

**ÂSAFÎ DAL MEHMED ÇELEBÎ'S ŞECÂ'ATNÂME ABOUT  
THE SEIZURE OF TBILISI BY LALA MUSTAFA PASHA<sup>1</sup>**

ასაფი დალ მეჰმედ ჩელების „შეჯაყათ-ნამე“  
ლალა მუსტაფა ფაშას მიერ თბილისის აღების შესახებ

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**Abstract**

Lala Mustafa Pasha's military campaign in Kartli in 1578 has been depicted by a number of Ottoman historians: Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, Münecimbaşı Ahmed B. Lütfullah, Ebubekir Bin Abdullah, İbrahim Peçevi, Mustafa Selaniki, etc. The unknown work for Georgian historiography to date - Âsafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi's *Şecâ'atnâme* (a Book of Courage), where the writer details the stories of the conquest of Georgia by the Ottoman Commander-in-chief, occupies its place alongside the formally known Ottoman written sources describing the "Eastern military expedition". The author is the witness of the historical events of utmost importance for us. He is the direct participant of the "Eastern military expedition" and descriptor of the conquered places, occasionally engaged in the leadership of the army and sometimes appointed as a governor-general.

The *Şecâ'atnâme* conveys the comprehensively interesting accounts about the conquest of Kartli by the Ottomans which are somewhat different from the other contemporary sources: 1. The decision taken at the meeting held to seize Tbilisi by the Ottoman commander Osman Pasha and bring it to completion 2. The exact date for the entrance into the city. 3. The miniature depicting the seizure of aflame Tbilisi 4. Minting the coin in the name of Sultan Murad III dedicated to the conquest of Tbilisi.

The unknown factual material revealed on the basis of conducting the scientific study of Âsafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi's work enhances our knowledge about the aggressive wars waged on the territory of Georgia in the second half of XVI century. The *Şecâ'atnâme* informatively extends and enriches the historical accounts about Lala Mustafa Pasha's military expedition in Kartli in 1578 preserved in the formally known Ottoman written references and represents relatively complete historical picture of the process of conquering Tbilisi.

**Keywords:** Lala Mustafa Pasha, Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, Eastern military expedition, Conquest of Tbilisi, Minting of the coin, Miniature.

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**აბსტრაქტი**

1578 წელს ლალა მუსტაფა ფაშას ქართლში ლაშქრობას აღწერს არაერთი ოსმალთა ისტორიკოსი: გელიზოლუელი მუსტაფა ალი, მუნეჯიმ-ბაში, აბუბეერ ბინ აბდულაჰი, იბრაჰიმ ფეჩევი, მუსტაფა სელანიქი და სხვ. „აღმოსავლეთის ლაშქრობის“ ამსახველი ჩვენთვის ცნობილი ოსმალური წერილობითი წყაროების გვერდით დგება ქართულ ისტორიოგრაფიაში დღემდე უცნობი თხზულება, ასაფი დალ მეჰმედ ჩელების „შეჯაყათ-ნამე“ (წიგნი სიმამაცისა), სადაც მწერალი დაწვრილებით გადმოსცემს ოსმალთა მთავარსარდლის მიერ საქართველოს დაპყრობის ამბებს. ავტორი არის თანადამხვედური და თვითმხილველი ჩვენთვის გადამწყვეტი მნიშვნელობის ისტორიული მოვლენებისა. იგი „აღმოსავლეთის ლაშქრობის“ უშუალო მონაწილე, დაპყრობილი ადგილების აღმწერი, დროდადრო ლაშქრის ხელმძღვანელობაში მყოფი, ზოგჯერ კი ბეგლარბეგად დანიშნული პირია.

