

**THE FIRST BRITISH CONSULATE IN BATUMI¹ DURING
OTTOMAN RULE: REASONS FOR ESTABLISHMENT,
PURPOSE AND STRATEGY (1840-1852)**

დიდი ბრიტანეთის პირველი საკონსულო ოსმალეთის
მმართველობის დროინდელ ბათუმში: დაარსების მიზეზები,
მიზანი და სტრატეგია (1840-1852)

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Abstract.

From the 30s of the 19th century, the interest in Batumi began to grow, which was connected, on the one hand, with the results of the Russian-Ottoman war of 1828-1829 (Ottomans lost the eastern coast of the Black Sea), and on the other hand, with the influence of Russia in Anatolia. This was followed by the opening of Great Britain's diplomatic representation first in Trebizond (in 1831) and then in Batumi (in 1840).

The opening of consulates at that time served to weaken the influence of Russia on Iran and the Ottomans and to pursue British interests. At the same time, the British government wanted to get quick and correct information about all the events that were happening in Georgia and the North Caucasus, as well as to facilitate British trade.

20-year-old Frederic Guarracino was selected as the first vice-consul of Batumi, who was appointed to the position in November 1839, although he began to perform his duties in April 1840.

By the instructions received from the diplomatic agency, F. Guarracino had to collect all kinds of information (geographical, statistical, political, trade...), study interesting places from a commercial point of view, gain the favor of the locals, establish good relations with the ruling elite...

Frederic Guarracino served as the British Vice-Consul in Batumi for 6 years. From June 1846 until the abolition of the diplomatic mission (December 1852), William Richard Holmes was appointed vice-consul. The reason for closing the consulate was probably that, at that stage, Britain apparently did not see the development prospects of Batumi: constant unrest, adverse climatic conditions, and limited scale of trade became the basis for making such a decision.

Keywords: Batumi, Britain, Consulate, Guarracino, Holmes

¹ Batumi - the administrative center of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara - is the historical city and the southwest gateway of Georgia.

ირაკლი ბარამიძე

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აბსტრაქტი.

XIX საუკუნის 30-იანი წლებიდან იწყება ბათუმისადმი ინტერესის ზრდა, რაც დაკავშირებული იყო ერთი მხრივ, რუსეთ-ოსმალეთის 1828-1829 წლების ომის შედეგებთან (ოსმალეთმა დაკარგა შავი ზღვის აღმოსავლეთ სანაპირო), მეორე მხრივ კი ანატოლიაში რუსეთის გავლენასთან. ამას მოჰყვა ჯერ ტრაპიზონში (1831 წელს), შემდეგ კი ბათუმში (1840 წელს) დიდი ბრიტანეთის დიპლომატიური წარმომადგენლობის გახსნა.

საკონსულოების გახსნა იმ პერიოდში ემსახურებოდა ირანსა და ოსმალეთზე რუსეთის გავლენის შესუსტებას და ბრიტანული ინტერესების გატარებას. ამავე დროს ბრიტანეთის მთავრობას სურდა მიეღო სწრაფი და სწორი ინფორმაცია ყველა მოვლენის შესახებ, რაც ხდებოდა საქართველოსა და ჩრდილოეთ კავკასიაში, ასევე, ხელი შეეწყო ბრიტანეთის ვაჭრობისთვის.

ბათუმის პირველ ვიცე-კონსულად შეირჩა 20 წლის ფრედერიკ გუარაჩინო, რომელიც თანამდებობაზე დაინიშნა 1839 წლის ნოემბერში, თუმცა მოვალეობის შესრულებას შეუდგა 1840 წლის აპრილიდან.

დიპლომატიური უწყებიდან მიღებული ინსტრუქციის შესაბამისად, ფ. გუარაჩინოს უნდა შეეკრიბა ყველა სახის ინფორმაცია (გეოგრაფიული, სტატისტიკური, პოლიტიკური, სავაჭრო...), შეესწავლა კომერციული თვალსაზრისით საინტერესო ადგილები, მოეპოვებინა ადგილობრივთა კეთილგანწყობა, დაემყარებინა კარგი ურთიერთობები მმართველ ელიტასთან...

