

History

Critical Periods in the History of Georgia (15th Century)

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Georgia being politically, economically and culturally successful in the Middle Ages began to decline in the 15th century. By that time the main foreign enemies of Georgia were the Ottomans. The country needed help from the West to survive. It was necessary to end the religious schism between the West and the East. However, Georgia had strong religious position and refused to renounce Orthodoxy. The aftermath of the ecumenical councils (e.g., disregard for the decree of Union adopted by the Ferrara-Florence council) encouraged such decisions. Georgia did not receive any assistance from the powerful countries. Various problems existing around the world for the whole century did not allow even the benevolent countries (having their own problems) to give a hand to Georgia. The powerful Georgian state of the 11th-12th centuries plunged into a severe crisis and politically disintegrated in the 15th century. © 2021 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Orthodox, Catholic, Christian, the Ottomans, Ferrara-Florence council

Mongol domination devastated medieval Georgia. By the middle of the 13th century there was nothing left from its Golden Age but the shadow. The agriculture devastated, cities declined and people were in the worst economical conditions. Such a situation continued for over a century. But in the 30s of the 14th c. a deep crisis began in the Mongol state. The country divided into feudal units and broke into several nomadic tribes. After that the Georgian state began political and economic restoration. The progress of the country is related to the reign of George V the Brilliant (1299, 1314-1346). It was the period when political and economic situation of the country significantly improved, and some success was achieved in international relations. The talented and ambitious king established friendly relationship with the

Golden Horde, Iran and the countries of Asia Minor. His great effort was effective: the lands lost earlier (during the time of Bagrat V) such as Gonia, Makrialala, Adjara, Shavsheti, Meskheta and Klarjeti were returned to the kingdom. The city of Anis with its surroundings, Ossetia (the North Caucasus) and Dvaleti were part of Georgia.

Tamerlan Invasion

In the 80s of the 14th c. the reviving Georgian state faced new problems. In 1386, Georgia (as well as the Middle East and other countries of Europe and Asia) was invaded by Central Asian conqueror Timur (Tamerlan), the son of Taraghai, the Beg of Turkicized Mongol tribe. Due to lameness, he was called Lame („lenk“ means lame in Persian). Iran was also among the countries, where Tamerlan

invaded and captured a large part of the Ilkhanate. His invasions (eight invasions to Georgia from 1386 to 1403) put the whole South Caucasus in a terrible situation. The loss was enormous. Georgian economy, culture, agriculture were destroyed. The situation was especially grave from political point of view. Georgia was alone against the aggression of the nomads. The kings of Georgia Bagrat V (1360-1393), who was captured together with his family by Tamerlan, and Giorgi VII (1393-1407) were powerless against their extreme aggression.

The question often arises as to why Georgia failed to stop Tamerlan either by force or through diplomacy, and why Tamerlan could not have quenched his blood thirst (eight invasions to Georgia!). Tamerlan openly stated that he wanted to destroy the Kingdom of Georgia, eradicate Christianity, and convert the population to Islam. Thereby, Tamerlan would easily make Georgia an organic part of his empire [1:532]. George VII could not get used to the idea that Christian Georgia might become one of the provinces of the Tamerlan Empire. Therefore, Georgian diplomacy chose the way of resistance. George VII, meanwhile, was seeking powerful allies, though he did not avoid negotiations either [1:532-533]. Moreover, George VII and Tamerlan had correspondence between each other. In the first text of the "Akhali Kartlis Tskhovreba" (New Georgian Chronicle), Beri Egnatashvili provides written version of "Kapiaoba" (verse improvization) between the conflicting parties. Tamerlan writes to Giorgi VII: "I am your king and I came here and you must obey me; and if you obey, I will give you lots of gifts, and I will respect you very much. But if you refuse to obey me, I will command my armies to destroy your country" [2:331]. George VII gave him blunt answer: "I too am a king, and no less than you, and you will not be able to destroy my country. Let him be a coward and a scoundrel who will not keep his word." [2:331]. The ambassador reported everything to Tamerlan. Moreover, he praised the king of Georgia and emphasized his bravery and

kindness. Also, he characterized the Georgian army as a strong one [2:332].

