

FERIKOY CELEBRATIONS

ფერიქოის დღესასწაულები

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ABSTRACT

The Georgian Catholic Monastery of Immaculate Conception of Holy Virgin in Istanbul (in Turkish - Gürcü Katolik Kilisesi, in Georgian - ლურდის ღვთისმშობლის სახელობის ქართულ-კათოლიკური ტაძარი), with its schools, printing house and rich library did a great Georgian work and had great cultural, educational and scientific functions outside of Georgia for a century.

The monastery was built in 1861 by Father Petre Kharischirashvili in one of the most beautiful districts of Istanbul, Ferikoy (the Village of Angels). It is noteworthy, that the most of the fathers serving in the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul were from Samtskhe-Javakheti by origin. Father Petre Tatalashvili was from Samtskhe as well.

For hundred years (1861-1961) of its existence, Georgian Catholic Monastery of Istanbul acted as a spiritual, cultural, educational and scientific center where many national, educational or scientific activities were performed. Establishment of religious and educational institution, Georgian-French schools, printing-houses, the literacy society for Georgians living in Turkey, the library called after Akaki Tsereteli are good examples of cultural and educational activities of the Monastery. The Monastery was the educational center providing Georgian young people the opportunity to get education first in Istanbul and then to Europe. At schools, students had the opportunity to study literature, history, religion, theology and philosophy. Most of the fathers of the monastery were polyglots, fluent in French, Italian, German and Latin, so they helped students to learn languages. They helped to many Georgian scientists and public figures, like Ivane Gvaramadze, Mikheil Tamarashvili, Shalva Vardidze, etc.

The purpose of the article: Description of Monasterial work of one of the honorable figures, the Monastery secretary and the person in charge for the educational processes, later on the Prior of the monastery, Father Petre Tatalashvili, continuation of the traditions of Ferikoy Monastery and arrangement of the grand celebrations, tracked in the documents obtained from the monastery archive, had not widely used by the scientists. The study will be interesting for the people concerned by the history of Georgian monastery in Istanbul being famous not only by religious and educational activities

but also interesting from the cultural point of view. The monastery linked those Georgians who lived in different parts of Ottoman Turkey and also those who immigrated from Georgia.

Key words: Petre Tatalashvili; Georgian Monastery (Savane) of Istanbul; Georgian Catholics.

თეა თათენაშვილი

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აბსტრაქტი. საუკუნის მანძილზე სტამბოლის ღვთისმშობლის უმანკო ჩასახვის ქართული კათოლიკური ეკლესია (თურქ. Gürcü Katolik Kilisesi; ქართ. ლურდის ღვთისმშობლის სახელობის ქართულ-კათოლიკური ტაძარი) თავისი სასწავლებლებით, სტამბითა და მდიდარი ბიბლიოთეკით საქართველოს საზღვრებს გარეთ დიდ ქართულ საქმეს, კულტურულ-საგანმანათლებლო და სამეცნიერო ფუნქციას ასრულებდა.

ტაძარი 1861 წელს აშენდა მამა პეტრე ხარისჭირაშვილის მიერ სტამბოლის ერთ-ერთ ულამაზეს უბანში ფერიქოიში (ანგელოსთა სოფელში). აღსანიშნავია ისიც, რომ სტამბოლის ქართული სავანის მოღვაწე მამების უმრავლესობა სამცხე-ჯავახეთიდან იყო. სამცხედან იყო მამა პეტრე ტატალაშვილიც.

სტამბოლის ქართული კათოლიკური სავანე ასწლიანი არსებობს მანძილზე (1861-1961) წარმოადგენდა როგორც სასულიერო, ასევე კულტურულ-საგანმანათლებლო და სამეცნიერო ცენტრს. სასულიერო სასწავლებლის, ქართულ-ფრანგული სკოლების, სტამბის, ოსმალეთის ქართველთა შორის წერა-კითხვის გამავრცელებელი საზოგადოების, აკაკი წერეთლის სახელობის ბიბლიოთეკის დაარსება დასტურია სავანის კულტურულ-საგანმანათლებლო საქმიანობისა. სწორედ სავანე გახდა იმდროინდელი ქართველი კათოლიკეების განათლების კერა, რომელმაც გზა გაუხსნა ქართველ ახალგაზრდებს ჯერ სტამბოლში, შემდეგ კი ევროპაში მიეღოთ განათლება. სკოლებში მოსწავლეებს ლიტერატურის, ისტორიის, რელიგიის, თეოლოგიის და ფილოსოფიის შესწავლის შესაძლებლობა ჰქონდათ. მონასტრის მამების უმეტესობა პოლიგლოტები იყვნენ, თავისუფლად საუბრობდნენ ფრანგულ, იტალიურ, გერმანულ და ლათინურ ენებზე, შესაბამისად ისინი სტუდენტებს ენების დაუფლებაშიც ეხმარებოდნენ. სწორედ ამ მონასტრის დამსახურებაა იმ ქართველი მეცნიერებისა და საზოგადო მოღვაწეების არსებობა, როგორც გახლდათ ივანე გვარამამე, მიხეილ თამარაშვილი, მიხეილ თარხნიშვილი, შალვა ვარდიძე და სხვა.