„შეჯაყათ-ნამე“ მრავალმხრივ საინტერესო, სხვა თანადროული წყაროებისგან რამდენადმე განსხვავებულ ცნობებს იძლევა ოსმალთაგან ქართლის დაპყრობის შესახებ: 1. ოსმალთა სარდლის ოზდემიროღლუ ოსმან ფაშას მიერ თბილისის ასაღებად გამართულ თათბირზე მიღებული გადაწყვეტილება და მისი სისრულეში მოყვანა 2. ოსმალთა ლაშქრის თბილისში შესვლის ზუსტი თარიღი 3. ცეცხლმოკიდებული თბილისის აღების ამსახველი მინიატურა 4. სულთან მურად III-ის სახელზე თბილისის დაპყრობის აღსანიშნავად მონეტის მოჭრა.

ასაფი დალ მეჰმედ ჩელების თხზულების მეცნიერული შესწავლის საფუძველზე გამოვლენილი უცნობი ფაქტობრივი მასალა აღრმავებს ჩვენს ცოდნას XVI საუკუნის II ნახევარში საქართველოს ტერიტორიაზე მიმდინარე დაპყრობითი ომების შესახებ. „შეჯაყათ-ნამე“ ინფორმაციულად ავრცობს და ამდიდრებს 1578 წელს ლალა მუსტაფა ფაშას ქართლში ლაშქრობის შესახებ ადრე ჩვენთვის ცნობილ ოსმალურ წერილობით ძეგლებში დაცულ ცნობებს და თბილისის დაპყრობის პროცესის შედარებით სრულ ისტორიულ სურათს წარმოგვიდგენს.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ლალა მუსტაფა ფაშა, ოზდემიროღლუ ოსმან ფაშა, აღმოსავლეთის ლაშქრობა, თბილისის აღება, მონეტის მოჭრა, მინიატურა.

## Introduction

In the process of waging the multi-centurial Ottoman-Iranian wars the issue related to Georgia had always assumed the paramount importance due to its convenient geo-political location. The redistribution of Georgian kingdoms and principalities used to represent one of the essential points of Ottoman-Iranian treaties of peace, which, in its turn, determined the permanent military mode of life for Georgians to repel the invaders.

At the end of the 70s of XVI century, the subjugation of Georgian kingdoms and principalities assumed the vital importance for Ottomans in the renewed war against Iran, which is evidenced by the interest in the current aggressive warfare over the territory of Georgia evinced by Ottoman chroniclers.

The military campaign waged in Kartli by Lala Mustafa Pasha in 1578 is depicted by a number of historians: Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali, Münecimbaşı Ahmed B. Lütfullah, Ebubekir Bin Abdullah, İbrahim Peçevi, Mustafa Selaniki, etc. Âsafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi is among them, whose work *Şecâ'atnâme* (A book of Courage) was unknown to date for Georgian historiography. It mainly describes the heroism of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha retelling the story of Ottoman commander in the battles fought against the Safavids and Russians in Childiri, Tbilisi and Tabriz in 1578-1585. (Özcan, 2007:18).<sup>2</sup>

The degree of reliability of the source is highlighted by the fact that the author, in most of the cases, is the witness and observer of the stories narrated by him. Being under aegis of Mustafa Pasha, Âsafî was instructed to describe the military expedition upon declaring the war against the Iran that allowed him to attend the official meetings and listen to the talks of statesmen (Eravcı, 2009:51)<sup>3</sup> as well as participate in battles.

Âsafî gives the extensive description of the conquest of Kartli by Lala Mustafa Pasha. He provides the explicit information about the meeting held to seize Tbilisi by the Ottomans and the events developed while entering the city. The *Şecâ'atnâme* encompasses the accounts which differ from the other contemporary sources and occasionally, contradicts the formally known confirmed facts.

As a result of collating the facts formally well-known to Georgian historiography and those highlighted in the recently obtained Ottoman sources as well as comparing the miniatures given, some of the noteworthy details were singled out, which considerably enhance our knowledge relating to the sequence of historical processes in Kartli in 1578.

## Methods

The historical-comparative method was applied in the process of studying the issue, on the basis of which the accounts of *Şecâ'atnâme* was collated and compared with the other Ottoman written sources of that time. The mentioned method highlighted the originality of the written work encompassing a great number of novelty and the necessity of considering the data given in the objective study of the issue.