Probably it would be better for the King of Georgia to give a more tactful, more diplomatic response to fierce Tamerlan, who was outraged by such a response ("განძვბღღა") and moved towards Georgia "with huge army." George VII resisted the enemy but was forced to flee to Likhtimereti and the enemy could not capture him. After that King decided to chose a diplomatic way. He pledged obedience to Tamerlan and promised to pay tribute. After the visit of the honorary ambassador of Georgia Tamerlan agreed to make peace. That ambassador was Constantine Batonishvili, brother of George VII (later King Constantine I, 1407-1412). In 1401 a peace agreement between Tamerlan and the Kingdom of Georgia was concluded in Shamkhor.

Domestic Political Conflicts

The "peace agreement" turned out to be a fiction. Tamerlan (after solving his internal problems) broke peace. In 1403, accusing George VII of failing to fulfill the terms of the peace agreement, Tamerlan invaded Georgia once again causing serious damage to country [3:123, 4:225]. He invaded western Georgia as well. George VII confirmed his obedience again and demanded peace. In 1403 a peace agreement was concluded. After that Tamerlan never invaded Georgia again. In 1405 he died and "the country and the king were left in peace, and the king expelled the Tatars and took over the fortresses of Kartli and Armenia in full" (Vakhushti).

In 1412 Alexander I ascended to the royal throne of Georgia. In those days the country was no longer suffering from the invasions of foreign enemies. Royal court began great reconstruction work restoring cities, churches and monasteries. For that reason, a temporary tax was introduced. Each household had to pay 40 Tetri a year for fifteen years (1425-1440) [5:247-248; 6:126-128]. Also, Alexander I cared about population growth.

He tried to reinforce the unity of the country with the help of church. But all this was not enough to stop the disintegration of the country that had begun [4:243-267]. The king's power was weakening, domestic political conflicts intensified and there were problems within the royal family. Alexander I abdicated and became a monk.

The process of disintegration of the Kingdom of Georgia became apparent during the reign of George VIII, who ascended the throne in 1446. The situation was troublesome in Samtskhe principality, where the Jakels had conflict with each other. The king supported Aghbugha and helped him to win the battle with his uncle Quarquare. After Aghbugha's death (1451) Quarquare received the title of Atabeg. Bearing old annoyance in mind and striving for independence Quarquare continued fight against the king. Moreover, he attempted to separate the church of his principality from the Georgian Orthodox church. According to his plan, Matskvereli (the Bishop of Atskuri) would not obey the Catholicos of Mtskheta. For some time, the churches of the municipality stopped mentioning the King of Georgia and the Catholicos-Patriarch in the liturgy. The separatist sentiments were encouraged by Greek ecclesiastical figures (including the Greek Metropolitan who came to Samtskhe to collect contribution) in Samtskhe. There were cases when the priests of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem promoted ecclesiastical separatism in Georgia. [5:268-269]. There are cases when the priests of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem promoted ecclesiastical separatism in Georgia. In the Chronicles T. Jordania refers to one document that directly states: "When an insidious Greek, the pseudo prophet arrived, he attracted us with some words".

In that period, the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia was David IV Chavchavadze, who arrived in Samtskhe himself and cursed the apostate clergy of the Sapari Church. They were deprived of the right to serve and were incurred to excommunication. The cursed and excommuni-

cated clergy repented before the king and the Catholicos and asked for forgiveness [7:74-75]. They took the oath of allegiance in writing [5:2-7, 68-69] and promised that they would never let the separatist Greek priests come to Samtskhe and would never believe them again [4:279-281, 5:269].