სტატიის მიზანი: სტამბოლის ქართული სავანის ერთ-ერთი ღირსეული მოღვაწის, მონასტრის მდივნისა და სასწავლო პროცესებზე პასუხისმგებელი პირის, შემდეგ კი უკანასკნელი წინამძღვრის - მამა პეტრე ტატალაშვილის სამონასტრო საქმიანობის აღწერა და ანალიზი, მის მიერ ფერიქოის სავანის ტრადიციის გაგრძელება და გრანდიზული დღესასწაულების მოწყობა, მონასტრის არქივში მოპოვებული დოკუმენტების მიხედვით, რომელიც აქამდე სამეცნიერო მიმოქცევაში ფართოდ გამოყენებული არ ყოფილა. ვფიქრობთ, აღნიშნული კვლევა საინტერესო იქნება სტამბოლის ქართული მონასტრის ისტორიით დაინტერესებული პირებისთვის, მონასტერი რომელიც ცნობილი იყო არამარტო რელიგიური და საგანამანთლებლო საქმიანობით, არამედ კულტურული თვალსაზრისით. მონასტერი, რომელიც ერთგვარი შემაკავშირებელი იყო არამარტო ოსმალეთში გაბნეული ქართველებისათვის, არამედ, საქართველოდან ემიგრირებული ბევრი ქართველისთვისაც.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: პეტრე ტატალაშვილი; სტამბოლის ქართული სავანე; ქართველი კათოლიკეები.

Introduction: The Georgian Catholic Monastery of Immaculate Conception of Holy Virgin in Istanbul (in Turkish - Gürcü Katolik Kilisesi, in Georgian - ლურდის ღვთისმშობლის სახელობის ქართულ-კათოლიკური ტაძარი) is known as the Georgian Savane (Monastery) of Istanbul. This is one of the distinguished religious and cultural-educational institutions, the Center for Kartvelian studies among Georgian cultural and educational centers functioning out of Georgia.

Ivane Javakhishvili reports about the Georgian cultural centers functioning out of Georgia that “The cultural importance of Georgian Monasteries functioning out of Georgia was highly valuable. Along with rich cultural heritage gained there by Georgia for centuries, it had another value. Georgia was able to observe cultural development of the educated countries of that time by means of the monasteries functioning abroad. Everything new and important written in the monasteries founded by Georgians, immediately reached Georgia with support of the Georgian public figures, scientists and artists” (Javakhishvili, 1965:340).

Eugène Dallegio d'Alessio, the Italian diplomat (1888-1983) reported about Georgian Catholic Monastery of Istanbul "Catholic priests of the Monastery... from the beginning to the present had not been hesitating to put their community to the test of existence and they clearly fulfilled their duty for the freedom of Georgia imbued with faith in the glorious future. The priests of Ferikoy (Ferikoy, the district in Istanbul, Sisli district, Bomonti quarter) were famous for entire Turkey and Greece. The people of different type and even different religion used to come to their churches because of their fame, throughout the old Empire of Ottomans” (Dalejio D’alesio, 1921:33).

Georgian Monastery in Istanbul is located in one of the districts of Ferikoy. The church of Georgian Catholics, friary and nunnery, Georgian printing house and the library after Akaki Tsereteli

with its archive, Georgian-French and Georgian-Greek schools acted as the great cultural-educational and spiritual center and the strong center of Georgian liberation movement for more than hundred years. (Letters from the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, Volume II, II, 2020:30).

The monastery was founded by Father Petre Kharischirashvili, the resident of Meskheta, who struggled for the bright future of Georgia, for preserving Georgian language for Georgians not only in Samtskhe-Javakheti, but also in Turkey, during his entire life. Since the 60s of the XIX century Father Petre Kharischirashvili had brought progressive religious and secular people striving for their motherland together in Georgian Monastery in Istanbul (Letters from the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, Volume II, II, 2020:30) and founded the brotherhood (congregation) of Georgian Catholics which thoroughly fulfilled the will of its “founder”, Petre Kharischirashvili.