ფრედერიკ გუარაჩინო 6 წელი ასრულებდა ბრიტანეთის ვიცე-კონსულის მოვალეობას ბათუმში. 1846 წლის ივნისიდან დიპლომატიური წარმომადგენლობის გაუქმებამდე (1852 წლის დეკემბერი), ვიცე-კონსულად დანიშნული იყო უილიამ რიჩარდ ჰოლმსი. საკონსულოს დახურვის მიზეზი, სავარაუდოდ, იყო ის, რომ იმ ეტაპზე ბრიტანეთმა, როგორც ჩანს, ვერ დაინახა ბათუმის განვითარების პერსპექტივა: მუდმივი არეულობა, არასასურველი კლიმატური პირობები, ვაჭრობის შეზღუდული მასშტაბები გახდა ასეთი გადაწყვეტილების მიღების საფუძველი.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ბათუმი, ბრიტანეთი, საკონსულო, გუარაჩინო, ჰოლმსი

Introduction.

The importance of Batumi (being a part of the Ottoman Empire for more than two centuries), as a port and trade-transit town, has been increasing since the 1830s, which was related to several factors:

a) After the defeat against Russia in the war of 1828-1829, under the Treaty of Adrianople, the Ottoman Empire, together with other territories (among them Akhaltsikhe-Akhalkalaki), lost almost the entire eastern coast of the Black Sea: Anapa, Sujuk-Kale (Novorossiysk) and, what was most painful, Poti. The new reality, on the one hand, led to the growth of the role of Trebizond as a trade-economic and transit-port city, and on the other hand, it led to a rethinking of the importance of Batumi as an excellent, natural harbor and, in fact, a settlement that had already become a border point with Russia.

b) At the beginning of the 30s, the declining Ottoman Empire was shaken by the 1831 rebellion of the ruler of Egypt – Muhammad Ali Pasha. Ottomans were able to correct the situation only with the help of Russia, but in return, they received the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi (1833), the Russian fleet in Istanbul, and the growth of Russian influence in Anatolia, which, of course, was not part of the European plans. Great Britain began to expand its trade-economic and diplomatic activities in the territory of the Ottoman Empire. If in 1825 Britain had only 13 diplomatic missions here (Vice-Consulate, Consulate, and General Consulate), by 1834 this number had increased to 19, by 1846 – to 36, and by 1852 up to 51 (!) (Dönmez, 2019, pp. 363-380). It was during this period that British consulates appeared in Trebizond, Erzurum, Samsun, Batumi... We think it is suggestive of the fact that by 1831 when London first opened a consulate in Trebizond, the consulates of Russia, France and the Kingdom of Sardinia were already functioning there.

c) Simultaneously with the opening of consulates, which served commercial and economic interests as well as political ones, Great Britain and other great European powers forced the Sublime Porte to agree and reform the outdated system of the Ottoman Empire, which in 1839 was followed by the first stage of so-called Tanzimat. It was in the interests of Europe that a modernized Ottoman would be able to more effectively stop the growing Russian aggression and influence. Batumi was involved in this process of renewal which led to a noticeable upsurge in city life and a gradual revitalization of the port.

Against the background of the current events, the role of Batumi as a seaport and a border town between the two empires also increased, especially after the loss of Poti. As the researcher, V. Sichinava notes, at the mentioned stage, "the preservation of Batumi was of primary vital importance for the Ottomans. In the case of losing Batumi, the Ottomans were in danger of losing all of Anatolia, and after they lost Egypt and other important territories, the loss of the vast and rich territory of Anatolia would be the last fatal blow for them" (Sichinava, 1958, p. 18).