Domestic political conflicts of Georgia took place against a serious international background. The milestone was the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453. After a long battle, Sultan Mehmed II conquered the Byzantine capital. The last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos was killed in a battle with the Ottomans. Constantine XI was engaged to the daughter of King George VIII of Georgia. After the tragedy of Constantinople (the death of the emperor), the former bride of Constantine XI was married to Vameq Shaburidze, the son of Eristavi of Aragvi [4:289-190, 8:59-60], [4:279-281, 8:269]. The conquest of Constantinople practically changed the world. The actual destruction of the Byzantine Empire was equal to international catastrophe. It was especially difficult for Georgia having aggressive neighbors, which appeared in the southwest and southeast of the country before that, in 1451-1452. They were the Turkmen Black Sheep (Qara-Qoyunlu) and White Sheep (Aq-Qoyunlu) tribes. Georgia was virtually cut off from the cultural world of the West. There were no connections with European cities. That plunged the country into a severe crisis, reducing the international importance of Georgian cities.

Being in the most complicated situation the country tried to establish relationship with the countries of Western Europe and with their aid to escape the existing circumstances. Georgia decided it was necessary to form a coalition against the Ottomans. That was very important for any stratum of the country. It should be noted that the kings and princes of Georgia put aside their domestic disagreements, reconciled with George VIII and declared their readiness to fight against the Ottomans.

The scientists discovered important material (documents) about Georgia's relationship with foreign countries, especially with France and Italy (the Vatican). In this regard significant work was done by M. Brosset, Iv. Javakhishvili, N. Mari, Al. Tsagareli, E. Takaishvili, M. Tamarashvili, et al. Georgian Orthodox Church took an active part in the fight against the Ottomans. The political situation in the world of that period is of interest. The two ecumenical councils of the world – the Basel and Ferrara-Florence councils - are worth mentioning, which were of serious significance for Georgia and for its political orientation. The two ecumenical councils and their consequences are regarded important in the world historiography. There are extensive research materials on the subject [9:5-74; 10:106-132; 11; 12; 13:433-448].

Both ecumenical councils of Basel and Ferrara-Florence clearly reflect the real political situation of the epoch: the open struggles that took place in the society of that time, the controversy that existed in the Catholic and Orthodox confessions. Such a situation was not new. As is well known, in 1054 Christianity was divided into two directions. Catholicism (Roman Apostolic Church) was established in Western Europe. The process of Schism in Christianity began in the fourth century - in 395, when the Roman Empire split into western and eastern parts. The difference between them was both organizational and religious. According to Catholic teachings, the Holy Spirit comes not only from God the Father, but also from God the Son. Catholicism equates Jesus Christ to the Godhead, thereby trying to proclaim the Pope instead of Christ). Unlike Orthodoxy, Catholicism, in addition to heaven and hell, recognizes an intermediate state - the purgatory. The Catholic teaching is based on the "Bible" (considered sacred only in Latin).

It should be noted that after splitting the Christian churches, the relationship between the Georgian Orthodox and the Catholic (Roman Church) churches did not cease [14:5-6]. However, this does not give grounds to prove that the

Georgian Church was on the side of the Roman Catholic Church (referring to the period after 1054) [9:19]. The fact is that in the 13th century the secular and religious leaders of Georgia tried to establish relationship with the West. There is a letter from King Rusudan (1222-1245) to Pope Gregory IX. The King of Georgia asks for assistance in the fight against the Mongols and promises the Pope to unify the Georgian Church with the Church of Rome. The Pope sent a polite reply to the Georgian Queen refusing the assistance: "... Do not be surprised if the army of the Church of Rome will not come to your aid against the mentioned Tatars, in case the filthy Saracens would not allow us to do so" [11:187-188].

The letter of Gregory IX to the Minorite missionaries in the East is of interest. Those Minorities were the first missionaries arriving in Georgia after establishment the relationship with the Church of Rome. They were the members of the Order of Franciscans (created in the 13th century), called Minorites (obedient brothers) who founded a monastery in Tbilisi [11:187-188].

