

KIR-NILOS<sup>1</sup>, DIPLOMAT OF KARTLI KING CONSTANTINE II

კირ-ნილოსი, ქართლის მეფის კონსტანტინე II-ის დიპლომატი

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**Abstract:**

When Kartli King Constantine II (1478–1505) drove the Turkmens out of Kartli, he set his sights on reuniting Kartli, Kakheti, Imereti, and Samtskhe into a single state. In 1490, he convened the royal council, before which he raised the question of how to bring the rebels back under his authority. The council members unanimously advised the king to abandon the struggle to resolve this problem. Constantine was thus compelled to submit to the council's demand and accept the existing situation. In this way, the council legally formalized the fragmentation of Georgia into separate kingdoms and principalities. The breakup of the country also put an end to a unified foreign policy, which became especially apparent in the last quarter of the 15th century.

From the 1480s onward, the Kingdom of Kakheti saw its salvation in the Muscovite state, while Kartli looked to Western Europe. King Constantine of Kartli oriented his political allegiances toward countries that had a particular interest in weakening the Ottoman Empire. Constantine II first made contact with the Mamluk ruler of Egypt, Al-Ashraf Said ad-Din Qaitbay. The sources tell us nothing of the outcome of the Georgian envoy's negotiations in Cairo, and little is known of that same envoy's negotiations in Spain and Rome. The present article analyzes, to the extent possible, the probable outcomes of Kir-Nilos's negotiations in all three countries.

**Key words:** Kir-Nilos, Zakaria, King Ferdinand, Queen Isabella, Poland

ელდარი მამისტვალიშვილი

ისტორიის მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი,  
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**აბსტრაქტი**

როდესაც ქართლის მეფე კონსტანტინე II-მ (1478–1505) თურქმენები ქართლიდან განდევნა, მან ქართლის, კახეთის, იმერეთისა და სამცხის ერთ სახელმწიფოდ გაერთიანება დაისახა მიზნად. 1490 წელს მან მოიწვია სამეფო კრება, რომლის წინაშეც წამოჭრა საკითხი, თუ როგორ დაებრუნებინა აჯანყებულები თავისი ხელისუფლების ქვეშ. საბჭოს წევრებმა ერთხმად ურჩიეს მეფეს, შეეწყვიტა

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ბრძოლა ამ პრობლემის გადასაჭრელად. ამგვარად, კონსტანტინე იძულებული გახდა დამორჩილებოდა საბჭოს მოთხოვნას და მიეღო არსებული ვითარება. ამ გზით, საბჭომ იურიდიულად გააფორმა საქართველოს დაქუცმაცება ცალკეულ სამეფოებად და სამთავროებად. ქვეყნის დაშლამ ასევე წერტილი დაუსვა ერთიან საგარეო პოლიტიკას, რაც განსაკუთრებით თვალსაჩინო გახდა XV საუკუნის ბოლო მეოთხედში.

1480-იანი წლებიდან კახეთის სამეფო თავის ხსნას მოსკოვურ სახელმწიფოში ხედავდა, ხოლო ქართლი დასავლეთ ევროპისკენ იყურებოდა. ქართლის მეფე კონსტანტინე თავის პოლიტიკურ ერთგულებას იმ ქვეყნებისკენ უბიძგებდა, რომლებსაც განსაკუთრებით ოსმალეთის იმპერიის დასუსტებით სურდათ დასუსტება. კონსტანტინე II-მ პირველად დაუკავშირდა ეგვიპტის მამლუქ მმართველს, ალ-აშრაფ საიდ ად-დინ ქაიტბეის. წყაროები არაფერს გვეუბნებიან კაიროში ქართველი ელჩის მოლაპარაკებების შედეგების შესახებ და ცოტა რამ არის ცნობილი იმავე ელჩის ესპანეთსა და რომში მოლაპარაკებების შესახებ. ამ სტატიაში, რამდენადაც შესაძლებელია, გაანალიზებულია კირ-ნილოსის მოლაპარაკებების სავარაუდო შედეგები სამივე ქვეყანაში.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** კირ-ნილოსი, ზაქარია, მეფე ფერდინანდი, დედოფალი იზაბელა, პოლონეთი

**Introduction:** This article examines the diplomatic mission and negotiations of Kir-Nilos, the court priest and diplomat of Kartli King Constantine II (1478/1479–1505), in Egypt, Spain, and Rome. In Egypt, with whose sultans Georgia had traditionally maintained good relations, his envoy was tasked with securing the Egyptian sultan's support for the Georgian churches and monasteries in Jerusalem. As for the purpose of Nilos's journey to Spain and Rome, it was to obtain assistance in defending against Persian aggression.

