

History

An Inscription in Asomtavruli Script on the Akhaldaba Church, 12th-13th cc.

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(Presented by Academy Member Zaza Aleksidze)

ABSTRACT. The paper studies Georgian inscription in *asomtavruli* script executed on the Akhaldaba church from Borjomi region. The inscription mentions Eristavt-Eristavi Gamrekeli, his spouse Vaneni and their son. In the process of the study, the text of the final fragment of the inscription was defined and dated to the 12th-13th cc., instead of the second half of the 12th c. (1191) as suggested by a Georgian scientist. Correspondingly, we identified *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli mentioned in the inscription either with *Amirspasalari* Gamrekeli Toreli (second half of the 12th century) as it was suggested earlier, or as *Mechurchletukhutsesi* Gamrekeli Toreli (1230-40). The question of dynastic belonging of the Queen of Queens Vaneni, the spouse of *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli, to the Feudal House of the Abuseridzes remains open. Finally, it is concluded that the church maquette with the inscription belonged to the St. George Church, erected on the Akhaldaba cemetery ground. © 2018 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: Tori, Gamrekeli, Georgian inscription

The lapidarium of the S. Janashia Georgian State Museum holds a church maquette (inventory number 696). Historian Valeri Silogava studied the inscription made on the east and north facades of the church maquette [1: 52]; [2: 67-81]. read is as follows:

† Lord Jesus Christ, God, you who have raised up a horn of the holy church, raise up Queen of Queens Vaneni together with her son to the Heavens; say a prayer for the ex-spouse of *eristavta eristavi* Gamrekeli [2: 68].

By use of artificial illumination we clarified the final part of the inscription and read the entire text.

Inscription contains separation marks: three dots. Our reading is as follows:

† უ(ფა)ლო ი(ეს)უ | ქ(რისტ)ე, ღ(მერთ)ო, | რ(ომელმ)ან აღ(ა)მ(ა)ღლე რქა | წ(მი)დათა | ეკლესიათ(ა) | || მ(ა)ღლ(ა)დ, | შ(ე)ნც(ა) ც(ა)თ(ა) შ(ი)ნა | აღ(ა)მ(ა)ღლე ძ(ი)თქუროთ დ(ი)ფ(ა)ლოთ(ა) | დ(ი)ფ(ა)ლი ვ(ა)ნ(ე)ნი; | ე(რისტავთა) ე(რისტავი)სა გ(ა)მრ(ე)კელისა ცოლ[ისათუის] ეკლ(ე)სი(ა)სა წი[რვიდეთ]

† Lord Jesus Christ, God, you who have raised up a horn of the holy church, raise up Queen of Queens Vaneni together with her son to the Heavens; a private mass for the spouse of



Eristavta Eristavi Gamrekeli is to be offered in the church.

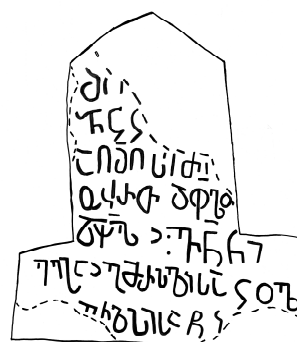
The new reading introduces changes into the final fragment of the text: according to the reading suggested by us, priests had to hold a private mass for Vaneni, the deceased wife of *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli (V. Silogava reads this fragments as “spouse of *Eristavta Eristavi* Gamrekeli.” Thanks to new interpretation, dubiousity associated with the ex-wife was clarified.

Based on paleographic data and historical sources, V. Silogava dated the inscription to 1180s-90s, more precisely – to 1191, and identified *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli mentioned in the inscription with *Amilakhori* and *Amirspasalari* Gamrekel Toreli, who was active during Queen Tamar’s reign (1184-1210).

Individual graphemes of Akhaldaba inscription are similar to the widely known inscriptions of 1180s-90s and 13th century. Construction inscription of the 13th century from Akhalkalaki can be given as an example [3: 100] etc.

On the bases of the above, the time interval to which the inscription might be attributed should be expanded: “*Eristavt-eristavi* Gamrekeli” should be sought among the individuals with this name from the feudal family of the Torelis.

Three individuals with the name of Gamrekeli from the Toreli feudal family are known in the 12th-13th centuries: a) A prominent historical person who carried out his activities during Queen Tamar’s reign in the second half of the 12th century.



He was *Amilakhori* (1185-1187) and later on the *Amirspasalari* (1191), as well as *Eristavi* of Akhalkalaki; b) Historical person who carried out his activities in 1130s-40s and was *Eristavi* of Akhalkalaki and *Mechurchletukhutsesi*; c) A statesman who carried out his activities in the end of the 13th century and beginning of the 14th century.