Relationship of King Rusudan with the Pope

Correspondence between King Rusudan of Georgia and Pope Honorius III took place even earlier. Informing the Pope about the death of Lasha-Giorgi, the King of Georgia wrote that the Georgian army was ready to take part in liberation of the Holy Land. Ivane Mkhargrdzeli also wrote a letter to Honorius III. He asked the Pope for a blessing: "That we may, by the grace of the Lord, prepare ourselves in faith to fight for the glory of the Lord." [14:8-9] The answer was not delayed. Honorius III sent letters to both the King of Georgia and Ivane Mkhargrdzeli, expressing great gratitude for the readiness of the Georgians to fight for liberation of the Lord's tomb [11, 14].

The relationship of Georgia with European countries was humble. Georgians were in trouble, but they received no real assistance except the

verbal expression of sympathy. Although some success was achieved (by George the Brilliant, Alexander I the Great), at the beginning of the 15th century Georgia experienced a certain crisis because of different reasons (domestic political battles, complicated international situation). It should also be noted that in that period there was a fierce struggle between the Byzantine Empire and the papal throne. The cause of the conflict was political interests of both sides. Outwardly, however, this struggle was shrouded in a dogmatic veil [10:109]. The controversy became apparent at the aforementioned ecumenical councils of Basel and Ferrara-Florence.

Ecumenical Councils of Basel and Ferrara-Florence

The ecumenical council of Basel (started in Basel and continued in Lausanne) was held in 1431 and lasted until 1449. The council intended to use the fall of the papal authority in that period and to support the strengthening of the Church (and so it was done), thereby to prove the superiority of the Church over the power of the Pope. The council rejected the contributions (heavy taxes) in favor of the Pope's course, including the bishops' investment tax. Free elections were announced in the churches. Pope Eugene IV, who did not recognize the decisions of the council and wanted to dissolve it, openly opposed the Basel council. Failing to do that, Eugene IV convened an ecumenical council in Ferrara in 1438. Nevertheless, the Basel council continued to work and declared the pope a heretic, deposed him (1439) and elected Amadeus VIII, Duke of Savoy (Felix V as pope) to that position. A great number of participants left the Basel council (supporters of Eugene IV). In 1449 a new Pope Nicholas V was elected, and the council was dissolved. The Basel council ended with the victory of Pope absolutism.

The Ferrara-Florence council with its developments and results is very interesting. The more so it is special because the Georgian Orthodox

Church demonstrated its strong position there. The council has an important place among the medieval ecumenical councils. At the council an agreement between the churches of the West and the East, the so called Union, was signed. However, the document did not reflect the union of equal parties. It was created on the basis of the dogmatic and political capitulation of the Orthodox East to the Catholic West. The decision of the council failed to reduce the controversy both within Catholicism and between the Catholicism and Orthodoxy. The controversy between the Latin and Greek Churches escalated further and eventually led to the complete dissolution of the union adopted by the Ferrara-Florence council.

The fact is that the open hostility between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which dates back to the time of the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders, could not be rectified.

Cultural relationship between the parties ceased. The Orthodox regarded Catholics to be heretics, while the Latins considered the Greeks to be unconscientious and schismatic.

Relationship between Georgia and European States

The Byzantine emperors Manuel II and John II Palaiologos took effective steps to establish peace between the Orthodox and the Catholics and to unite the two opposing churches (including the joint use of military capabilities of Byzantium and Western countries against Ottomans). It was decided to convene a unifying ecclesiastical council. The Byzantine emperor John VIII Palaiologos applied to the rulers of some western countries for help. He personally traveled to Germany and Hungary, but did not achieve any results. John VIII Palaiologos asked Pope Martin V for help offering Constantinople as the place of the council. The Roman Curia did not agree with that. They considered Italy to be the right place to hold the council. The Greeks agreed. The agreement about convening the council was realized by