**Methods:** The following methods are employed in this work: empirical analysis, comparative-historical method, cause-and-effect analysis, synthesis, abstraction, content analysis, and systemic analysis.

## Discussion:

### 1. *Kir-Nilos's Diplomatic Mission to Egypt*

The dispatch of Nilos by Kartli King Constantine II, first to Egypt in 1493–1494, and then to Spain and Rome, was one of the most significant events in the history of Georgian foreign relations and diplomacy.

Nothing is known of the biography of the clergyman (priest) Kir-Nilos. He is mentioned only in letters sent by the king, where he is referred to as the court priest. Nor do we know anything of what he discussed with the Egyptian sultan.

It is entirely plausible that Nilos was entrusted with raising a certain proposition with the sultan concerning the threat posed to Egypt by the Ottoman Empire - a threat of particular relevance, since the Mamluks regarded the Ottoman state as their principal enemy. In this period, negotiations with Egypt would likely have begun on that basis, before moving on to matters of greater interest to Georgia, in my view - the improvement of conditions for the Georgian monasteries in Jerusalem, which was dependent on the sultan's goodwill.

It is accepted in Georgian historiography that the king sent the priest Nilos to Egypt to form an anti-Ottoman coalition, but I believe this does not correspond to the truth. The primary purpose of Nilos's visit to Cairo must have been the protection of Georgian holy sites in Jerusalem, the positive resolution of which could not be achieved without the support of the Egyptian sultan. At this time, it was Iran, not the Ottoman Empire, that posed problems for the Kingdom of Kartli. During this period, the Greeks, Armenians, and

especially the European Catholic Franciscans were attempting to seize Georgian churches and monasteries in the Holy Land. The Franciscans wished to take Golgotha from the Georgians - an attempt they had already made unsuccessfully in 1475 (Jannin R., 1992: 10). In 1492, the Franciscans succeeded in having a local court ruling split the summit of Golgotha between Georgians and Catholics (Jannin R., 1992: 10; Metreveli E., 1962: 122–123). Nilos was tasked with having this court ruling annulled. The envoy remained in the Egyptian capital for one year but failed to achieve a positive result. The presence of a Georgian envoy in Cairo in 1493, without naming him, is noted by the 15th-century Arab historian A. Daraji, when writing about another Georgian envoy who arrived in Cairo on 14 August 1511. This envoy too, it seems, came to Egypt to request the annulment of the same court decision, but likewise achieved no success (Japaridze G., 2011: 90).

The envoy is known by the name Kir-Nilos, which reflects the influence of the Greek-language letters sent by the Georgian king to Europe. Georgian kings customarily sent Greek-written letters to Western Europe and Russia. In certain documents produced in Western Europe, Nilos is referred to as a member of the Order of Saint Basil.

We have no information whatsoever about Nilos's negotiations in Cairo. This was not the first time Georgian kings had sent envoys to Egyptian sultans on account of the holy sites in Jerusalem. In general, only fragmentary records of Georgia's relations with Egypt survive from the 12th to 15th centuries. The primary purpose of these embassies was to secure the release of Jerusalem's churches and monasteries and to create conditions for their normal functioning. Kartli King Constantine II is seen as continuing this tradition.