During the Soviet period, till the 90s of the XX century the little part of Georgian society was informed about existence of the monastery (Surguladze...2022, 122-123). Thought in Meskheta, the descendants of the Monastery leaders knew about it well. Due to Soviet censorship Georgian Monastery in Istanbul was tabooed and the residents of Meskheta avoided speaking about it. Shota Lomsadze was the first scientist, who raised the issue of Monastery and talked about it in his work. He described certain period of the monastery in his “Akhaltikhuri Kronikebi” (the Chronicles of Akhaltsikhe) (Lomsadze, 1979_66-94). After 1990s, when Georgia became independent many researchers became interested with the history of the monastery and the material preserved there (Guram Sharadze, Shushana Putkaradze, Shota Lomsadze, Murman Papashvili, Nato Kruashvili, etc.)

Political developments caused establishment of the monastery. In the second half of the XIX century in Georgia and especially in Samtskhe-Javakheti, the condition of Georgian Catholics worsened due to Russian politics against Catholicism. “Restriction of entrance of the catholic missionaries from Europe to Georgia made situation very complicated in Akhaltsikhe, where Russian government support to establishment of the Armenian typikon and the Armenian language in the Georgian Catholic Latin churches. Armenian Catholic church started a great propaganda about non-existence of Georgian Catholics historically. It did not mean that Meskheta returned to its motherland could reconcile the fate easily. Georgian Catholics led this big campaign that time (Papashvili, 1995:314-315).

Petre Kharischirashvili took the leadership on the fight against all above-mentioned. He had to confront the teacher, Pavle Shakhuliani, who oppressed and did not give young Petre Kharischirashvili a chance to implement national ideas. After many obstacles and problems, Petre Kharischirashvili left his native land and moved to Turkey in 1857. In 1859, with the help of Archbishop Brunoni, the representative of Pope Pius IX, he received a job at the nunnery, as well as the permission to establish congregation of Georgian Catholics in Istanbul with the Georgian language and typikon. At the same time, Father Petre bought the land plot in the suburbs of Istanbul, Ferikoy with financial support of famous Maecenas, Jacob Zubalashvili and built the Church of Holy Virgin in 1861. The nunnery was added soon. Father Petre led the church till 1892. After his death the Monastery had elected priors,

Stephane Giorgidze, Alfonse Khitarishvili, Benedicte Vardidze, Pio Balidze, Shio Batmanashvili and Petre Tatalashvili who was the last prior of the monastery, led the Monastery. (Kruashvili, 2012:8-9).

Father Petre Kharischirashvili was aware that there was lack of Georgian manuals at Georgian schools. Therefore, he opened the printing house at the monastery and started publishing of Georgian book in 1870. At the same time, he founded the monastery with its own publish-house and religious school at Montauban, the south France. He established the higher educational courses in theology and philosophy at the monastery. Many interesting books were printed in the printing houses of Istanbul and Montauban. Father Petre was the author of the most of those books, though he did not refer to himself, because he liked to do great work quietly. Those books included, "The Way of Life", "The Crown of the Martyrs", "The Flower branch for Children", "The Leader of Heaven", "The Wise Man", "Brief Rhetoric, Gina Eloquence", "Brief Philosophy or Love of Wisdom", "Short Georgian Grammar", "Short Georgian-French Grammar", "Christian Doctrine", "Paradise Prayers", "General History", "Short Geography", "Ready answer about the Armenian newspaper "Mshaki, etc. (Letters from the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, Volume II, II, 2020:31).

On the edge of the XIX-XX centuries, during Russification and Armenization of Georgians, "Georgian Monastery of Istanbul" was the only religious institution where the monks with their practical actions, by cross, pen or arms were fighting for the souverinity of Georgia, what became the fatal for them (Surguladze...2022:124).

The library and the archive of Georgian monastery in Istanbul is interesting because it preserved the epistolic or publicistic materials which gave Georgian scientist possibility to disclose the names of the people who made a Georgian affairs far from their homeland, on foreign land noiseless. They contribute with those "little" affairs" to great Georgian, national deed and served to their homeland from the foreign land. One of the prominent persons was Father Petre Tatalashvili and his activities in Georgian monastery of Istanbul, where he spent the major part of his life. He went where in the age of eight to get education and was engage in the life of Monastery for his whole life.