At the same time, the interest in Batumi grew from both the Russian Empire and the great European powers standing behind the Ottoman Empire. This struggle of interests also added a special load to Batumi. Russia, which had already had its eyes on this side of the Ottoman Empire, increased its desire to conquer it. In 1804, General Pavel Tsitsyanov wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Empire, Chartoritsky, that Batumi "must belong to us without any resistance and it must be in our hands" (Megrelidze, 1956, p. 22). The issue of joining

Batumi was raised before the Russian Empire during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828-1829. Nicholas the First himself said that "Batumi and Kars are worth sacrificing a few million for them" (Diasamidze, 2009, p. 19)

Thus, from the 30s of the 19th century, the city gradually came under the geopolitical and trade-economic interests of Russia and leading European countries, especially England. At that time, the town was included in the Sanjak of Lazistan, and the latter was within the boundaries of the Trebizond Province.

Methods.

The work is based on the sources of the studied period. The research uses data from the special scientific literature. The paper was written based on the comparison of historical sources (studying English handwritten documents is quite a laborious task) and scientific literature data. Critical analysis of sources, historical-comparative, and synthesis methods are used in the research.

Discussion.

In the summer of 1831, Great Britain opened its consulate in Trebizond (the consulate existed until 1914). The London government appointed James Brant, who had previously been prominent in trade, as the chief diplomat, in the rank of vice-consul, who was transferred to Erzurum in 1837. Brant was one of the main lobbyists for transit trade with Iran to be conducted via the Trebizond-Erzurum-Tabriz line rather than through the Russian-controlled Caucasus. This was one of the reasons for opening British consulates first in Trebizond and Tabriz, and then in Erzurum, where the Russian Empire opened its consulate two years earlier (Dönmez, 2019, pp. 363-380). In addition to solving trade and economic issues, the opening of consulates at that time served to weaken Russian influence on Iran and the Ottomans and to promote British interests.

Consuls and vice-consuls were also residents of the intelligence network. The words of the Russian researcher - V. Vrubel are significant about this issue. He points out that when the Anglo-French troops invaded Crimea in 1854, 36-year-old Charles Kettle was appointed as the head of the British secret intelligence service, who directly reported to the commander-in-chief of the British army, General Lord Raglan. Kettle was born in St. Petersburg in the family of an English merchant, after receiving his education in England, he returned to Russia and lived there, and from 1841 until the start of the Crimean War, he served as the English vice-consul in Kerch (Врубель, 2010). According to Vrubel, like Kettle, who was involved in intelligence activities in the Crimea, British representatives - Colonel Fenwys Williams in Kars, Consul James Brant - in Erzurum, and Vice-Consul F. Stevens - in Trebizond were assigned a similar mission (Врубель, 2010).

Up to the first quarter of the 19th century, the consular service was unpaid. That is why during this time it was widespread and necessary for consuls to combine their official activities with their business interests, that is, to provide for themselves financially in the process of fulfilling their official duties. This approach, to some extent, continued later when consular staff was paid salaries. British consuls were mainly focused on creating a favorable environment for English policy and trade in foreign countries, which included helping

entrepreneurs, monitoring the fulfillment of the terms of agreements, protecting and supporting the country's interests and fellow citizens, issuing visas, etc. They collected all kinds of information - be it trade-economic or military-political information (Watkinson, 2018, pp. 62-63).

Since 1825, consular activities became remunerative because, firstly, engaging in private business in a parallel mode harmed the diplomatic mission, and secondly, official leverage gave them an unfair advantage in business relations. This was accompanied by the restriction of private business, although for a while - from 1829 (until 1859) the situation changed again and private business, to replenish finances, became permissible again. As for the vice-consuls, they were usually able to carry out trade activities without any problems, since their duties were not extensive compared to the functions of a consul. However, depending on their position, that knowledge and access to information gave them a big starting advantage in this activity (Watkinson, 2018, p. 63).

This is how we should consider the work of James Brant. Before he was appointed vice-consul in Trebizond, he was engaged in trade in the city of Smyrna (modern Izmir) and was quite successful in this field. According to British archival documents, Brant made great efforts to promote British trade in Trebizond, where he served as consul for many years.