Let us see what information is available about the above-mentioned three representatives (Gamrekeli) from the feudal family of the Torelis.

The author of the “History and Eulogy of Monarchs” next to Qutlu Arslan’s rebellion narrates that Queen Tamar selected faithful feudal lords for high positions. Among them was “Gamrekel Toreli whom she appointed to the position of *Amilakhori*, and who also became *Amirspasalari* after Sargis Mkhargrdzeli” [4: 408].

According to the same written source, the Georgian army under the command of Gamrekel Toreli successfully accomplished military operation against the Turks, who had invaded Dzagliskhevi and Palakatsio, and defeated them. The source mentions Toreli as Gamrekeli Kakhasdze (son of Kakha).

When the “History and Eulogy of Monarchs” narrates about the entry of the Russian Prince Giorgi into Georgia in 1191, as well as about devastation of Kartli, Javakheti and Trialeti by the rebels, the chronicler adds: “Then Tamar ordered *Amirspasalari* Gamrekeli and four Mkhargrdzelis, as well as the Torelis, from the upper and lower

regions, to go and meet the enemy in the land of Javakheti...” [4: 412]. This is followed by description of a battle between the supporters of Prince Giorgi and the troops faithful to Tamar, who defeated the rebels.

The chronicler writes that the rebelled feudal lords were pardoned by Tamar and the Russian Prince was freed. “At that time *amirspasalari* Gamrekeli died. His heirs lost only Tmogvi” [4: 427].

Basili Ezosmodzghvari, the second chronicler of Tamar, also focuses on Gamrekel Toreli’s death: “*Amirspasalari* Gamrekeli died and they all lamented him” [5: 488].

There was one more Gamrekel Toreli who carried out his activities in 1230s-40s. Accounts about him can be found in Georgian narrative sources (*Zhamtaaghmtsereli*) and historical documents. According to the *Zhamtaaghmtsereli*, initially Gamrekel Toreli confided in the Mongols and took their side. Evidence of this can be seen in the following: when the invaders divided Georgia up into several *dumans*, Gamrekel Toreli was nominated as the ruler of a large military-territorial unit – Samtskhe-Javakheti [6: 561]. Together with other Georgian Eristavis he participated in Kokhtastavi plot. During the dual monarchy in Georgia he was among the supporters of Davit VII (1247-1270). During this time Gamrekel Toreli occupied an important post of *Mechurchletukhutsesi* [7: 117, 120].

One more Gamrekel Toreli, the statesman of the 13th century and beginning of the 14th century, carried out his activities during the reign of Davit VIII (1293-1311), king of Georgia, and during the rule of Mahmud Ghazan, ruler of the Mongol Empire's Ilkhanate division (1295-1304). Gamrekel Toreli ceded Bakatar, ruler of the Ossetians *dukht*, Dzami Fortress [6: 647]. Taking this into consideration, this Gamrekel Toreli should also be considered possible candidate for identification with *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli mentioned in our inscription.

After we have reviewed accounts found in Georgian sources about all three Gamrekelis from the 12th-13th centuries, our task is to identify the one who fits the place of *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli mentioned in the Akhaldaba inscription.

If we take into consideration the site of finding of the inscription, namely the village of Akhaldaba which was the part of historical Tori during upheaval of the Torelis, Gamrekeli who carried out his activities in the end of the 13th century and beginning of the 14th century should be excluded from the list, since the large territory from Tashiskari to Speri where he carried out his activities, was controlled by Beka I Jakeli. Hence, the Torelis could not control these territories, including the village of Akhaldaba. Oppressed by the Jakelis, they move to Shida Kartli, though initially they failed to strike root there. Seizure of the Dzami Fortress by Bakatar, ruler of the Ossetians’ *dukht*, corroborates the above.

If our reasoning is correct, then two possible candidates remain: Gamrekel Toreli (*Amilakhori* and *Amirspasalari*), political figure in the second half of the 12th century, and Gamrekel Toreli (*Mechurchletukhutsesi*) who carried out his activities in the 13th century.

We know that Gamrekel Toreli from the second half of the 12th century held positions of *Amilakhori* and later on of *Amirspasalari*. Apart from that, one of the sources mentions him as son of Kakha. Available written sources never mention him as *Eristavi*. Apart from that, Gamrekel Toreli is not mentioned among Queen Tamar’s *Eristavies* listed in the “History and Eulogy of Monarchs”.

And indeed, mentioning of Gamrekel Toreli in Georgian narrative sources without the title of *Eristavt-Eristavi* does not mean that he was not really *Eristavt-Eristavi*.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, we share the consideration of Nodar Shoshiashvili [8: 48] and Mikheil Bakhtadze [9: 257-258] that Gamrekeli, who carried out his activities in the

second half of the 12th century, was *Eristavt-Eristavi* of Akhalkalaki.