Research methodology: The research is based mainly on the historical research methods, including description, comparative-historical method, and empiric, cause-and-effect analysis based on the Epistolary and memoir materials preserved in the archive fund of the Georgian Catholic Monastery in Istanbul.

Outcomes and discussion. There was the special tradition of celebration several event in Georgian Monastery of Istanbul. St. Nino's day was celebrated in January and Holy Virgin's day in the last week of May. These celebrations had multiple purposes. On one hands, it has a religious purpose and on other hands, it was the reason for gathering Georgians being there.

On January 14, St. Nino's day, the service was conducted in Georgian language. Almost all the Georgians being there with no exemption used to come together. It had the response and naturally, it was reflected in the papers of that time. "The Droeba" of 1909 published the letter "St. Nino's day in

Istanbul” by Kartvelishvili (Razhden Khundadze). It describes the celebration of St. Nino thoroughly. It worth to mention that after service Georgian community came together for the charity purpose. The monastery Prior - Benedicte Vardidze, Father Andria Tsinamdzghvrishvili and Pater Merab (Ioseb Merabishvili), attended the meeting. During this meeting, Vl. Tsereteli presented the anniversary committee of Akaki. He also presented the report about opening of the fund because of the murder of Ilia to Georgian community came together there and the collected money was sent to the editorial office of “The Isari” on October 18, 1907. In addition, they expressed the desire to establish the society “Ertoba”, uniting Georgians for solution national problems together. Establishment of the „Kasa” (fund) proves the charity activities of the society, from where the poor and economically deprived Georgians in Istanbul would get support (The letters from the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, 2020:60-61).

May was announced as a month of Holy Virgin commemoration in the Georgian Monastery in Istanbul. It was one of the important traditions in its concept, which united everybody, elder and younger. The services were conducted every day, in the morning and evening. On the last day of the month, the celebration took place with lots of prayers.

According to the archive materials it is clear, that in the 30s of XX century, this tradition was even more pompous. The press of Istanbul of the time reported about this celebration. On the last week of May, a magnificent procession of the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was organized in Ferikoy district of Istanbul. During that time, it was a popular Christian celebration in Istanbul attended by Sultans accompanied with the Imperial guards. Local Turks respected this event. The representatives of the embassies of different countries (France, Italy, etc.) in Turkey participated in the procession with their flags (F.L.A.G.C.C.I. Tatalashvili, the letter to the Colonel of the 660th Infantry Regiment of France).

Relationship of France and Vatican with the Ottoman Empire is very important for that period. French and Italian religious orders and congregations mainly represented catholic missionary work in the Ottoman Empire (Taft, 2008:416). French influence on the Ottoman Empire, especially on Istanbul, the capital had been increased since XVI century, when the treaty between Paris and Istanbul was concluded on October 18, 1569 and made France the most important ally for Turkey for that period. It had an impact on the future of the Catholicism in the Ottoman Empire. French had the guaranteed freedom for religious rites, to make services accessible for all the Catholics residing in the Ottoman’s Empire (Frazee, 2006:67). In 1583 Pope Gregory XIII and Jesuit General, Claudio Aqvavia agreed by the request of the Galatian enlighteners to send several missionaries to Istanbul. Julio Manchinel, a priest led the mission, who were accompanied by two other clergymen and two brothers. They took ownership on St.Benedict church in Istanbul, which was handed over by Dominicans. Very soon, Jesuits opened their school and started preaching from the church of St. Benedict (Frazee, 2006:73). In 1587 at the general council, the Capuchins also agreed to renew missionary work in the East and four Italian monks volunteered to go to Istanbul (Frazee, 2006:67). In the Ottoman Empire, religious minorities were divided into separate communities - "Milets," which enjoyed partial autonomy and were controlled in religious matters by their own religious leaders. However, they did not have the

same civil and political rights, but they were protected as it was required from Islamic Sharia (Taft, 2008:415).