Eugene IV (Martin V died). In 1438 it was decided to convene a new ecumenic council in Ferrara (one of the centers of the humanist movement). There exists a lot of literature about that council. The main sources are the acts of the council presented by three opposing camps. The author of the acts of the Catholic part is Andrea de Santa Croce. As to the acts of the Latinophilic camp of the Greeks - *Acta Graeca* (Greek Acts), the Greek orthodoxy attached great importance to the works of the Greek Orthodox, the grand ecclesiarch Sylvester Syropoulos. Georgian historians [1, 4, 9, 11 - 15] also paid tribute to the research of the council and its consequences. Naturally, Georgian historians focus on the participation of Georgians in the ecumenical council of Ferrara-Florence. Foreign sources also provide information about that. Almost all historians refer to Memoirs of the most interesting author, the above-mentioned ecclesiarch Sylvester Syropoulos. Sylvester Syropoulos was a representative of the last generation of the Byzantines (like Mark of Ephesus, Bessarion of Nicaea, Gennadius Scolarius, John Eugenicus). He was a member of the Orthodox delegation to the Ferrara-Florence council. After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, Sylvester became the third patriarch (after Gennadius Scolarius and Isidore) of Constantinople with the name of Sophron [16:5]. The Memoirs of Sylvester Syropoulos was published in Russian with the comments of Zanamets, in 2010 (Published by Oleg Abyshko: "Universal Book - SPB"). Here are some excerpts from the Memoirs. On page 54 of the Russian translation of the Memoirs it is written that there were the people from the western and eastern regions the Trapezunians, Ivirs, Circassians, Mengrels, Goths, Roses, Vlachs, Serbs.. [16:54]. Obviously the "Ivirs" are the Georgians, and it is interesting that the list includes "Mengrels". One of the passages of the Memoirs is very important, which says: "As for the Georgian ambassadors, there were two: one was a bishop and the other a secular archon". In the footnote he explains that it

was George Iveri, the nephew of King Alexander I of Georgia and his representative in the council. Then, Sylvester Syropoulos provides very interesting information: "When the debate ended, the bishop somehow learned that the unification was being prepared in a bad way and he immediately came up to the bishops and to us showing the letter of the Patriarch of Antioch commanding not to add or subtract anything to the flesh notes [16:260].

It is also noted that the bishop kept his money (Florins) in secret, gave his belongings to the needy, and he himself feigning madness and pretending to be a vagrant fled from that place. He wandered around Italian cities. Nothing was known about the Georgian clergy for three months. He was found by the Metropolitan of Tirnovo and taken to Venice. After coming to his senses "he collected money and came back with us". The second member of the delegation, the secular Archont, left for Rome as soon as he learnt about signing union. "So, none of the two Georgians took part in the unification, as long as they [in different ways] escaped it." [16:261]. Some other sources state that the members of the Georgian delegation signed the Union, which is not right [9:15-17].

Participation of Georgians in Ferrara-Florence Council

Sylvester Syropoulos' information clearly proves that the union of the Georgian Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church was out of the question. The only thing might be mentioned here is the active contacts between those two churches. According to Prof. J. Vateishvili, three plenipotentiaries were sent to the Ferrara-Florence ecumenical council from Georgia: two clergymen – Grigol and Ioane, the bishops of Tbilisi, and also, a high rank official ("Ambassador of the Georgian King") [15: 268-269].

In our opinion, it is right that M. Tamarashvili's concept about the statement that "there was always friendly relationship between Georgia and Rome,

and the Georgian Church joined the Church of Rome more than once" [9:5] has been reconsidered. The fact is that the Georgian society was not always happy with the "care" of the Pope for the spread of the Catholic faith.

The serious controversy between the "Orthodox" and the Catholics became apparent at the Ferrara council. As for the position of the Georgian participants, S. Syropoulos writes that John VIII Palaiologos sent someone named Andronikus Jagrin as ambassador to Trabzon and Iberia. The ambassador was warmly received. From Iberia the ambassador took two bishops, the ambassador of the king of Iberia and the special senators with him. The representatives of the Georgian Church participated in the work of the ecumenical council both in Ferrara and in Florence. The Georgian delegation enjoyed special respect there. In the minutes of the ecumenical council of Florence it is underlined that "On the four chairs next to the patriarch there were sitting: the Archbishop of Heraklion (he had the mandate of the Bishop of Alexandria), the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch - the Archbishop of Ephesus, the representative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the representative of the King of Iberia – the Metropolitan of Iberia... Several secular persons were sitting next to the emperor's fauteuil, among them the ambassador of the king of Iberia. He was distinguished by his luxury clothing; he was wearing a gold-laced hat bedecked with many jewels [11:214-215]. It is noteworthy that none of the monarchs of the European countries took part in the work of the council.

