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SOME DETAILS ON THE BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID AGMASHENEBELI

In my today's presentation, I present a discussion about two issues from the biography of Davit Agmashenebeli, otherwise known as David IV the Restorer.¹ The first is the issue of the origin of his mother and the second topic is the identity of his brother. Both of these topics are poorly investigated, hence it is important to shed some light on these subjects.

The initial plan was to discuss more issues, but schedule does not allow me to speak and discuss more problems from the history of 12th century Georgia. The 12th century is widely regarded as “the Golden Age” in the history of Georgia, while David is regarded as the founder of the Medieval Georgian “Golden Age”. Many even reckon him as the greatest ruler in the history of Georgia, hence the issues of the history of David’s period are always under consideration and attract much attention from the Georgian public.

The first issue I discuss with you is about the origin of David's mother. As we know the personal name of David's mother was Elene, which is the Georgian form of the Greek first name – Helena. We know certainly that Elene was a mother of David even though she is not mentioned by David's anonymous historian. The latter provides the most valuable information about David, but unfortunately delivers no information about David’s mother. Thanks to the

¹ The paper was presented at TSU International Conference “The Battle of Didgori – 900” on August 12, 2021. As for now, we have supplemented our conference paper with footnotes for more clarity, see: Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Faculty of Humanities Institute of Georgian History International Scientific Conference “The Battle of Didgori – 900”, August 12, 2021. Program, pp. 3-4.

colophons (e.g. Tskarostavi Gospel, etc.²), we know that the Queen consort of Giorgi II was Elene and their son David is also mentioned alongside his parents. Despite that, we do not know much about her and we certainly know nothing about her origins, which, I think, is important to understand family relations as well as the international relations of that period, just as all rulers of the 11th-12th centuries Georgia were married to the members of the royal houses of foreign sovereigns. Giorgi II, father of David, should have to be no exception.

In all previous cases from the history of the 11th century Georgia we know that royal members of the Bagrationi ruling house of Georgia were married to members of neighboring royal houses. Two marriages of Giorgi I of Georgia suggest a political tie with Armenia and Alania. The first wife was a daughter of Senekerim Artsruni king of Vaspirakan. He was a king of the neighboring Armenian Kingdom, while the second wife was a daughter of Alan ruler. Giorgi's son and successor, Bagrat IV was also married on two occasions. The first wife was a member of the Imperial house of Byzantium and the second wife was a daughter of Urdure, king of Ossetia. Giorgi II as we know was married only once, but the origin of his wife, Elene, is unknown. We know for sure that their only son and successor David the Restorer was married twice and presumably, his first wife was a daughter of the king of Lore-Tashir while his second wife was a daughter of Atraqa Khan of Kipchaks. From all these examples it is quite obvious that the 11th-12th centuries practice was to arrange the marriage of the Georgian crown prince with a royal member of the neighboring country. Based on all these examples it is obvious that Elene was a daughter of the ruler of neighboring country. But exactly from which country? – this is our main dilemma. As we do not have direct evidence about this issue, but we can provide our assumption.

Most probably David's mother was a member of the royal house of Kakheti-Hereti Kingdom. Some indirect evidences are leading to this opinion: 1) the recent archaeological excavations revealed the tombstone of Kvirike III's daughter with a large epitaph. Tombstone was uncovered in 2017 with inscription and the content of the entire inscription is already exposed.³ According to this inscription, king of Kakheti and Hereti Kvirike III had a

² ქრონიკები და სხვა მასალა საქართველოს ისტორიისა, შეკრებილი, ქრონოლოგიურად დაწყობილი და ახსნილი თ. ჟორდანიას მიერ. I. პირველად გამოიცა 1892 წელს, მეორე ფოტოფირული გამოცემა. თბ. 2004, გვ. 145. 234.

³ ლ. თავაძე. კვირიკე III დიდი. თბ. 2020, გვ. 13, 107, 157-158.

daughter who had a name – Elene.⁴ This name was previously unknown for the members of this royal house. As we know, Kvirike III was succeeded by his niece Gagik from the Armenian Bagratuni royal house and Gagik’s line continued to rule in Kakheti and Hereti.⁵

Bagratuni rulers of Kakheti and Hereti Kingdom used to name their successors with given names used by their predecessors from Arevmaneli dynasty of the same Kingdom. It was implemented to show a continuation of the succession of the former dynasty and to claim their legacy on a solid basis. Most members of Kakheti-Hereti Bagratuni dynasty used names like Kvirike and Fadla while some others were newly introduced (e.g. Aghsartan). The given name “Elene” that appears among the members of the royal house of Kakheti-Hereti was used not only during Kvirike III's period but after his rule as well, especially among the female members of Gagik Bagratuni’s family and among his successors.

We assume that Gagik, who had five sons aged between 27-31 according to one colophon dated in 1070,⁶ had a daughter as well. She is not mentioned in the colophon, just as only male members of the royal house appear in it, while females are ignored, as they did not participate in the governance of the state; 2) Personal name “Elene”, Greek “Helena”, was in use exceptionally by the Christian families. In the early 1070s, when Giorgi got married to Elene, most of the neighboring Christian countries either were vanished or already had matrimonial ties with the Georgian Kingdom. Most of the Armenian Kingdoms were annexed and Byzantium, Alan-Ossetia and Lore-Tashir had their royal members intermarried with the members of the Georgian royal family, hence another possibility of matrimonial union with the same countries during Giorgi II should be rejected. Thus the only neighboring Christian country is left, Kakheti-Hereti Kingdom as a country of possible origin of Elene of Georgia. Hence, Elene of Georgia appears to be the daughter of Gagik Bagratuni of Kakheti-Hereti.