As noted, in the 1480s–90s the Ottoman Empire had not yet begun creating problems for Georgia. Eastern Georgia was suffering from the aggression of the Aq Qoyunlu Turkmen state based in Iranian territory. However, when Georgian diplomats spoke of plans against the Ottomans, their aim was to link Georgia's own grievance (Iran) to that of Christian Europe (the Ottomans) and to kindle the spirit of anti-Islamic struggle both in Egypt and in Europe. Georgia would, of course, itself, as a member of the great Christian family, actively participate in the struggle against the Muslims. If the Georgian envoy expressed readiness to fight against the Ottomans during negotiations with the sultan (of which we have no evidence), it was solely because this was relevant to Egypt from the standpoint of its own state interests, and because it was necessary to encourage the sultan to assist the Georgians in recovering and retaining their churches and monasteries in Jerusalem. That Nilos's mission to the Egyptian sultan regarding the holy sites was not a matter of political negotiation is clearly evident from the letter King Constantine sent to the monarchs of Spain: *"Oh, how bereft of grace are our kin (Christians - E.M.)... But now we have learned, and hold firm hope, that our God Jesus Christ, our true God, will grant us victory over the godless Hagarenes. For which purpose we dispatched our priest-monk Kir-Nilos to the Sultan of Egypt in Cairo, who received him with great joy. Know that we have nothing in common with the impure in any other regard"* (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 82–83).

I believe it is beyond doubt that by "Hagarenes" (Tatars), both Georgians and Europeans generally meant Muslims, not Turks alone. In this instance too, the Hagarenes are the Muslim Egyptians/Mamluks. King Constantine also states clearly that he sent Nilos to Cairo for a different purpose - unquestionably to resolve the matter of the Georgian monasteries. "We have no business with the impure (Muslims, including Egyptians) in any other regard."

King Constantine, concerned with improving the situation of Georgian monasteries in the Holy Land, also sent Nilos to Rome, to Pope Alexander VI, *"to declare his obedience to him as the Vicar of Christ in the Holy Lands and to ask him to encourage the kings of the West to undertake a holy war against the Saracens."* Constantine promised the Pope that, together with other Eastern Christians, he himself would participate in the war against the Muslims (Tabaghua I., 1984: 109).

In his letter to Spain, Constantine II briefly but with complete clarity indicates whom he considers the enemy of his country. He avoids elaborating on this point, *"for on the road there are many enemies, as your majesty also knows; we are perpetually tormented by godless Iran, and they have done us much harm."*

*They are many in number. From Constantinople, Trebizond, and other Christian lands, we are left alone, very few. At this time, the whole multitude of Hagarenes, Turks, and Arabs is shaken and frightened<sup>2</sup>. Now the time has come for us, with God's intercession, and I ask you to march on Constantinople, do not delay... And I, with my son and my army, as many as I am able, as soon as the envoy dispatched by your majesty reaches me, shall without delay join your grace in this endeavor"* (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 82–83).

After these words of the King, it should have been clear to the Spanish what country the Georgians were seeking assistance in fighting against. It is therefore tenuous to claim that *"Constantine's letter does not reveal the purpose of the Georgian envoy's presence in Egypt, and it is thought that this was connected with an attempt to form an anti-Ottoman coalition"* (Japaridze G., 2011: 129; Tsintsadze I., 1965: 12–13; Khintibidze E., 2013: 79; Papashvili M., 2002: 70).

Whatever purpose the mission of priest Nilos to Egypt may have served, it is nonetheless of great significance for the study of the history of Georgia's foreign relations. It can be surmised that diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Kartli and Mamluk Egypt, from that time onward and in keeping with the interests of both states, did not cease until the Ottoman conquest of Egypt (Mamistvalishvili E., 2009: 121–124)

The historical significance of this embassy also lies in the fact that, on his way from Cairo, Georgian envoy Nilos passed through Jerusalem, where he met Martín Díaz de Aux - a page and lancer of the Spanish king,<sup>3</sup> who was present in the Holy City on a specific mission: to inform the Christians of the holy city of the joyful news of the liberation of Granada from Muslim hands. This event of tremendous international significance apparently inspired the Georgian envoy to turn Spain's great success to his own country's advantage, and he persuaded Martín Díaz de Aux to accompany him to Georgia (Luis Gil Fernández, Iliá Tabaghua, 1991: 85).

One can only marvel at the conduct of these two envoys - Georgian and Spanish: how did Nilos manage to persuade the Spanish envoy to take such a bold step and travel to Georgia without the permission of his sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella? One might conjecture that the envoy, taking into account the great interest of the Spanish royal court in the political situation of the Near East, accepted the invitation to Georgia. It is likely that he possessed some knowledge of Georgia and that the country was not terra incognita to him.

