

A NEW ACCOUNT ABOUT THE DELTAVI MONASTERY IN JERUSALEM ACCORDING TO THE  
MANUSCRIPT JER. GEO. 65

ახალი ცნობა იერუსალიმის დელტავის მონასტერზე ხელნაწერ იერ. 65-ის მიხედვით

TINATIN TSERADZE

PhD

+995593 55 57 48

[tinatseradze@gmail.com](mailto:tinatseradze@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1416-2006>

**Abstract.** The paper discusses the colophon of Georgian nun Douda kept in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Parakletikon - Georgian manuscript N 65 of the Library of Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The colophon provides us remarkable information about Deltavi monastery of Jerusalem whose location is not specified. There are also accounts about two Georgian feudal families of medieval times in the text, namely, about the family of Abazaisdze and the family of Jakeli. According to the colophon, the manuscript's beneficiary Douda was the daughter of Abazaisdze Tbeli and the wife of Beshken Bibila Jakeli. She has three sons: Sula, Botso and Memna. Douda used to live in Memna's house (presumably after widowhood), but after Memna's death she decided to go to Jerusalem and has chosen to live in the Jerusalem Deltavi Monastery of John the Baptist. Thus, based on this text we can undoubtedly conclude that the monastery was located in Jerusalem - Douda clearly states that he made the decision to settle in Jerusalem and selected monastery of Deltavi for this purpose. b) She also states that the Deltavi Monastery was built in the name of John the Baptist.

**Key words:** Holy Land, Georgia, monasticism, Deltavi monastery in Jerusalem, manuscript tradition

თინათინ ცერაძე

ფილოლოგიის დოქტორი

+995593 55 57 48

[tinatseradze@gmail.com](mailto:tinatseradze@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1416-2006>

**აბსტრაქტი.** სტატიაში განხილულია იერუსალიმის ბერძნული მართლმადიდებლური საპატრიარქოს ბიბლიოთეკაში დაცული ქართულ ხელნაწერთა კოლექციის კუთვნილ პარაკლიტონში (# 65 ნუსხა) წარმოდგენილი ანდერძი, რომლის ავტორია ქართველი მონაზონი ქალი დუდა. ანდერძში, რომელიც მე-13 საუკუნით უნდა დათარიღდეს, ვხვდებით ცნობებს შუა საუკუნეების ორი ქართული ფეოდალური საგვარეულოს - აბაზაისძეებისა და ჯაყელების - შესახებ. ტექსტიდან ირკვევა, რომ ხელნაწერ იერ. 65-ის მომგებელი დუდა ყოფილა აბაზაისძე ტბელის ასული, ზემქენ ბიბილა ჯაყელის მეუღლე და სამი ვაჟის: სულას, ბოცოს და მემნას დედა. მემნას სიკვდილის შემდეგ დუდას იერუსალიმში წასვლა გადაუწყვეტია და დამკვიდრებულა ნათლისმცემლის დელტავის მონასტერში. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ

მონასტრის ადგილმდებარეობა ჯერჯერობით დაზუსტებული არ არის, დუდას ანდერძის საფუძველზე უეჭველად დასტურდება შემდეგი: ა) დელტავის მონასტერი მდებარეობდა იერუსალიმში; ბ) დელტავის მონასტერი აგებული ყოფილა იოანე ნათლისმცემლის სახელზე. ამდენად, დუდას ანდერძი საყურადღებო მონაცემებით ამდიდრებს მონასტრის ისტორიას და აჩენს ახალ პერსპექტივებს მონასტრის ლოკალიზაციის კუთხით.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** წმინდა მიწა, საქართველო, მონაზვნობა, დელტავის მონასტერი იერუსალიმში, ხელნაწერი ტრადიცია

### **Introduction:**

Relations between Georgia and the Holy Land are centuries old. From the fourth up to the nineteenth centuries, Georgians owned more than forty monasteries and churches in the Holy Land – on Jerusalem and outside its borders.

Monastery of Deltavi together with the three other monasteries – Kappata, Devtubani and Dertupha - belong to the monasteries in the Holy Land whose location is not yet specified – they are only known from the Georgian manuscript tradition.

### **Methods:**

This article is based on following research methods: empirical analyses, comparative-historical methods, reason-result analyses, content-analyses.

### **Results:**

The 13<sup>th</sup> century manuscript Jer. Geo. 65 kept in the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem preserved the colophon of Georgian nun Douda, daughter of Abazaisdze Tbeli and the wife of Beshken Bibila Jakeli. The colophon reveals that Duda has ordered to copy this manuscript for the Deltavi monastery.