As a result of James Brant's activity, Great Britain opened its consulate in Batumi in 1840. This idea matured and developed over the years. As it turns out, in 1837, Lord Palmerston instructed J. Brant, the British consul in Erzurum at that time, to find a competent person for the position of vice-consul in Batumi. In a reply letter dated July 14 of the same year, Brant expresses some skepticism that no "respectable British Merchant" would go to work in Batumi if not for the salary and the prospect of career growth. He cites Batumi's insignificant scale as a trade center as the reason for such a view:

“There are nothing but wooden huts used as shops, with an inner room to sleep in, so that a house of some sort must be built: the place is not healthy and there are none but petty Country Merchants of a low stamp residing there. I do not imagine that under these circumstances any Englishman would station himself there unless tempted by a salary of the hope of promotion. I conceive it would not be desirable to place there any person but a respectable Englishman, not would any other be useful. Could he have been supported by his commercial business, I might have found some young man: as I do not think this likely to be the case, I could not fairly induce any person to undertake the office under a hope of gaining a livelihood, which might prove fallacious. I will apply to Mr. Suter to know whether he be able to point out somebody at Trebizond, but I would request Your Lordship to inform me whether it be considered indispensable that the person should be an Englishman, and what salary or emolument would be allowed him. It was contemplated once to run a Steamboat between Trebizond and Batoum; if that project were put in execution, the place might be better worth the attention of a respectable young man” (Jarman, 2003, pp. 141-143).

The letter of July 31, 1837, of the then British vice-consul in Trebizond H. Suter to the consul J. Brant makes it clear what was the purpose of the establishment of the consulate in Batumi. The British government wanted to get quick and accurate information about all the events that were happening in Georgia and the North Caucasus, as well as to facilitate British trade. In his opinion, to achieve these goals, it was necessary to select an intelligent, presentable

Englishman for the position of Batumi Vice Consul, who would have sufficient knowledge for relevant activities in this country (Jarman, 2003, pp. 146-149).

H. Suter also believed that the situation and perspective of Batumi were unfavorable without communication with steamships. „...excepting the residence of the Bey, there are no houses whatever at Batoom, and the Bazaar consists only of wooden shops, which, during part of the summer and Autumn are shut up, the occupants retiring to more salubrious parts of the Coast. From the information I have been able to obtain, expenses of ground rent and the erection of a small house for the residence of the Vice Consul would probably amount to £250 or £300. If the building were erected on the Eastern side of the Bay, the situation would be sufficiently healthy to permit the Consul to remain at his post throughout the year. A sum less than £200 per annum would be inadequate to his subsistence with any degree of respectability, and as a Dragoman and Guard would be indispensable, the salaries of these and other contingent expenses would scarce be defrayed under £120 to £150 per annum. Were these allowances granted a respectable and intelligent English man, competent to the efficient discharge of the duties of Vice Consul, would, without much difficulty, be found: but I am unable to, point out a person who would accept the honorary appointment, depending as he must in that case for his subsistence, on the slender and precarious resources which the present limited Commerce of Batoom affords“ (Jarman, 2003, pp. 146-149).

James Brant's own great experience dictated that the appointment of the consul in Batumi did not depend only on the will of the British government. In the letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he writes:

„Whether the person placed at Batoom be called Agent or Vice Consul will not make any difference. The Turkish authorities know not these distinctions. He must have a Berat from the Sultan, in order to be acknowledged by the Bey as British Agent, for without such acknowledgment, he would be liable on all occasions to insult, perhaps without unworthy complaisance, his personal safety might be endangered... With a Berat, then, he would be considered as an effective Consul, whatever the rank given him by his own..“. To prove this, he cites the example of the French consul in Trebizond, who had to overcome great difficulties before the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828-29 (Jarman, 2003, pp. 153-156).

Brant took into account even small, seemingly insignificant nuances. „It will be evident that a person accepting the appointment, must give up his whole time to its duties, therefore whether he resided permanently at Batoom, or only occasionally, he could not afford to receive a less remuneration, for the change of residence, would, instead of an advantage, be only an additional source of expense. A person by living in one of the huts existing at Batoom, would certainly live at a cheap rate, but then he must abandon every comfort and all the usages of civilized life, his influence would be small, and he would not enjoy the consideration of the natives – pointed J. Brant (Jarman, 2003, pp. 153-156).

