV “ The diplomatic abilities of Bagrat IV became especially evident during his compulsory visit to Byzantium, during which, at the meeting “at the highest level” with the Byzantium Emperor, Bagrat IV managed to convince him that going on the way of confrontation with Georgian king was absolutely blemish policy. This resulted in the fact of full isolation of Liparit Bagvashi. Since that, the relations between Byzantium and Georgia altered and in fact, they were on the way of equitable and allied relations” (Papaskiri, 2009:125).

Having solved the problem of Liparit Bagvash, perishing the influential feudals family of Abazasdze by Bagrat IV, in 1060, became the next success of the centralized royal power. “They were all strong men, very proud, wealthy, powerful (Giorgi Mtsire, 1967:160). The same year of 1060, Bagrat IV received the title of Sevastos from Caesar (Javakhishvili, 1983:151). Giorgi Mtsire considers the victory of Bagrat IV over Abazasdze feudal family as “a miracle” and “a great victory of the king” (“at that time there happened great victory of the king when he, with God’s help, defeated and prisoned the opposers of the royal power” (Giorgi Mtsire, 1967: 160). The Abazasdze feudals were fighting against the king so that even some foreign states were aware about their intention to prison the king Bagrat IV (Aptsiauri, 1980:51).

Supposedly, Liparit Bagvash and representatives of Abazasdze family belonged to the same political grouping, as along with Liparit Bagvash, the name of Ioan Abazasdze is also frequently met in

the chronicles. It is noteworthy that the initiator of struggle against the Emir of Tbilisi was a nobleman Ioane Abazasdze, alongside with Liparit Bagvash; both feudals later became the most powerful contenders to the King. After the King had defeated Liparit Bagvash, one of his opposers Parsman Tmogveli became enforced to make a declaration of loyalty to the King Bagrat IV. According the Georgian chronicles, in the 40-ies of the XI century, when the tension became very hard between the King and the feudals, Parsman Tmogveli was among the opposers: „The men who were governors of the fortresses were loyal to Bagrat and were steady except Farsman Tmogveli and Bshken Jakheli whose title was Eristavi of Tukharisi” (Georgian Chronicles, 2008:282).

When Turk-Seljuks perished Akhalkalaki (1064), according the old wall scripts of Mirashkhani, Parsman Tmogveli was among the allies of the King and was killed in the battle. We suppose that Parsman Tmogveli became loyal ally to the King Bagrat IV only after defeating Liparit Bagvash and the Abazisdze family. After those events, Bagrat IV became as strong as to rejoin Tbilisi and was duly honored by Ganja ruler Abul Asvar and king of Kakheti Aghsartan. According Munejim Bashi, in 1062, Abul Asvar (from Shededian dynasty, who was governing in Gandja in the years 1049-1067, was visited by the noble representatives from Tbilisi who informed him about the hard circumstances, rendered him the keys of the city and asked to receive the city and its surroundings under his power. Besides, they asked the governor of Ganja, conditioned over the hard times, to hurry up with sending a detachment to defend Tbilisi, also some armaments and food. Abul Asvar was pleased with this pleading and decided to agree with it but his vizier thought that such decision could not turn to be wise. He warned Abul Asvar that such decision could bring wrong results as to lose everything which had been reached earlier. He really meant the fight with the Georgian King, which could take place. Following this advice, Abul Asvar refused to accept the proposition made by the representatives of Tbilisi citizens and returned the key of the city back (Kiknadze, 1958:164). After this refusal, the citizens sent the same offer to the king of Kakheti, Aghsartan Gagikisdze. Aghsartan received the representatives of Tbilisi city, presented them with gifts and then sent them back with honor (Kiknadze, 1960:113). After that, Bagrat IV who had been even earlier trying to adjoin Kakheti region, took a considerable price from Aghsartan and bought Tbilisi back, sent a garrison, with reserves of fighters, armament and food (Minorsk, 1953:20). It seems that Bagrat IV was so much interested in Tbilisi being his royal city that he did not refuse to pay large sum of money for it. At that time the king could not refuse to the chance of possessing Tbilisi as earlier he had already defeated his opposers, namely, the influential feudal Eristavi of Kldekari who was also fighting for possessing Tbilisi.