At the beginning of the XIX century, there were 32,000 Catholics in the Ottoman Empire (Frazee, 2006:223). Catholics in Istanbul enjoyed even greater freedom and influence after a series of reforms in the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1876, called Tanzimat¹. The major transformations were made in the military and civil sectors of the national government. However, those reforms did not refer to every region. Some of them were too remote from the center to introduce effective reforms. At the same time, during the whole period, the Empire constantly faced the foreign threats. The supporters of the internal reforms believed that only reforms leading to the modernization or Europeanization could help to maintenance of the Empire. (Sanikidze...2011,63). Christians and Muslims would enjoy full equality since then. The code of laws would be accessible for all, so that there would be no preference for a Muslim citizen over a Christian. (Frazee, 2006:225). The spirit of the Tanzimat was also manifested in the increase in the number of Western-educated Ottomans, whose worldview was already based on secularism. In the 40s, an unprecedented boom in the publishing of newspapers and books began. New generation demonstrated the great interest towards politics, history, biographies and philosophy. Rebellion against Conservatism in Europe was echoed in Turkey as well (Sanikidze...2011, 67). In general, the history of Turkey of the XIX-XX centuries were full of changes. The Empire faced great challenges both internal and external. Series of important reforms were implemented there, first Tanzimat epoch, then revolution of “Young Turks”, the Empire was looking for the new ideology and identity, the end of the Empire, the Revolution of Mustafa Kemal and establishment of Turkish Republic.

The Rome confirmed the protectorate of France over the Catholics living in Ottoman Empire in 1888 and 1898. The government of France was happy by strengthening its power on the missions abroad what was possible through founding of the Catholic churches (Taft, 2008:416). In the nineteenth century, the catholic church of the Middle East achieved a great progress with support of Latin missionaries. The schools and seminars were opening almost everywhere, the religious and Monasterial life was revived or renewed. This period was called the “Golden Age“ of the Latin Missions (Taft,2008:416). During the Sultanate of Abdulhamit II, from 1878 to 1905, the role of the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul was strengthened. The Apostolic Delegate was entrusted with the supervision of eleven Latin Catholic parishes in Galata and its adjacent areas. He also oversaw a large number of educational institutions serving several thousand students in Istanbul at the time. There were eleven Catholic orders located in Istanbul that period. There were thirty operating Catholic schools funded by France. The situation was changed during World War II. Many missionaries were forced to leave Turkey. In February 1919, French occupied Istanbul by leadership of General Franchet

¹ A period of reforms in the Ottoman Empire that lasted about 40 years and aimed to Europeanize the country in political, social, economic, and educational matters

d'Espèrey. Several years the forces of the Allies maintained the peace in Ottoman Empire. In 1923 when Turkey was announced as a republic, the condition of Catholics was changed again. (Frazee, 2006:230-231).

The letters of May 22, 1923 and of May 18, 1925 in French and the letter dated by May 28, 1925 in Italian language were found in the archive material written by Father Petre Tatalashvili on behalf of Monastery board to the Colonel of the 660th Infantry Regiment of France. He is invited on the Sunday solemn mass at the end of May together with an orchestra to the Monastery of Our Lady of Lourdes in Ferikoy. The respect of the Georgian Monastery board members to the French soldiers is demonstrated in the invitation letter.

The second invitation letter dated by May 18, 1925 gained our interest. The invitation is addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral Vandry, who is invited to a pompous ceremony, a solemn service, and he also asks to have French flags at the ceremony. It is known that the inhabitants of Constantinople are very fond of such pompous ceremonies. (F.L.A.G.C.C.I The letter of Petre Tatalashvili to Admiral Vandry).

The recipient of the third invitation is the Admiral Gaetano of the papal warships, who is asked to have the flags of the Royal Italian Navy and present it together with the flags of the navies of France and other countries during the ceremonies. (F.L.A.G.C.C.I The letter of Petre Tatalashvili to Admiral Gaetano).

One more letter is also interesting which is accompanied by the “Brief Instruction about Our Lady of Lourdes” and tells the history of the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes of Georgian Catholic Monastery in Istanbul. It was produced in Paris in 1880 and brought to the Monastery in 1881. The altar was built first in 1901, though it was renovated in 1912 and 1913. At the end of May a magnificent procession of the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes is organized in Ferikoy district of Istanbul (F.L.A.G.C.C.I Petre Tatalashvili, "Brief instruction about Our Lady of Lourdes”).

These are the official invitation letters for the high-ranking officials of France written at highly academic way and according to the diplomatic etiquette.

Georgian Monastery of Istanbul had never been reluctant to the national affairs. The information printed in “Sakartvelos Respublika” in 1919 reports, that on May 26 Georgian community had celebrated the anniversary of the independence of Georgia by leadership of a brotherhood of Immaculate Conception Monastery in Istanbul, („The Sakartvelos Respublika”, 1919, №161. p. 1). The similar information is given by the “Sakhalkho Sakme” (1919, № 582, p. 2) (Letters from the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, Volume II, 2020:61).