The examination of the data recorded in the primary Ottoman sources and Turkish scientific literature through applying the critical analysis singled out the approximate to the reality and relatively complete historical picture of the events developed in Tbilisi.

While reviewing the miniature depicting the seizure of the capital of Kartli the creative cognition approach was applied that provided the proper interpretation of the process of conquest illustrated by the interchangeability of several scenes.

## Discussion and Results

According to the accounts given in the works of Turkish historians and Ottoman written sources of medieval ages, the Ottoman army marching from Childiri mostly under the conditions of heavy rainfall entered Tbilisi on August 24, 1578 (Kütükoğlu, 1962:54) and siezed the city on the same day (Danişmend, 1972:23). But the author of *Şecâ'atnâme* provides the fundamentally different

<sup>2</sup>The numerals are Roman in the book (XVIII)

<sup>3</sup>The numerals Roman in the book (LI)

information about the date of entrance into the capital by Ottomans and the events developed on location. At the same time, while Ottoman sources of that time say nothing about the preparations and plan to seize the city, *Şecâ'atnâme* offers the detailed accounts about the course of meeting held before entering Tbilisi, the decisions taken at the meeting and the action plan of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha.

According to Âsafî, the Vizier held the meeting and asked the people around to express their views about the measures to be taken. One of the significant decisions made at the meeting implied conducting the negotiations with Georgians to persuade them into changing the religion. The source reveals that as a risky matter to be settled Osman Pasha himself assumed the responsibility for suggesting the Moslem Doctrine to Georgians and in case of their resistance he set the target to destroy them: “Then His Majesty, Osman Pasha declared that it was the way worth sacrificing his life and himself. I will go, offer the Islam to the unbelievers, and spill the blood of disobedient people over the ground” (Özcan, 2007:33-34). The participants of the meeting unanimously approved his decision and the commander immediately set off together with the accompanying persons.

According to Ottoman historians depicting the military campaign – Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali (Eravcı, 2014:115), Müneccimbaşı (შენგელია, 1968:137) and İbrahim Peçevi (ჯიქია, 1964:41) the seizure of Tbilisi by Ottoman army is dated to August 24. Based on the Ottoman written sources the same date is indicated by Turkish historians – Bekir Kütükoğlu (Kütükoğlu, 1962:54), İsmail Hami Danişmend (Danişmend, 1972:23) and Fahrettin Kırzioğlu (Kırzioğlu, 1976:292). In addition, the fact, that the Ottoman seized Tbilisi on the same day without any resistance and bloodshed, is highlighted. The both information is cast a doubt on by the accounts describing the course of processes in the capital of Kartli provided by Âsafî. In particular, he dates Osman Pasha’s entrance into the city three days prior to the arrival of regular Ottoman army – to August 21. (Özcan, 2007:34). The reliability of Âsafî’s information is proved by the accounts cited by Kırzioğlu from the work of Hüseyin – „Gazavat-ı Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa“, according to which, *primarily*, Osman Paşa entered Tbilisi accompanied by 300 Janissaries and several thousand of Askers (Kırzioğlu, 1976:292). At the time of escape Daut-Khan had destroyed the bridge and Pasha was able to enter the city only after its restoration. The mentioned accounts indicate the division of “Islam army” having set off in the direction of Kartli into two parts, out of which the advanced one, relatively a smaller part subordinated to Osman Pasha, was sent to conduct negotiations with Georgians as well as to direct reconnaissance of the situation, and it entered the city 3 days prior to the arrival of Mustafa Pasha’s regular army, on Thursday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, 1578.