The colophon mentions members of Jakeli feudal family Beshken Bibila (presumably Duda's husband), Sula, Botzo and Memna (Duda's sons), known from other historic sources. Correspondingly, *terminus ante quem* of the Douda's colophon is 1226 and the manuscript should be copied in the XIII century.

Douda's colophon confirmed that: a) Deltavi monastery was located in Jerusalem; b) Provides information unknown for other sources that Deltavi Monastery was built in the name of John the Baptist.

It is not possible to identify the Deltavi monastery with the well-known church located in Muristan – a center of the present Jerusalem Christian quarter, associated with the name of John the Baptist.

### **Discussion:**

The information about Deltavi Monastery is preserved in three Georgian manuscripts dated from the 11th-12th centuries and copied in Palestine: H 1662 (11th c.), Jer. Geo. 65 (XIII c.) and Jer. Geo. 33 (XIII-XIV centuries). The name of monastery is known by two variants. According to a manuscript of the 11th century the name of the monastery is "Dertavi" (k'ek'elidze 1957: 210-211). Later this name has undergone a slight phonetic change - according to manuscripts dated to XIII-XIV centuries, this monastery is called "Deltavi". It is also known another forms derived from the same root – “deltaveli” and “deltaveli” - to mention nuns of Deltavi Monastery, as well as “deltaori” – used to mark the manuscript belonging to the same monastery.

Manuscripts H 1662 and Jer. Geo. 33 testify that the Georgian nuns living in the Deltavi Monastery had close ties with other Georgian clerics working in different Christian holy sites and monasteries of Palestine. The first of them (H 1662) copied in Palavra, i.e. St. Chariton’s old monastery in Palestine, is dedicated to the nuns of Dertavi by the copyist Grigol - a priest from St. Chariton’s monastery (otkhmezuri 2018:32). It is noteworthy that the same person has written manuscript Kutaisi 181 which belonged to Dertupha monastery. The third manuscript - Jer. Geo. 33 - is copied by the special order of the Deltavi nuns. According to the colophon of copyist Basili Saithouri he handed over this copy to the sisters of Deltavi as he was raised by them since his childhood (otkhmezuri 2018:32; met'reveli 1976: 77, 80). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that there was a collection of Georgian manuscripts in Deltavi Monastery, which was especially taken care of by the Georgian nuns living there. Additional evidence in this regard is provided in above mentioned manuscript Jer. Geo. 65 and in the colophon of Georgian nun Douda, the beneficiary of this manuscript which has ordered to copy it for the needs of monastery. She refers to the monastery as Deltavi in accordance to the 13th century tradition.

The manuscript represents the liturgical collection parakletikon containing liturgical canons for workdays. Douda's colophon preserved on the 1<sup>st</sup> page is written in Nuskhuri (Georgian minuscule), in black ink. For the first letter is used Mtavruli-Georgian capital letter. The text uses punctuation marks - dots and binaries. Some words cannot be read because the sheet is badly damaged. Instead of damaged words ellipses are put down.

Below is the text of Douda’s colophon:

line 1. “In the name of uncreated Trinitarian God Father,  
 line 2. God Son and God Holy Spirit who has created all the seen  
 line 3. and unseen things in the heaven and on the earth, by the grace and help  
 line 4. of our most blessed Queen and most Holy  
 line 5. Virgin Mary, by the strength of life-giving Holy  
 line 6. Cross, by the pleading of the holy heavenly powers, by the grace of Saint John  
 line 7. the Baptist and by the help of all the saints  
 line 8. pleased to God from the very beginning, I miserable and worthless Douda,  
 line 9. the daughter of Abazaisdze Tbeli, have been honored to gain this Holy and soul  
 line 10. enlightening Parakletikon to pray for my soul and for souls of my parents, and for soul

line 11. of Beshken Bibila Jakeli and for my sons: Soula and Botso and Memna  
 line 12. whose house was a residence for my worldly life. And when he has left  
 line 13. a tent of meat and I took [monastic] life preferring to settle up in  
 line 14. Jerusalem and God has fulfilled my wish and I have stayed in  
 line 15. Deltavi - monastery of the Baptist. And God knows that I have heard many  
 line 16. ... of this monastery. But a great wrath  
 line 17. came over our kingdom for our sins by demolition of ...  
 line 18. and Tatars and I could not fulfill my desire  
 line 19. to serve a monastery except of ... at my  
 line 20. expenses ...this Parakletikon and who will... “ (Jer. Geo. 65, fol. 1r).

Then there are two other handwritten inscriptions given above the text of Douda, which refer to the monasteries of Kappata and Holy Cross monasteries. It seems that Douda's colophon was going on and had five more lines, but the text is unreadable, only separate letters are visible.