As it turns out, by 1839, three persons were selected for the position of Batumi Vice-Consul, but when it came down to the matter, all three refused. According to J. Brant's confession, he wanted to see an Englishman in this position, but since it was not possible, his choice was stopped on Frederic Guarracino - the son of the sister of the Vice-Consul of Trebizond, Henry Suter. 20-year-old Guarracino was an Ionian Greek by his father, and English by his mother. Before being appointed as a vice-consul, he worked for 18 months in Trebizond with Suter, and then for 5 months in Erzurum with James Brant (Jarman, 2003, pp. 157-161).

Brant's vision, presented to Palmerston on August 10, 1839, is interesting:

“Mr. Guarracino is both in education and feeling an Englishman, he is robust in constitution and intelligent in disposition, and in fact, I see no objection to his appointment... He has a tolerable Knowledge of Turkish and is now occupied in Studying it with a Master. Having been to Batoom and knowing the place and its resources, with the consent which his uncle, Mr. Suter has given, he willingly resolves to incur the inconveniences he knows he must encounter. During the months of July, August and September, no one can or does remain there, but Mr. Guarracino can then go to the small commercial town of Artvin, about three days inland, in a healthy situation on the Jorook-Soo, or he can explore the interior of the country if desired, or go to Trebizond or someplace on the coast.

I would submit to Your Lordship that his salary were £ 200 per annum, that he were allowed to £100 or £120 for contingent expenses of dragoman, carnages, and as no residence is to be found, that £ 200 or £250 be given him to provide himself with a small house and a little furniture. These appointments will enable Mr. Guarracino to live respectably, and he will have to depend on any little trade he may be able to establish for saving something to compensate him for the sacrifice he makes in abandoning civilized society, and the risk to which he is exposed of suffering from illness.

Should Your Lordship accept Mr. Guarracino's services, it were advisable that his Berat were obtained early from the Porte that he may have before him as much as possible of the healthy season to provide himself with a convenient habitation.

Perhaps, considering Mr. Guarracino's age he may not prove quite competent to fulfill all that your Lordship expects of him and to ensure exertion on his part, perhaps Your Lordship would not consider it, inconvenient to give me the power of replacing, without any reference, Mr. Guarracino by another person, should he prove himself in my opinion inadequate to the duties he undertakes.

I would also suggest that the house to be erected were considered as Government property and not that of Mr. Guarracino, at least until he had given proof of his being adequate to fulfill the duties of his office.

Mr. Guarracino is ready to go to Batoom immediately Your Lordship's instructions are given and his Berat reaches him; the latter may be addressed to Mr. Suter at Trebizond, where Mr. Guarracino will be in about two months“ (Jarman, 2003, pp. 157-161).

After Palmerston's consent, on November 19, 1839, James Brant appointed Frederick Guarracino as the first vice-consul of Batumi. On April 14, 1840, 10 days before he arrives in Batumi, Brant from Erzurum gives Guarracino extensive instructions for future action. It clearly shows how British diplomacy worked:

“The main object Her Majesty's Government had in view in naming a vice Consul at Batoom, was to receive early and correct information as to the every event, that occurred in neighboring Countries and Provinces, which had any reference to their Political and social State or which might occasion changes in the existing order of things; You will therefore make it your study to collect information, and facts, which may tend to show, the actual state of those countries, as well as the changes and improvements which may be anticipated or which are known to be contemplated. Such information is desired not less regarding the Country belonging to the Sultan, than regarding that under Russian dominion, and Circassia which the Russian Government is now endeavoring to subjugate.

Another object of your Appointment is naturally to promote the extension of British Trade and Navigation, and the welfare and civilization of the Country in which you reside.

In furtherance of this object, you are allowed to engage in trade; The New Convention admits the exportation, of every Production of Turkey without exception and I imagine that some new Articles will be found in the neighbourhood of Batoom, adapted to the purpose of commercial Exchange.