To date, it was known that the population of Tbilisi ran away to the inaccessible mountains before the appearance of Ottoman army, Daut-Khan burned the city and fled as well. (სვანძე, 1971:113). Accordingly, Osman Pasha together with the accompanying persons entered the already emptied city (მამისთვალისვილი, 2009:193). According to Âsafî, the processes developed in different way. From the source we become aware that the commander having entered the city caused the deep trouble for Georgians. Due to the obstinate refusal to convert to Islam, Georgians suffered the greatest misfortune. The Ottoman followed the runaways and even killed some of them (Özcan, 2007:34). As it seems, when Osman Pasha entered Tbilisi, a certain part of locals, who having rejected the demand to change their belief were punished, had remained in the city. They could not manage to run away or intentionally decided to stay. The fact remains that during the seizure of Tbilisi the Georgians had not set the goal to exhibit the resistance to Ottomans, however, some confrontations still took place.

According to the data preserved in *Şecâ'atnâme* we should presume that before Mustafa Pasha’s arrival, it had taken Osman Pasha quite a while to meet and negotiate with Georgians, to punish the disobedient locals, to follow the runaways and, in general, to conquer this strategic point. The obstacles created by Georgians is worth considering – destroying the bridge entering the capital, which Ottomans had to restore, so that they could penetrate the city and putting out the roaring fire made by Daut-Khan in Tbilisi. Supposedly, it took Osman Pasha the whole 3 days from entering Tbilisi – August 21 to Mustafa Pasha’s arrival – August 24, to take the complete control over the city. The commander-in-chief Mustafa Pasha appeared in the city together with his army on the fourth day, when Osman Pasha had already dealt with the main affair. Exactly the day of the commander-in-

chief's arrival in Tbilisi is indicated as the date of the entrance and seizure of the capital – August 24 by Turkish historians of the medieval and the following period.

The course of historical processes developed during the entrance of Ottoman army into Tbilisi is well depicted by the miniature given in the middle of the text (pic.1) To date, the oldest picture of Tbilisi has been deemed to be the illustration (Eravcı, 2014:81b-82a) of Gelibolulu Mustafa Alis' *Nusret-nâme* (The book of Victories), which depicts the main part of Ottoman's army entering Tbilisi under the commands of Lala Mustafa Pasha who is met by Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha.

The miniature of Tbilisi of *Şecâ'atnâme* is singled out by the diversity of contents as well as the artistic value. The artist presented the already known historical stories through interchanging several scenes. Ottomans' entrance into Tbilisi is illustrated in the lower part by the scene of soldiers standing like newcomers and the Janissaries with the rifles aiming at the small castle in front of this group. The scene of infantry and cavalry willing to cross the river presumably represents the story of destroying the bridge by Daut-Khan, according to which Osman Pasha's army managed to enter the city only after the restoration of the bridge.

The aflame city in the upper part of the miniature confirms the fact of burning the capital by Daut-Khan, which is described in „Meskhetian Chronicle”: “Daut-Khan burnt it and fled, arrived in Lori” (შარაშიძე, 1961:49). Here it is worth noting, that Ottoman historians provide the information about the population leaving Tbilisi and fleeing to the mountains, however, nothing is said about the fire, neither Âsafî mentions this information in the text, although he revives the fact, which is not narrated, on his miniature. As regards Tbilisi being emptied and the population running away to the mountains, the artist narrates this story by the scene of a group of inhabitants of the castle behind the range of mountains.



Picture 1: The scene depicting the Ottoman army entering and conquering Tbilisi  
 Source: Abdülkadir Özcan, Asafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi (Bey, Paşa). Şecâ'atnâme.  
 Özdemiroğlu Osman Paşa'nın Şark Seferleri (1578-1585)  
 İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2007:35(18r)