It is doubtful but possible that the Spanish envoy's journey to Georgia was also prompted by the dangers along the route by which he had traveled from Spain to Jerusalem, and that he chose instead to make use of the road leading through Georgia toward Europe (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 17).

The Spanish envoy did not remain long in Georgia. He made such an impression on the Kartli royal court and so thoroughly demonstrated the benefits of ties with Spain that King Constantine sent his own envoys with him - Brother Nilos and Brother Zakaria, accompanied by two servants.

Kir-Nilos was also entrusted with another special mission: the king sent with his envoys two letters, one addressed to the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, the other to Pope Alexander VI. The king also conveyed particularly important verbal messages through his envoys. They were given additional special assignments as well, including gifts to be presented to the Pope.

## 2. Kir-Nilos's Diplomatic Mission to Spain

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the liberation of Granada in 1492 from Arab rule by Spanish forces, which finally completed the unification of Spain.

<sup>3</sup> Based on I. Tsintsadze's Russian translation of Constantine II's letter (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 83), it has been accepted in Georgian historiography that the King of Spain sent not one but several envoys to Jerusalem. However, the Spanish source indicates there was only one, and this is what should be trusted.

From Constantine's letter addressed to the King of Spain, two significant themes can be identified, based on the letter's overall thrust and the issues it raises: 1) the Georgian king informs the addressee of his position on the problems created by the Ottoman Empire for all of Christendom, and pledges that small Georgia will contribute to their resolution by mobilizing all its capabilities and expressing readiness to fight alongside others; 2) the Georgian king also informs the Spanish court of the sufferings of his own country and people: your enemy is the Ottoman Empire, while for us the particularly dangerous and oppressive enemy is Iran.

Constantine is well aware that in Western Europe, Iran is regarded as a potential ally in the struggle against the Ottomans, and therefore he cannot directly request armed assistance against Iran. While informing the addressee of his country's misfortune, there immediately follows his plea: take our situation into account as well, and perhaps you might help us in some way.

Constantine's appeal to the Spanish royal court would not have achieved the desired result. Spain's interests in the Near East at that time were minimal, and no Christian state of the era would have taken such a consequential step out of love for Christendom alone. Ferdinand and Isabella, as was to be expected, gave the Georgian envoy only vague promises: the Spaniards were prepared to fight the enemies of the Catholic faith in Africa, and they expressed high regard for King Constantine's proposal to establish relations between Spain and Georgia, and even promised him material assistance (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 39).

The envoys crossed the Black Sea, traveled up the Dnieper River, and set off toward Spain by way of the Lithuanian-Polish territories.

In Lithuania-Poland, the Georgian envoy presented the government with Georgia's plan for the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. I. Tsintsadze considered the insertion of a translation of King Constantine's letter to the Spanish king into the "Lithuanian Metrica" as proof that consultations on this matter took place in Poland (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 39).

King Constantine's letter to the King of Spain is a cleverly conceived analysis of the situation created in the Near East by the growing power of the Muslims. The King of Kartli creates the impression that he is primarily concerned with common Christian affairs, and calls upon the united forces of Western Europe to restore the states of Byzantium and Trebizond. Constantine and his courtiers knew well that the restoration of the aforementioned states could not be achieved without the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. And if that were to happen, Georgia too would be saved as a matter of course. The letter mentions only in passing the situation of Georgia at that time, while the ambassador was to convey the details verbally to the rulers of Spain.

It is noteworthy that the King of Kartli takes into account the interests of both secular and ecclesiastical rulers of Western European countries and draws their attention to different problems. In the letter written by Constantine II to the King of Spain, the situation created in the Near East by the growing power of the Muslims is analyzed. The King of Kartli made the King of Spain feel that he was primarily concerned with common Christian affairs, and called upon him to restore, through the united forces of Western Europe, the states of Byzantium and Trebizond, that is, those centers of strategic and economic importance which the Ottomans had conquered and which had created serious problems for the Western countries in terms of connecting with the Eastern countries, particularly with Iran. In the letter sent to the Pope, however, as will become apparent below, he focuses attention on the liberation of Constantinople and the Holy Land - the most significant centers for Christian spirituality.