Correspondence of Father Petre Tatalashvili and Italian engineer, Mr. Frizzoni (1922 and 1924) requires attention, as it is clear from this communication, that an engineer attended the events organized by the monastery quite often. In addition to invitation, Father Petre Tatalashvili used to tell

him the stories about the monastery. It seemed that a successful Italian Engineer was the parish of Istanbul Georgian Catholic Monastery and an honorable guest. He greatly supported not only to the monastery but also to poor Georgian children and Father Petre thanked him for his good attitude and generosity on behalf of the Monastery. He thanked for the support in some reconstruction works conducted in the Monastery. "We remember very well how compassionately you visited our modest institution. It was the Lord's call to do so much good for Catholics in the Middle East" (F.L.A.G.C.C.I Letter to Engineer Frizzoni, 1922).

On February 20, 1924 Father Petre Tatalashvili sent a response to Italy, to an engineer Frizzoni, demonstrating his gratitude on behalf of the monastery for the help and interest the engineer demonstrated towards Monastery and Georgia. Then he told about the hard conditions in Georgia after becoming Soviet state, about difficulties of movement and contacts with his homeland. He was sorry that for the last two years, it was not possible to engage new Georgian students from Georgia. Religious work was persecuted in Georgia, some of Georgian brothers were detained, and others were abused. Only several Georgian students were left in the monastery. He also told about leaving of a Monastery Prior to Georgia, the story of establishment a Tbilisi school. Soviet government did not issue the passports for young people making impossible to take the student for study to Istanbul by a prior. (F.L.A.G.C.C.I Letter to Engineer Frizzoni, 1924).

It is clear from the letters that the Italian engineer Mr.Frizzon was well acquainted with the activities of the Georgian monastery, its problems and the issues related to Georgia. He helped to poor children as much as he could in Georgia, to Georgian monastery in Istanbul, as its parish and honorable supporter. By this correspondence, father Petre Tatalashvili tried to inform European society about the religious persecution in Soviet Georgia.

Conclusion

Father Petre Tatalashvili continued with the tradition of organizing of the grand celebrations on behalf of the monastery. Such attitude played a great role not only from the religious prospective, but also from political view. The monastery, which was kind of linker not only for Georgians living throughout entire Turkey, but also for many immigrated Georgians from Georgia. Moreover, the attitude of the country was changing towards Georgian culture and religious values. Actually, the celebrations had the international character and supported to promotion of Georgian culture and Christian religion and at the same time, it was the peace and national message for the rest of the world.

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Annexes

[F.L.A.G.C.C.I Letter of Petre Tatalashvili to Admiral Vandry].

Constantinople, le 18 Mai 1923.

A Son Excellence
Monsieur l'Amiral Vandry
Commandant en chef des Forces Navales
D'Orient - A Constantinople

Monsieur l'Amiral,

Je me permets de soumettre au bienveillant accueil de Votre Excellence la demande suivante:

Depuis que la statue de Notre Dame de Lourdes a été apportée de la terre de France et érigée dans notre chapelle des PP Géorgiens, la Sainte Vierge y a attiré de nombreux pèlerins et répandu des grâces exceptionnelles tout comme à la Roche de Massabielle. Aussi l'usage s'est établi d'organiser annuellement, à la fin de Mai, une Procession solennelle en son honneur. La cérémonie a toujours revêtu un caractère de pompe extraordinaire, en attirant une afflu-
ence considérable. Et puisqu'il s'agit de N.D. de

Lourdes, les stationnaires de l'Ambassade de France se faisaient un plaisir de nous prêter chaque année leurs drapeaux pour le pavois de l'église et de ses alentours.

Cet usage interrompu pendant la grande guerre, a été remis en honneur après l'armistice; et les bâtiments de guerre français nous ont continué le généreux concours de leurs anciens prédécesseurs. Cette année, la Procession a été fixée au Dimanche 27 Mai. C'est pourquoi je viens prier Votre Excellence, Monsieur l'Amiral, de vouloir bien nous accorder pour ce jour un certain nombre de drapeaux et pavillons de la Marine Française que les habitants de Constantinople aiment tant à saluer lors de cette manifestation à la fois catholique et française.

Persuadé que ma demande sera favorablement accueillie par Votre Excellence, je la prie de vouloir bien agréer l'assurance

de mes sentiments les plus distingués

P. Pierre Tatalashvili
des PP. Géorgiens

[F.L.A.G.C.C.I.The letter of Petre Tatalashvili to the Admiral Gaetano]

Costantinopoli, 25 Maggio 1925.