In the last part of the conquest of Tbilisi, following the story about Mustafa Pasha gaining the entrance into the city and looking around the inner castle, Âsafî provides the hitherto unknown information about minting the coin in the name of Sultan Murad III: “The coin was engraved with the name of *Şâhen-şâh* and there was written – we genuinely conquered”<sup>4</sup>(Özcan,2007:35). This noteworthy information is not detected in the works of Ottoman historians of either that or the subsequent period of time. So far, we have not obtained the evidence confirming the fact, which would assure us in the accuracy of Âsafî’s accounts. While discussing this point, it is worth considering that the issue of Iranian and Ottoman coins in the kingdoms of Kartli and Kakheti in the II half of XVI century may have a certain relation with the above mentioned information. One of them chronologically precedes and the other follows the information about minting the coin by Ottomans in Tbilisi. The first case refers to minting the Safavid’s coin before the seizure of Tbilisi by Mustafa Pasha. The coin issued in the name of Mohamed Khodabende is dated to 986 AH, which corresponds to 1578/9 AD and Tbilisi is indicated as the place of minting the coin. The numismatist Irakli Paghava stated the chronological frameworks of the issue of the above mentioned coin. This interval of time comprises the period from March 10 to August 24, 1578 (the period prior to Lala Mustafa Pasha’s military campaign in Tbilisi). The researcher duly remarks that the date engraved on the coin is not ordinary and it should be related to the Ottoman-Iranian war which started in that year (ფაღავა, 2018:325-328). Supposedly, Iran highlighted the subordination of this strategic point by minting the coin in Tbilisi. A few months later, minting the coin in the name of Murad III dedicated to the day of the seizure of Tbilisi indicates the retaliation step to Iranians’ action for the purpose of numismatic consolidation of the control established over Tbilisi by Ottomans.

As regards Ottoman coin minted in the name of Murad III in one more Georgian kingdom – Kakheti, the Ottoman chronicler of XVI century – İbrahim Rahimi-zâde notifies about it. The accuracy of the notification is confirmed by the coin material having been discovered a few years ago, on which the name of Sultan Murad is engraved. Bazari, the capital of the kingdom, is considered to be the place of minting the coin, whose name is encountered in the foreign sources as Zagemi-/Zagami/Zegami/Zegemi (ფაღავა, გოგავა, 2016:272-275).

Taking into account the chronological order, the Ottoman invaded first in Tbilisi and after its conquest they set off towards Kakhetian kingdom. Accordingly, if the Ottoman deemed it necessary to mint the coin in the name of Sultan in Kakheti, it can be presumed that they did it as a token of conquering Tbilisi. This is also reflected in the process of discussing the warfare strategies at the military meeting held under Lala Mustafa Pasha’s leadership on July 3, which clearly shows that the Ottoman attached the paramount importance to the conquest of Tbilisi (Danişmend,1972:19). It is true that so far we have not the evidence confirming the Âsafî’s accounts, however, the possibility of the future discoveries to lead the numismatists to the trace of this coin cannot be excluded.

### Conclusion

The study of Âsafî Dal Mehmed Çelebi’s work shows that *Şecâ’atnâme* is depicting mainly the heroism of Özdemiroğlu Osman Pasha, which substantially increases the accounts of other Ottoman sources about the conquest of Tbilisi. The facts about Âsafî’s appointment as a descriptor of “Eastern military expedition” as well as the familiarization with the hitherto unknown realities set us thinking that the author himself was the eyewitness and participant of the stories narrated by himself.

The accounts depicted in *Şecâ’atnâme* allows to perform the somewhat complete reconstructions of the historical process of conquering Tbilisi by the Ottomans in 1578. The events developed in August are represented in the following succession: the preparations for the conquest of Tbilisi and the decision adopted at the meeting; gaining the entrance into the city by Osman Pasha and suggesting the change of religion to Georgians; the punishment of Georgians due to rejecting the conversion to Islam; chasing the runaways; the expulsion of non-Muslim people from the fortress; carrying out prayers in churches; Mustafa Pasha’s arrival and minting the coin in the name of Murad III as a token of seizing Tbilisi.

The exhaustive description of the course of historical processes in Tbilisi denotes the interest of the author in detailing the story of Osman Pasha’s bold decision and the successful seizure of the city.

<sup>4</sup>“We genuinely conquered” – is written in Arabian in the text : اَنَا فَتَحْنَا

In addition, the attention focused on the conquest of Tbilisi is conditioned not only by the desire to highlight the potentials of Özdemiroğlu as a brave warrior but by the strategic location of the city and the significance of gaining the control on it for Ottomans as well.

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