King Constantine's appeal to the Pope for the organization of a crusade to liberate the Holy Land, rather than for the formation of an anti-Ottoman coalition, was met with the following response: *"We have received with complete enthusiasm your remarkable intention and plan to*

*campaign against those who have rebelled against the faith of Jesus Christ. Such a campaign shall be prepared everywhere, and that you offer us an army led by your son, for the purpose of cleansing the venerated sepulchers and liberating the people oppressed for Christ's sake, it is difficult to express how much this news has uplifted us and what worthy gratitude we render to Almighty God for having planted in your great mind such aspiration and sense of duty toward the faith; you so greatly comfort our soul and desire for the protection of the Christian faith and care for its teachings that we rejoice in the progress of Christians"* (Tabaghua I., 1984: 217). This excerpt makes it entirely clear that the King of Kartli did not write to the Roman Pope about the Ottoman state and the threat it posed. Constantine's letter contains only one sentence about the situation in Georgia, specifically, in his kingdom of Kartli. The same letter hints indirectly at a plea from the leader of a country burdened by Iranian aggression for assistance in defending against the enemy. In exchange, if the Spaniards were to attempt to liberate Constantinople, King Constantine would attack the Ottomans with his entire army - a force that troubled not Georgians but Europeans. The Georgian king also proposes to the Spanish authorities the continuation of relations at the ambassadorial level (Tsintsadze I., 1965: 83).

The Georgian ambassadors arrived in Spain in January 1495 and remained there until December. Regarding their stay in Spain, we possess extremely scarce yet interesting accounts, the likes of which we do not have for any other Georgian embassy sent to Western Europe.

The Spanish government allocated funds to the ambassadors for the tailoring of clothing and five mules for travel. They were attended by one escort, a certain Garcia de Badajoz. The ambassadors were allocated 300 ducats, or 112,500 maravedis, for travel expenses (Luis Gil Fernández, Ilia Tabaghua 1991: 306).

In March 1495, the envoys arrived in Seville and resided in the house of Pedro de Huvarilio. The owner of the city's inns, by order of the municipal council and the Count of Cifuentes, took upon himself the costs of the envoys' residence in that city. Nilos and Zakaria were in Burgos in July of that same year. On 30 July, the Spanish monarchs' reply to the Georgian king was drafted there (Luis Gil Fernández, Ilia Tabaghua, 1991: 306–308; Khintibidze E., 1986: 148).

Based on the letter, we can say that the Georgian envoys made quite a good impression on the Spanish royal court. They are referred to as "remarkable, devout, and brilliant orators."

It is noteworthy that Nilos and Zakaria are described as orators. In ancient Roman diplomatic service, there were special envoys whose duty was to deliver particular messages verbally at their destination. Since the Georgian envoys in effect carried the principal matters of diplomatic negotiation not in written form but were required to deliver them orally, the Spanish diplomatic service applied to them the term orator - used for a specific category of envoys.

The Catholic Monarchs of Spain (as Ferdinand and Isabella were called) expressed great joy at the Georgian king's "*loyalty, service, and reverence*" toward the Catholic faith. It is worth asking what King Constantine meant by these words expressing allegiance to Catholicism, and this must be clarified in order to understand the "*acknowledgment*" of Catholicism by priest Nilos in Spain or Rome.

Catholic states, including the Spanish kingdoms, which were still fighting the Arabs under the banner of the triumph of Catholicism, were informed of the measures taken by the Pope. After the unification of Spain, Ferdinand was a devoted Catholic (it is worth noting that he and Isabella introduced the tribunal of the Inquisition in Castile in 1480). All of this was known at the Kartli royal court through information periodically received from Jerusalem; much would also have been learned from the Spanish envoy who came to Georgia together with Nilos. Constantine's expressed attitude toward Catholicism was solely intended to win over the Catholic monarchs of Spain and had no real basis. This conclusion is supported by an analysis of Georgia's lengthy relationship with Western Europe during the Middle Ages.