Sua Eccellenza
Il Signor Ammiraglio Gaetano Pepe
Corazzata San-Giorgio
Costantinopoli

Eccellenza,

Conoscendo lo zelo di Vostra Eccellenza per la gloria di Dio e le funzioni religiose, prendo la libertà di rivolgermi a Lei per sottometergli la seguente supplica:

Ogni anno, all'ultima Domenica di Maggio, si svolge una Processione grandiosa della Madonna Santissima nei dintorni del nostro Santuario il quale, come lo devo ricordare, durante due anni dopo l'armistizio ha prestato il servizio religioso all'Infanteria Italiana del Corpo di Occupazione.

Ma siccome il quartiere nostro innanzi alla chiesa non è affatto abitato, dove il convento adesso paviggiare il viale per cui passerà il corteo solenne. A questo scopo, prima della Grande Guerra ed ancora ultimamente due anni fa la Regia Marina Italiana ci prestava con squisita cortesia

per quel giorno un certo numero di bandiere e serie internazionali le quali, con altre date parimente dalla Marina Francese e da altre Società marittime, ci permettevano di decorare le strade in un modo decente ed assai degno della funzione che si celebrava ed alla quale parteciparono pure ultimamente i Carabinieri Reali.

Quest'anno, la detta Processione avrà luogo la Domenica prossima il 27 Maggio. Ardisco dunque di venir a pregare rispettuosamente l'Eccellenza Vostra di voler concederci benignamente un certo numero di bandiere e padiglioni di cui abbisogniamo molto e che restituiremo integralmente appena terminata la festa.

Persuasissimo che questa mia supplica sarà benevolmente accolta dall'Eccellenza Vostra, approfitto di questa occasione per dichiararmi con ogni rispetto,

dell'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima,

devotissimo servitore

Costantinopoli, ai 25 di Maggio 1925

P. Pietro Tatalashvili
Segretario

[F.L.A.G.C.C.I.. The Letter to an Engineer Frizzoni, 1922].

Costantinopoli, 26 Ottobre 1922.

Al molto Egregio Signore
Signor Ingegnere S. Frizzoni
Santa Margherita Ligure (Italia)

Caro Signor Frizzoni,

Il Reverendissimo Padre Superiore essendo partito in Georgia due mesi fa, tocca ben volentieri a me di ringraziarla di tutto cuore pel dono generoso che V.S. si è degnata di mandarci per l'Opera di assistenza ai fanciulli affamati nella Georgia. Ci ricordiamo benissimo di Lei quando con tanta simpatia venne a visitare il nostro stabilimento tanto modesto, ma il quale è chiamato da Dio a fare tanto del bene pel Cattolicesimo nel Prossimo Oriente. E quel bene che potremo fare noi, debbono considerare come fatto da loro quelli i quali con benevolenza o con generosità sua ci aiuteranno a compiere il nostro dovere apostolico.

Sperando dunque che La rivedremo ancora, caro Signor Ingegnere, di nuovo La ringrazio tanto al nome del Convento nostro quanto a quello del Superiore assente, per la Sua offerta, e La prego di gradire gli obligatissimi saluti

del Suo devotissimo

P. Pietro Catalašvily
Segretario della Congr.
dei PP. Giorgiani

[F.L.A.G.C.C.I.The Letter to an Engineer Frizzoni, 1924].

Costantinopoli, 20 Febraio, 1924.

Al molto egregio Signore Ingegnere E.S. Frizzoni
Santa Margherita Ligure (Italia)

Carissimo Signor Ingegnere.

Quanto è più raro d'incontrare nella vita la fedeltà nel ricordo, tanto è più gradita e consolante questa, specialmente per quelle anime le quali di continuo lottano contro le avversità spirituali e temporali. La di Lei pregiatissima del 30 Gennaio, ottimo Signor Ingegnere, ci ha dato una prova assai dolce di questa fedeltà, e ciò molto più nei nobilissimi sentimenti espressi in quella Sua missiva che non per l'offerta cordiale racchiusavi a favore delle opere nostre apostoliche. Per ciò mi fa un piacere di ringraziarLa con cuore commosso del conforto ed incoraggiamento che Lei ci reca con questo doppio Suo ricordo tanto simpatico. Ed ai miei ringraziamenti personali mi permetto giungere pure quei del P. Superiore e di tutta la Comunità nostra tanto delle monache quanto dei confratelli miei.