Thus, it is revealed from the colophon that the manuscript's beneficiary Douda was the daughter of Abazaisdze Tebeli and the wife of Beshken Bibila Jakeli. She has three sons: Sula, Botso and Memna. Douda used to live in Memna's house (presumably after widowhood) and when Memna passed away (literally: "when he left the tent of meat") she decided to go to Jerusalem. She has chosen to live in the Jerusalem Deltavi Monastery of Baptist of which much was known to Georgian nun. Douda writes that due to the difficulties in her homeland she was not able to provide satisfactory assistance to the monastery, but nevertheless she still managed to order a manuscript for the needs of Deltavi.

The colophon of Georgian nun provides us valuable information about two Georgian feudal families of medieval times – The family of Abazaisdze and the family of Jakeli. The Abazaisdze family appears in the political arena of the middle Kartli (Eastern Georgia) in the 11th century. It was the ancestral family of Tbeli Family - the most powerful feudal family of the IX-X centuries in the middle Kartli. The Tbeli family received the honorable position of Eristavi (literally, "head of the nation", in Greek *strategos*, equivalent to *duke*) from King George I (1014-1027). Among the representatives of Tbeli family was famous Ivane Abazasze - Eristavi of Kartli in 1032, during the reign of George I successor, Bagrat IV (1027-1077). He, along with Eristavi of Kldekari Liparit IV Baghvashi (30s-60 of XI c.) led a united army comprised of warriors from Kartli, Kakheti, Tbilisi and the Armenia (surguladze 2017: 322). In 1032, by the river Ekletz this army has defeated Fadlon, Amir of Ganzak who had been rescued from the servitude of the King of Georgia. Later Ivane Abazasdze, along with his four brothers, joined the opposition to King Bagrat IV with Liparit Baghvashi. In the words of George Atoneli's disciple and biographer, Giorgi Mtsire (George the Minor), the brothers Abazadzēs were: “strong and powerful men who boasted of their wealth and of the multitude of their people” (giorgi mtsire 1967: XXI). In the “Life of George the Hagiorite” we read words of the King Bagrat IV that he several times unsuccessfully tried to defeat the Abazaisides. So king Bagrat regarded their defeat as miracle and linked it with the arrival of George the

Hagiorite to Georgia (giorgi mtsire 1967: XXI). The mention of ancestral Tbeli feudal family indicates that Douda wanted to highlight the glorious and famous history of her native family and was proud of it.

There are some members of Jakeli feudal family named in Douda's colophon: Beshken Bibila (presumably Douda's husband), Sula, Botzo and Memna (Douda's sons). All of these names are anthroponyms common in this family - in Georgian historical sources from the 9th century onwards we find several Jakelis bearing these names - prominent feudals of Samtskhe (javakhishvili 1965:45; javakhishvili 1966: 132]. The brothers - Botzo and Memna from the family of Jakeli-Botzozdze - under the direction of King Rusudan headed the defense of Tbilisi in 1226. It is said that by the betrayal of the Persian residents of Tbilisi Memna was killed making it easy for the enemy to take over the city (javakhishvili 1966: 221]. Consequently, it may be considered that *terminus ante quem* (lower bound) of the Douda's colophon is 1226.

Douda's text enriches our knowledge of the Deltavi Monastery with remarkable information, namely: a) It is undoubtedly confirmed that the monastery was located in Jerusalem - Douda clearly states that he made the decision to settle in Jerusalem and selected the monastery of Baptist Deltavi Monastery for this purpose. b) It is also clear that the Deltavi Monastery was built in the name of John the Baptist.

One of the oldest Jerusalem churches associated with the name of John the Baptist is located in Muristan – a center of the present Jerusalem Christian quarter (Pringle 2007: 201-206]. This building has a very interesting and varied history. Its oldest part - the crypt - dates back to the middle of the 5th century (Humbert 2011: 137). In 614, during the Persian invasion, the church was significantly damaged and rebuilt by the Patriarch of Alexandria John the Merciful (Pringle 2007:24). In 11th-12th centuries the church was restored once again, though the original church plan was maintained. During the Crusades, merchants from Italian city Amalfi built a new church on the site of the old church. In the following centuries, the upper church has been renovated many times, but in the course of these works restorers have always sought to preserve the original plan of the church (Humbert 2011: 201). At the end of the 15th century, the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem became the owner of the church and in the following century the church was converted into a mosque, but for a while - it was soon returned to the Greek Patriarchate of Jerusalem (Humbert 2011: 203), which still holds this place in modern times. Is it possible to consider the church of John the Baptist in Muristan as a monastery of Deltavi? - We think not. The point is that the history of this church (especially in 12th-13th centuries) is quite well known, and it can do nothing for the monastery.