From the Spanish monarchs' letter, it is clear that they were aware of Georgia's unfavorable situation, but they promise the Georgians nothing reliable. What mattered to them was that the Georgians fight for the

triumph of Catholicism: *"As we have been told, you face troubles daily and danger never leaves you, which brings us great sorrow, and yet for all things we must offer thanks to the Lord and beseech Him that both you and all of Christendom may be delivered, protected, and led to victory from the power and dominion of the infidels. There is no doubt that the Lord God will not withhold His divine mercy in this matter, if Your Excellency fights with the same resolve of old for the defense and renewal of the Catholic faith and holds back the enemy. To bring this about, it is necessary to see the undertaking already begun through to its end, for which purpose we again address our request to Your Excellency and beseech you for the sake of the Lord... The remaining proposals, conveyed to us in your words by the aforementioned orators, we approve of and offer you great thanks for such goodwill... On other matters as well, we have given sincere responses to the said orators; whatever they shall say, Your Excellency will be pleased to extend them your patronage."* (Luis Gil Fernández, Iliá Tabaghua, 1991: 307–308).

The letter does not reveal what specific demands King Constantine had made, to which the Spanish monarchs likewise responded verbally.

When we examine the letters of King Constantine and the Spanish monarchs, it becomes clear that even 130 years later (let us recall the embassy of the eminent clergyman and diplomat Nikipore Irbakhi - Nikoloz Choloqashvili, to Spain and Rome), almost nothing had changed in what the Georgian king asked of the Spanish royal court, nor in the latter's response. How close in substance the letters are to one another, how familiar the Georgian king's passionate concern for the struggle against the enemies of Christianity, the veiled plea for assistance in defending against Iranian aggression, and the calm, instructive tone of the Spanish government (Mamistvalishvili E., 2011: 213–278).

Of course, in that distant past the great distance separating Georgia and Spain from one another had a certain significance, but this factor was nonetheless not decisive, as some researchers believe. Quite simply, in both the 1490s and the 1620s, Spain's state interests did not align with providing assistance to Georgia and fighting against either Iran or the Ottoman Empire on its behalf. It is well known that the Spaniards, when it served their own state interests, were not deterred by distance or danger - this is especially true of Spain in the first half of the 17th century. Therefore, I do not consider it correct to justify Spain's failure to render assistance to Georgia on account of the great distance between the two countries.

As noted, two Georgian envoys - priests Nilos and Zakaria, were present in Spain, while only Nilos traveled to Rome. This is noted in Pope Alexander VI's reply letter to King Constantine (Tamarashvili M., 1902: 64–66; Tamarashvili M., 1995: 460–462; Tabaghua I., 1984: 217–219).

It has been suggested that Zakaria died en route. This may indeed have been the case, but it is not out of the question that Zakaria was fulfilling another mission on behalf of the king, or that he returned to homeland directly from Spain.

### ***3. Kir-Nilos's Diplomatic Mission to Rome***

It appears that King Constantine took into account the interest of the papal curia in the submission of the Georgian Orthodox Church to the Catholic Church, and promised the Pope that, in exchange for assistance, he would have the decisions of the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1437–1439) sent to him, would familiarize himself with them, and would draw appropriate conclusions. With this request, the king and his diplomats offered the Pope a certain hope regarding the union of the churches. Thus, the King of Kartli was asking the Pope to send him the very decisions that the Georgian delegates to that same council had once rejected. The delighted Pope, as is evident from his letter, responded to Constantine: *"We are exceedingly pleased that your majesty strives to grasp the true Orthodox faith and through us requests our most holy Apostolic See, the head of all Christendom, to set forth everything pertaining to the correct observance of this faith... Therefore we now send you the decree of the Council, placed in a letter and sealed with our seal,*

*and we offer to your devotion to command: let it be disseminated and adopted in all the provinces of your country, as the directives and decrees concerning Christ, the true Son of the Lord... Then we shall all be united and close... Then no hostile weapon shall be able to do us any harm, for I believe that the Kingdom shall triumph over them"* (Tabaghua I., 1984: 217–219; cf. Tamarashvili M., 1902: 67; Tamarashvili M., 1995: 517).

Since it is not known when or how Nilos returned to his homeland (or whether he returned at all), we likewise do not know what reaction Constantine II had to the decisions of the Council of Florence.

Nilos carried back from Rome the reply letter of Pope Alexander VI, in which the author approves of several important matters raised in King Constantine's letter: 1) the king's expression of reverence and loyalty to the Apostolic See; 2) the call to organize a campaign against the Muslims; 3) his concern for the liberation of the Holy Land; 4) his aspiration to grasp the true Orthodox (in this case, Catholic) faith and his request that the Pope *"set forth everything pertaining to the correct observance of this faith"*; 5) that the Pope send him *"the religious decree formulated at the Council of Florence."*

The Pope fulfilled for Constantine II only the last, fifth request: he sent Constantine the decision of the Council of Florence and a letter sealed with lead.