Every new Product, or every Known Product the demand for which can be extended, taken from the natives, augments their means of consuming British Productions and tends to the increase of your trade, and to the prosperity of the country, and in extending your trade, therefore you will not only be promoting your own interest but likewise the views of Her Majesty's Government.

You are allowed to absent yourself from Batoom during the unhealthy season which I suppose includes the months of July August and September; I think you would do well to employ, the time this year in exploring the Country between Batoom and Kars.

You should on such a journey visit every place of importance, in which you may hope to create a demand for British Productions, from which you may draw Produce of any kind; you should inform People of your being settled at Batoom, and of your desire to enter into Commercial relations with them, enquiring into their wants, and as to what they can supply you in return for your goods.

I conceive such a tour indispensable to give activity and development to your trade and I should hope that the labour and expense would be compensated by the Commercial advantages it would secure; If however on such Tour you collect any interesting or useful information either Geographical, Statistical, Political or Commercial, and will send it to me embodied in a Report, I will forward it to Her Majesty's Government, and possibly Viscount Palmerston may be pleased to reimburse you the expenses of your Journey.

You will understand that I do not order you to make this Tour but suggest it merely as useful employment of leisure time, as a thing which can be affected, I believe, at a moderate expense and which will be the means of gaining you credit for intelligence, zeal, and diligence in the Public Service.

In any Journies, you may undertake whether near or distant, I think it important, that you should make a point of collecting every possible information, regarding trader Geography, Statistics, Routes, and Distances, keeping always in mind that you reside in a Country very imperfectly known; If you could with a compass lay down the course of the Jorook from its mouth to Artvin, stating the least depth at the lowest season, and whether any serious impediments occur from rocks or falls to its navigation, you would render an important service to Geography, this might be done by embarking at Artvin in a boat, and going down the stream to the Sea, which I understand is performed in less than a day.

An equally important service would be rendered to trade, by obtaining accurate information on the present state of navigation of the river in boats, together with details as to the nature, and quantity of the goods carried down the stream from Artvin.

It were desirable to learn the quality and sorts of Timber which might be procured and whether it were valuable or cheap enough to form an object of exportation.

I point out these subjects of enquiry as many occurring to me but I imagine many others will strike you when you are familiar with the Country, and nothing can be unworthy of observation in one so totally unexplored.

You will as a matter of course cultivate a good understanding with the Agha of Batoom as also with the Bey of Chorook Soo, although the latter depends on kars, and not on Trebizond in which Pashalik, Batoom is situated, yet you should give the Bey to understand that your authority extends to the Russian Frontier; if he should not acquiesce, I will procure you a letter to hem from the Pasha of Kars. From the Bey of Chorook Soo, you will I think be able to obtain information as to what passes over the Georgian Frontier, as I believe the inhabitants of Chorook Soo are in daily communication with the Georgians.

I have only further to add that I rely on you to justify my recommendation of you at so early an age, to fill so important, a situation, and I trust Her Majesty's Government will have reason to be satisfied with your zeal and intelligence“ (Jarman, 2003, pp. 165-171).

Frederick Guarracino served as the British Vice-Consul in Batumi for almost 6 years. However, in a letter dated December 24, 1844, he requested from the government, due to the difficult living conditions, to transfer to another area, to which he received permission only in 1846. He remained as vice-consul until June 11, 1846 (Gelashvili, 2019, pp. 106-116).

William Richard Holmes - James Brant's mason - was chosen as the new consul. He arrived in Batumi and began his duties on June 11, 1846, as can be seen from his report of June 12 (Jarman, 2003, p. 266). At that time he was 24 years old (Wilson, 2011, p. 18). Interestingly, Guarracino did not only hand over the files and archives to him but also introduced him to all the officials, Ayan, and other high-ranking officials, with whom, as Guarracino himself writes, during these 5 or 6 years, he formed quite warm relations. Guarracino accompanied Holmes to Ozurgeti, where he introduced and met General Brusilov. The already former vice-consul of Batumi hoped that this goodwill would be maintained towards the new vice-consul. Apparently, Guarracino was busy with these things for several days, because on June 24, 1846, he is still in Batumi (Jarman, 2003, pp. 280-281).