R. Kiknadze supposes that having bought out Tbilisi city, Bagrat IV did not occupy it but made peace with the family of Djaparashvili and appointed them as governors of the city. We consider this supposition doubtful as the members of this family were guilty for heavy conditions of Tbilisi city. The citizens had earlier ousted these feudals from the city and thus it could be very difficult for them to return there as governors. Neither Bagrat IV could wish to make this family the governors of Tbilisi for which he had paid great amount of money. The opinion of Shota Meskhia seems more trustful to us: “We do not know how long Bagrat IV was the owner of Tbilisi but we think that it could last only two or three years. As we know, the first invasion of Turk-Seljuks (in 1065) could become the reason for

Bagrat to leave Tbilisi and to transfer its governing to Djaparashvili family and this fact surely happened due to the support Alf-Arslan. It is clear that the Georgian and Orient world sources give us the same information about Alf-Arslan's ties with Emir of Tbilisi and his help during Alf Arslan's invasion to Georgia" (Meskhia, 1982:241).

Z. Papaskiri supposes that after rejoining Tbilisi, Georgia (country) became the main adversary of Seljuks in Trans-Caucasus. "Evidently, not without reason, seizing of Tbilisi disturbed the Muslim world. The measures taken by Bagrat IV in Tbilisi (one of them and the most underlined by Al-Fakih, was widening the mountain roads, with the apparent aim to make it easier for Muslim population leave the town and move to the Islamic countries) show to the governing circles of Turk Seljuks that the King of Georgia intended to take even more military actions. Supposedly beginning from that time, Georgia became the main threat on their way of gaining power over the whole Transcaucasia and this resulted in inevitability of war between Georgians and Turk Seljuks (Papaskiri, 1991:11). It was of special importance for the royal power what could be the position of the Georgian Church. After Bagrat IV had achieved some results in the struggle against the powerful feudal families in the 60-ies of the XI century, he attempted to carry out the reforms in the Church and he invited the well known religious figure Giorgi Mtatsmindeli from the Mount Athos asking his help in resigning the influential religious figures in Georgia, who had achieved their high positions not resulting from their peculiar characteristics but only due to their positions. Certainly, the King mostly disliked those persons who opposed the active political steps made by Bagrat IV (Lortkipanidze, 1979: 170). Giorgi Mtatsmindeli arrived to Georgia and began taking active measures to reform the Georgian Church. At those times, hunting for ranks was so usual and intensive in the church that fighting against that phenomenon was regarded as extremely unusual. The high positioned clergymen did not pay any attention even to the especially high public image of Giorgi Mtatsmindeli who strictly opposed the high rank clergymen in the monasteries and started democratization processes in accordance with the strict laws of Christianity basing on the Evangel which denies any career hunting in the Church (Aptsiauri, 1980:101). Resulting from his hard work being done during five years, he managed to stop careerism in the Church but could not get the Church reforms to the end as a result of the especially hard social, economical and political situation especially on the foreign arena.

Thus, the struggle between the high rank, influential feudals and the power of king in Georgia ended in the victory of the king's central power. Georgia managed to bring this struggle to the end. The most powerful and influential Georgian feudals, the families of Abazasdze and Bagvash were defeated and Georgia became unified for some time. But further political developments were hindered by the complex foreign situation. Especially, this was conditioned by the permanent attacks of Turk-Seljuk troops under the command of Alf-Arslan. Before these attacks began, one of the authors of the "Georgian Chronicles" wrote: „Bagrat became stronger and he was the strongest of all the kings of other regions; so he captured all the fortresses in Hereti and Kakheti regions except Kwetara fortress and Nakhchevani; after that, there were great events taking place during the years of power of the great kings" (Georgian Chronicles, 2008:289).

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