Another issue from David's biography is the problem of his sibling. As we know from “The Life of *mephetmephe* David” by an unknown author (the first half of the 12th c.), David IV the Restorer had no brothers or sisters. The

⁴ ლ. თავაძე. კვირიკე III დიდი, გვ. 107-110.

⁵ ლ. თავაძე. კვირიკე III დიდი, გვ. 110-114.

⁶ დ. კლდიაშვილი. ქართული არისტოკრატია კონსტანტინოპოლში: ჰერეთისა და კახეთის მმართველები. კრ. ბიზანტინოლოგია საქართველოში – 2. თბ. 2009, გვ. 321-334.

unknown author claims that David was “*the only-begotten son of Giorgi*”.⁷ Hence the David was the only begotten son of his father according to his historian. But we have another information concerning the same issue. This information derives from the Armenian historian of the first half of 12th century. Matthew of Edessa provides the account about the family of David IV the Restorer and mentions his brother T’ōtōrmē.⁸ This is the only otherwise unknown information of Matthew of Edessa concerning the family life of David the Restorer. The rest are well-known from the other sources. But these two accounts one by an unknown historian of David, who is David’s contemporary, and the second by Matthew of Edessa, who is David’s junior contemporary, are contradictory regarding the existence of David’s brother.

Alexander Abdaladze, a contemporary Georgian historian, attempted the analyses of Matthew of Edessa’s accounts based on surviving manuscripts and concluded that T’ōtōrmē mentioned by Matthew was Thevdore (Theodosius) of David’s historian who was a foster-brother of David.⁹ But the name T’ōtōrmē of Matthew’s manuscripts is not identical to Thevdore, moreover, they are separate names with almost nothing in common except the first letter, which is common in both names. Also, as we know Thevdore had a brother Svimon, who was more famous and more influential based on his position in Georgia, but he is not mentioned as a brother of David by Matthew of Edessa. Hence, Abdaladze’s assumption should be rejected as unconvincing. I assume is that T’ōtōrmē was a half-brother of David, the illegitimate son of Giorgi II. Indirect confirmation for this assumption is an example provided by another historian.

The historian of Giorgi IV Lasha wrote “Life of *mephe* Gioirgi, son of Tamar”. In his passage historian states: “*And he left no son alongside with wife by marriage*”.¹⁰ As we know, this historian was a contemporary of Giorgi IV

⁷ The Life of David, King of Kings. Translated by D. Gamq’relidze. Kartlis Tskhovreba (A History of Georgia). Editor in Chief of English edition: S. Jones. Tbilisi. 2012, p. 173.

⁸ Armenia and the Crusaders: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa. Translated from original Armenian with a commentary and introduction by A. E. Dostourian, forward by K. H. Maksoudian. University Press of America: Lanham, New York, London. 1993, p. 231.

⁹ ალ. აბდალაძე. დავით აღმაშენებლის „ძმის თოტორმე“-ს გამო. საქართველოს სსრ მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის მაცნე: ისტორიის, არქეოლოგიის, ეთნოგრაფიისა და ხელოვნების ისტორიის სერია. 1. 1978, გვ. 96-99.

¹⁰ This is our translation. Medea Abashidze’s translation is not correct from the above-mentioned English edition of “Kartlis Tskhovreba”, hence we do not employ it. In the primary source we read the following: „და არა დარჩა ცოლსა თანა გურგუნისა შვილი“ (ლაშა-გიორგის დროინდელი მემატიანე. ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა ც. ქურციკიძემ. ქართლის ცხოვრება. რედ. რ. მეტრეველი. თბ. 2008, გვ. 357).

Lasha, hence he was well aware of the family life of Giorgi Lasha. The historian knew that Giorgi Lasha has a son, David, later known as David Ulu, but despite that, the historian assures us that Giorgi IV Lasha had no son. This is because David Ulu was born outside of legal marriage, hence he was regarded as the illegitimate son of Giorgi Lasha. This is an explanation why historian dismisses him as a son and successor of his father. But later, as it is well-known in the history of Georgia, David Ulu managed to inherit the royal power of his father, mainly due to Mongol assistance. Despite the fact that Giorgi Lasha had a son, which, as many propose, was reckoned as legitimate by his father, he was denied the royal lineage by officials including the historian.

In my opinion, the same story applies to the life of T'ōtōrmē, he was also the illegitimate son of Giorgi II of Georgia, but as far as he is mentioned by Matthew, it seems that he was famous and probably reckoned as a brother of David the Restorer by popular opinion. But official historiography dismissed him due to his maternal origin. Concretization that David was the only begotten son of his father by the historian is a good indicator for this assumption. It seems that the historian argues with the popular opinion that someone was a brother or a sister of David, thus he dismisses anyone who was born out of wedlock. The historian states that David was born as the only begotten son of his father, hence he rejects any claim that T'ōtōrmē was a brother of David the Restorer. Fortunately, the Armenian historian preserved the account about the brother David IV the Restorer, who was probably half-brother of David, therefore the illegitimate son of Giorgi II of Georgia.