Holmes remained in office until the end of 1852. On December 23, he received information that he was appointed consul in Diyarbakir, and the vice-consulate in Batumi was canceled (Jarman, 2003, pp. 378-380). Unfortunately, the materials at our disposal do not allow us to find out the reasons for the closure of the consulate. We can only assume that at that stage Britain apparently did not see the development prospects of Batumi. Constant unrest, tension, adverse climatic conditions, and a swamp whose drainage issue could not be resolved by the authorities, 3 months of inactivity, and limited scale of trade became the set of problems that caused the British government to cancel its consulate in Batumi.

An excerpt from Holmes's 1851 report is interesting in this regard: Batum “can never become an important town until a road is made to the interior, and an amelioration affected in the climate. Both these improvements are, I believe, very feasible, but they seem hopeless in the present impoverished condition of Turkey” (Şaşmaz, I, 2014, pp. 223-225). The idea of building a port at Redoubt-Calais was thought-provoking for Holmes. If this project is implemented, there is no doubt, - Holmes thought, - that the Russians will soon monopolize the transit trade of Persia - by land through Georgia to Redoubt-Kale and by sea, with their ships, to Constantinople.

Perhaps, due to the mentioned circumstances, in 1852, the British consulate in Batumi ceased to exist at that stage.

As for the consulate building. Even during the time of F. Guarracino, with a 16-year contract signed somewhere in 1845, the British side undertook to pay 1000 piastres per year to the owner of the land on which the two-story building of the consulate stood (the first floor was made of stone, the second floor was made of wood). Even though the consulate was abolished, Holmes was in Batumi in the middle of May 1853 and was busy finding out the future fate of the building (Jarman, 2003, pp. 381-384).

The former vice consul of Batumi, Holmes, probably left Batumi by July, before the unhealthy season, and the building was loaded with a new function.

Conclusion.

From the 30s of the 19th century, Batumi gradually came under the geopolitical and trade-economic interests of Russia and leading European countries, especially England. The logical continuation of this was the opening of the British Consulate here in 1840. At that time, the city was included in the Sanjak of Lazistan, and the latter was within the borders of the Pasha of Trebizond.

In addition to the settlement of trade and economic issues, the opening of consulates (including Batumi) at that time served to weaken Russia's influence on Iran and the Ottoman Empire and to pursue British political and trade-economic interests. At the same time, consuls and vice-consuls were residents of the intelligence network.

The British authorities wanted to appoint an experienced and well-known Englishman as the first consul in Batumi, but due to the distance of the town and its small size, many people did not want to go there. In the end, 20-year-old Frederic Guarracino was chosen - the son of the sister of the vice-consul of Trebizond, Henrich Suter, whose father was an Ionian Greek and whose mother was English. Before being appointed vice-consul, he worked for 18 months in Trebizond with Suter, and then for 5 months in Erzurum with James Brant.

The purpose of opening the British Consulate in Batumi was to obtain timely and accurate information about all the events that happened in the neighboring countries and provinces (including the Caucasus, which Russia tried to subjugate), which had something to do with their political and social situation or could cause changes in the existing order.

The vice-consul was responsible for gathering all kinds of information, be it of a military-political, socio-economic, or trade nature. They had to gain the favor of both the local population and the government.

July-August-September was considered an unhealthy period in Batumi because of the swamp around it. During this period, the town was empty of inhabitants. British diplomats were also allowed to leave the town during this period, but they had to use this time to travel to neighboring provinces and collect information of interest and importance to the government.

The second and last vice-consul in Batumi was William Richard Holmes – James Brant's mason. He arrived in Batumi and served from June 11, 1846, to the end of 1852. After 12 years, the British government decided to cancel its consulate in Batumi, due to the constant tension in the region, unfavorable climatic conditions, swamps, and the limited scope of trade.

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