In surviving narrative sources and historical documents, Gamrekel Toreli, the statesman of the 13th century, is also referred to without the title of *Eristavt-Eristavi*, but as he is mentioned among the Georgian *mtavaris* and prominent noblemen, we consider it sufficient argument to assume that he was *Eristavt-Eristavi*. Apart from that, if we take into consideration that the Mongols entrusted him to administer the very large military-administrative territory which spread from Tashiskari up to the City of Karnu, and as he was *Mechurchletukhutsesi*, it is logical to think that Gamrekel Toreli was *Eristavt-Eristavi* as it was suggested by Nodar Shoshiashvili and Mikheil Bakhtadze.

Thus, taking into consideration available sources, we assume that Akhaldaba inscription was made in the 12th-13th centuries, instead of the earlier suggested second half of the 12th century, specifically prior to 1191. Therefore, *Eristavt-Eristavi* Gamrekeli mentioned in our inscription can be identified not necessarily with *Amirspasalari* Gamrekel Toreli, as it was suggested by V. Silogava, but also with *Amilakhori* Gamrekeli from the second half of the 12th century, or *Mechurchletukhutsesi* Gamrekeli from the 13th century.

V. Silogava identified the ex-spouse of Gamrekel Toreli, Queen of Queens Vaneni, with the sister of Tbel Abuseridze, Queen of Queens Vaneni. We consider that this assumption is incorrect. We agree with K. Sharashidze's consideration that Botso Jakeli and the Queen of Queens Vaneni were the spouses [10: 20-21].

Since we dated the inscription to the 12th-13th centuries based on its paleographic peculiarities and historical realities, the feudal house to which the Queen of Queens Vaneni belonged is to be sought among the ones in the second half of the 12th century and first half of the 13th century. Due to scarcity of available historical data, at the recent stage of studies we cannot suggest exact descent of the Queen of Queens Vaneni mentioned in Akhaldaba inscription from specific feudal house. This is a matter of future research.

V. Silogava is not determined concerning the function of the Akhaldaba church model. Though, taking into consideration existence of a hollow in the bottom of the model, the scholar tends to assume that the model was installed on a hip end of the church roof. We agree with this consideration. V. Silogava did not attempt to identify church of Akhaldaba to which this model might have belonged.

Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, we can assume that in the 12th-13th centuries the model belonged to the Akhaldaba church of St. George which is erected on a hillock that overlooks the site where the model was found. Probably after collapse of the church roof, the model rolled down the slope of the hillock.

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ისტორია

XII-XIII საუკუნეების ახალდაბის ეკლესიის ასომთავრული წარწერა

თ. გოგოლაძე

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წყაროთმცოდნეობისა და დიპლომატიკის დეპარტამენტი, თბილისი, საქართველო*

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის ზ. ალექსიძის მიერ)

წინამდებარე ნაშრომში შესწავლილია ახალდაბის (ბორჯომის რაიონი) ეკლესიის მოდელის ასომთავრული წარწერა, სადაც ერისთავთ-ერისთავი გამრეკელი, მისი მეუღლე დიოფალთ დიოფალი ვანენი და მისი ვაჟი იხსენიებიან.

ახალდაბის წარწერაზე მუშაობის შედეგად დავაზუსტეთ წარწერის ტექსტის ბოლო ნაწილი, ასევე გავაფართოვეთ მისი ქრონოლოგია და XII საუკუნის II ნახევრის, ანუ 1191 წლამდე პერიოდის ნაცვლად, XII-XIII საუკუნეებით განვსაზღვრეთ. შესაბამისად, აქ მოხსენიებულ ერისთავთ-ერისთავ გამრეკელს ვაიგივებთ არა მხოლოდ თამარის დროის მოღვაწე ამირსპასალარ გამრეკელ თორელთან (როგორც ამას ჩვენამდე მეცნიერთა გარკვეული ნაწილი ფიქრობდა), არამედ XIII საუკუნის 30-40-იან წლებში მოღვაწე მეჭურჭლეთუხუცესს გამრეკელ თორელთანაც. ქრისტიანე შარაშიძის არგუმენტებით გამაგრებული მოსაზრების საფუძველზე გავაბათილეთ ერისთავთ-ერისთავ გამრეკელის თანამეცხედრის - დიოფალთ დიოფალ ვანენის იდენტიფიკაცია აზუსტებითა ფეოდალურ სახლთან, თუმცა მის საგვარეულო კუთვნილების საკითხს ღიად ვტოვებთ.

დასასრულ, გავარკვეით, რომ ეკლესიის მოდელი სოფლის ცენტრში მდებარე სასაფლაოს წმიდა გიორგის ტაძრის აღმოსავლეთ კეხზე იყო ჩადგმული.

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