An interesting record concerning another site of John the Baptist is given by the European pilgrim John Poloner. In his report dated back to 1421, Poloner writes that on Bishop's Street in Jerusalem was located house of Zachariah, father of John the Baptist which belonged to the Georgians. He adds that there was erected beautiful chapel of John the Baptist as well (Peradze 1937: 205). It is true that John Poloner's reference is almost two centuries distant from the Douda's colophon, but we think that it is remarkable to note that in the 15<sup>th</sup> Jerusalem there was another site related to John the Baptist owned by Georgians.

The article has been prepared in the frames of the project “Georgian Christian Community in the Holy Land”. The project is funded by the Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation of Georgia (the grant agreement #217484).

The manuscripts mentioned in the article belong to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. They have been studied with the kind permission of the Library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

### დამოწმებული წყაროები და ლიტერატურა

- კეკელიძე კ. (1957). *ქართველ ქალთა კულტურულ-საგანმანათლებლო კერები საშუალო საუკუნეთა მახლობელ აღმოსავლეთში, ეტიუდები ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორიიდან, IV*, თბილისი.
- ოთხმეზური თ. (2018). *უცხოეთში გადაწერილი ქართული ხელნაწერები დაცული საქართველოს სიძველეთსაცავებში*, თბილისი.
- მეტრეველი ე. (1976). *დერტავისა და დერთუფას ხელნაწერების ირგვლივ (კოდეკოლოგიური შენიშვნები)*, აღმოსავლური ფილოლოგია, IV. თბილისი.
- სურგულაძე მ. (2017). *ცენტრალური და ადგილობრივი სამოხელეო წყობა შუა საუკუნეების საქართველოში*, ენციკლოპედიური ლექსიკონი, თბილისი.
- გიორგი მცირე (1967). *ცხორება და მოქალაქობა წმიდისა და ნეტარისა მამისა ჩუენისა გიორგი მთაწმიდელისა*, ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები, II, თბილისი.
- ჯავახიშვილი ი. (1965). *ქართველი ერის ისტორია, II*, თბილისი.
- ჯავახიშვილი ი. (1966). *ქართველი ერის ისტორია, III*, თბილისი.
- Pringle, D. (2007). *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, vol. III*, Cambridge University Press.
- Humbert J-B (2011). *Excavations at Saint John Prodromos, Jerusalem*, New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region Collected Papers, vol. V, Jerusalem. .
- Peradze G. (1937). *An Account of the Georgian Monks and Monasteries in Palestine as revealed in the Writings of Nongeorgian Pilgrims*, Georgica, 2, Vol. 4-5, London.

### REFERENCES

- k'ek'elidze k'. (1957). *kartvel kalta k'ult'urul-saganmanatleblo k'erebi sashualo sauk'uneta makhlobel aghmosavletshi, et'iudebi dzveli kartuli lit'erat'uris ist'oriidan* [Medieval Cultural and educational centers of Georgian women in the Middle East, Studies from the History of Ancient Georgian Literature], IV, tbilisi.
- otkhmezuri t. (2018). *utskhoetshi gadats'erili kartuli khelnats'erebi datsuli sakartvelos sidzveletsatsavebshi* [Georgian Manuscripts Copied Abroad in Libraries and Museums of Georgia (Illustrated Catalogue)], tbilisi.

- met'reveli e. (1976). *dert'avisa da dertupas khelnats'erebis irgvliv (k'odik'ologiuri shenishvnebi)*, aghmosavluri pilologia [On the manuscripts of Dertava and Dertupha (codicological notes), Oriental Philology], IV. tbilisi.
- surguladze m. (2017). *tsent'raluri da adgilobrivi samokheleo ts'qoba shua sauk'uneebis sakartveloshi, entsik'lop'ediuri leksik'oni* [Central and Local Government Order in Medieval Georgia, Encyclopedic Dictionary], tbilisi.
- giorgi mtsire (1967). *tskhorebao da mokalakobao ts'midisa da net'arisa mamisa chuenisa giorgi mtats'midelisao, dzveli kartuli agiograpiuli lit'erat'uris dzeglebi* [Life of St. George the Hagiorite, Monuments of Georgian Hagiographic Literature], II, tbilisi.
- javakhishvili i. (1965). *kartveli eris ist'oria [History of Georgian Nation]*, II, tbilisi.
- javakhishvili i. (1966). *kartveli eris ist'oria [History of Georgian Nation]*, III, tbilisi.
- Pringle, D. (2007). *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, vol. III*, Cambridge University Press.
- Humbert J-B (2011). *Excavations at Saint John Prodromos, Jerusalem*, New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region Collected Papers, vol. V, Jerusalem.
- Peradze G. (1937). *An Account of the Georgian Monks and Monasteries in Palestine as revealed in the Writings of Nongeorgian Pilgrims*, Georgica, 2, Vol. 4-5, London.