The Pope issued a special letter of safe conduct for the Georgian royal envoy on his journey home. It stated that whoever received them favorably and rendered assistance along the road would be promised thirty years of remission of sins by the Pope (Tabaghua I., 1984: 110).

I. Tsintsadze, based on the letter of recommendation given by the Pope to the priest Nilos, concluded that he returned to his homeland from Europe as a Catholic (Tsintsadze I., 1984: 26). This is impossible to believe, as nothing of the sort is written in the document issued by the Pope. Therein, Nilos is mentioned only as a member of the Order of St. Basil. At that time, Rome's attitude toward Basilianism was one of compromise, since membership in this movement, as Georgian clergy sent as ambassadors to Europe would customarily present themselves, represented something of an intermediate link between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. It must also be said that in the fifteenth century the Roman Church made certain concessions toward the Georgian Church. One fact may be recalled: during Nilos's stay in Rome, an interesting document, a *'memorandum'*, was specially created in 1496 in the chancellery of Pope Alexander VI for Constantine II, King of Kartli. It ordered that a certain letter of Alexander VI's predecessor, Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447), discovered in his register (book of records), be copied word for word. The letter contained the concessions of Eugenius IV toward the Georgian Church, *"which are conveyed (now, in 1496, E.M.) by us to Constantine, the most illustrious King of the Georgians, the most beloved son of Christ. The letter confirms that the King requires such a concession for the existence of the Orthodox faith in his country. On account of such an insistent request by the King, we have ordered that the content of the letter be transmitted, which is expressed in the following..."* (Tabaghua I., 1984: 219-220). In the letter of Alexander VI, three dots are placed and it is no longer apparent in what the concessions to the Georgian Orthodox Church consisted. It is only stated that *"the Georgian King joins the Roman Church. The Georgians... the restoration of their unity with the Roman Church. 1496"* (Tabaghua I., 1984: 110).

Before Nilos's departure from Rome, Pope Alexander gave him a *"travel document with thirty years of indulgences"*. *"...Inasmuch as the most gracious son of Christ, our Constantine, the illustrious King of the Georgians, as a Catholic and faithful Christian, in order to express his respect and devotion toward us and the Holy Apostolic See, sent to us in the capacity of ambassador the monk of the Order of St. Basil, our beloved son Nilus, and now this ambassador is leaving us, returning to his king, we wish to ensure for him free passage everywhere, and we call upon your lordly faithfulness and our subjects... that this obedient brother Nilus, together with his companions, both on horseback and on foot, with all his luggage... may stop and spend the night freely and without fear along the entire route... We command you all, jointly and severally, subjects of ours and of the Holy Roman Church, monks of all orders, obedient brothers, that notwithstanding our earlier*

*prohibitions and instructions, you receive and attend with goodwill the aforementioned monk Nilus and his companions in cities, on our lands and in other places, in monasteries and houses... Whoever receives them with benevolence and renders assistance along the way, we grant remission of sins for a period of thirty years. This letter remains in force for one year...*" (Tabaghua I. 1984: 220-221).

By Constantine's union with the Catholic Church and the restoration of unity, what is implied is the annulment of the discord that had arisen following the Council of Ferrara-Florence. To what extent the Georgian authorities accepted the proposals or concessions of Eugenius IV is impossible to determine today. However, we do have certain indications which give us an idea of the relations between Rome and Georgia.

The well-argued protest of the Georgian representative regarding the decisions of the Council of Ferrara-Florence apparently compelled Pope Eugenius IV to make concessions toward the Georgian Church. Unfortunately, we do not possess the document in which those concessions were specifically reflected, on the basis of which, half a century later, by order of Pope Alexander VI, a *'memorandum'* was compiled in 1496 specially for Constantine II, King of Kartli.

Based on the foregoing, it is doubtful that such pressure would have been exerted upon the priest Nilos in Rome as to place him before the necessity of professing Catholicism, something which in later periods the Popes would categorically demand from Georgians seeking an audience with them.

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