Le due Messe che Lei ha chiesto per Suoi defunti cari, sono state immediatamente celebrate; e sen'altro posso assicurarLa che spesso, spesso raccomandiamo le di Lei intenzioni al Signore ed alla Madonna Santissima in unione colle intenzioni degli amici e benefattori nostri. Carissimo Signor Frizzoni, Lei domanda qual sarebbe l'elemosina ordinaria per le messe qui a Costantinopoli: il valore determinato dall'autorità episcopale

in moneta turca è di Piastre 40 - 50, il che corrisponde ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ poco o poco più, a lire italiane cinque o sei. Però, le limosine di messe son divenute in questi ultimi anni abbastanza scarse, a cagione di molti sacerdoti orientali ruginosi dall'interne in questa nostra città. Ed è perchè saremo gratissimi alle anime benevole le quali ci procureranno simile aiuto per noi stessi come più specialmente per i nostri confratelli che lavorano in Georgia.

Carissimo Signor Ingegnere, grazie mille dell'interesse che Lei dimostra per la patria nostra e le opere nostre apostoliche. La situazione è tanto penosa in Georgia, che finora è difficile per noi non solo di viaggiarvi ma anche di corrispondere coi confratelli: di modo che da circa due anni e'è stato impossibile aumentare il numero dei nostri allievi ecclesiastici nel monastero. Però i stranieri non incontrano in Georgia nessun ostacolo per loro viaggio personale, meglio ancora commerciale; per essi vengono le comunicazioni e la vita abbastanza facili. Oltre a società marittime francesi e diverse altre, il Lloyd Triestino ha ripreso da poco il servizio regolare Trieste - Batum. Speriamo che adesso la riconoscenza ufficiale della Russia bolscevista faciliterà ancor di più le relazioni col paese nostro; e speriamo che pure noi, poveri sacerdoti Georgiani, i quali siamo proscritti dal suol natale nostro a causa di un regime tirannico e straniero, potremo anche noi provare qualche vantaggio di quel fatto, a scopo di giungere la meta a noi prefissa dalla Divina Provvidenza per il bene spirituale di tante anime abbandonate, le quali come pecorelle prive di pastore sono disperse in preda a lupi rapaci. L'opera religiosa soffre persecuzioni: parecchi confratelli nostri vengono molestati, anche incarcerati, ecc.... In attesa dunque di condizioni migliori, continuiamo qui a Costantinopoli, nelle lagrime e la preghiera, a far comiere loro studi gimnasiali o ecclesiastici ai pochissimi stu-

denti venuti dal paese nostro già prima dell'invasione bolscevistica, come ancora di procurare il servizio spirituale ai parrochiani dintorno al convento nostro.

Il Rev. P. Superiore, quando ebbe la fortuna di poter andare in Georgia 18 mesi fa, a scopo d'istituirci un ospizio per secolari poveri, riuscì a stabilire quest'opera in Tiflis dove continua sempre a far del bene alla gioventù sfortunata. Ma non potè riuscire a far ottenere dalle autorità governative il passaporto a giovanetti già maturi per la vocazione ecclesiastica. Anzi, ritornando per Costantinopoli, voleva portare con se diverse cose interessanti, come anche del materiale utilissimo per l'esposizione delle Missioni in Vaticano? ma, caro Signor Ingegnere, non si credete, è un fatto che: le autorità russe di Batun non l'hanno lasciato portar via ne s - s u n i s c r i t t o , neanche il piccolo conto delle spese quotidiane occorse durante il breve soggiorno nel paese!.. Speriamo però che adesso le cose cammineranno dopo la riconoscenza ufficiale dei Sovieti russi, e che almeno la corrispondenza ci verrà facilitata qualche poco. Ed è perchè il Superiore scrisse ultimamente ai conratelli di Georgia e gli raccomandò fra altro di raccogliere materiali interessanti per detta esposizione. Intanto dopo la primavera tenterà di andar ancor una volta in Georgia per affari importantissimi, e si spera che riuscirà in modo soddisfacente a far partecipare anche la Georgia nella detta esposizione in Vaticano.

Carissimo Signor Irizioni, spero di aver così soddisfatto a tutte le di Lei domande espresse nella Sua pregiatissima; ardisco di aspettare altre Sue nuove, forse anche il piacere di rivederLa a Costantinopoli; di nuovo cordialmente La ringrazio del Suo simpatico ricordo ed aiuto all'opera nostra apostolica, e, augurandole ogni bene a nome del P. Superiore come del mio e di tutti i conratelli miei, mi stimo sottoscrivervi di Lei.

Carissimo Signor Ingegnere.

Devotissimo

P. Pietro Cantalascio
Segretario