At the Ferrara-Florence council the Georgian delegation turned out in a radical opposition. The Georgian delegates were categorically against the conclusion of an agreement (Union) between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The reason was that the council organizers had selfish motives; Roman curia did not hide that they wanted to subdue the Orthodox Church. Despite numerous requests and various attempts of the hosts, the

representatives of Georgia did not sign the union act. In general, Union was a fiasco.

The Ottomans

The attempt to unite the two churches failed. In the first half of the 15th century, in such an important international situation, the attempt to unite the Catholic and Orthodox Churches was not successful. The "failure" caused the damage to the common Christian interests. The inability of the Christian world to respond to the enemy, the weakness of Byzantium and general weakening of Christian positions were apparent, and the Ottomans took advantage of the situation. They attacked Constantinople with all their might and conquered it. In fact, that was the fall of the Byzantine Empire. Georgia surrounded by the Ottomans was in a difficult situation with minimum contacts with the Christian world. The aggression of the enemy was growing, and the Georgian state was gradually degrading. The attempt of the Georgian kings to restore relationship with the West was unsuccessful.

After the capture of Constantinople, the Ottomans began expansion worldwide. In 1461 they conquered Trebizond. That was also difficult for Georgia as the road to Europe was blocked. Georgians tried to join the anti-Ottoman coalition. In establishing the contacts and relationship with Europe the Catholic missionaries played a certain role. Ambassadorial mission of Ludovico da Bologna who traveled to various countries including Georgia on the special order of the Pope was very important. The Pope's ambassador delivered a lot of good messages to Italy. He let them know that ... the Georgians maintained the Catholic Christian faith and were fully committed to the apostolic throne [11:104-105]. That was an important assessment, especially after the fact that Georgians turned away from the Union of the Ferrara-Florence council. Neither the European kings were able to reach an agreement and form an anti-Ottoman coalition. On the advice of the Pope,

Georgian ambassadors arrived in France in 1460 asking Charles VII and then his son Louis XI (1423-1483) an assistance in the fight against the Ottomans, but in vain. Apparently, the countries of Western Europe preferred to reconcile with the Ottomans rather than to fight against them.

The second half of the 15th century turned out very critical for Georgia. Frequent campaigns weakened the country. The economy devastated, the population significantly decreased, the culture degraded, the cities diminished, the society split. The new-formed principalities politically disintegrated the country. The progress stopped, the reaction won [17:141-211].

George VIII (1446-1466), who succeeded his brother Vakhtang III (1442-1446) reigned for twenty years. Their father, King of Georgia Alexander I the Great, became a monk under the monastic name Athanasus in 1442. George VIII was officially the king of all Georgia (the last king of united Georgia), but in fact, only Imereti, Kartli and Kakheti obeyed him. Sabediano including Samegrelo and Abkhazia, Guria and Samtskhe-Meskheti principalities were separatists and acted independently of the central power. The agreement concluded between the kings and princes in 1459 about mutually agreed-upon activities turned out to be the fiction. The first was the Samtskhe principality which started the political disintegration of the country. In 1451, Quarquare seized the power after the death of Aghbugha and practically separated Samtskhe from Georgia. He tried to become ecclesiastically independent as well, but with no success (as mentioned above the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia David acted smartly). Bagrat, the principal of "Samoqalaqo" (Kutaisi region) began fight against the royal power, namely against George VIII. In 1463 there was a battle between the King and the rebellious Bagrat at Chikhori (Imereti). George VIII was defeated in the battle. As for Bagrat, he could not totally conquer Kutaisi neither the eastern Georgia. In 1465, Quarquare Athabagh rebelled against the

King defeating and captivating him. King of Kartli and Imereti (1466-1478) Bagrat (Bagrat VI - Bagrat II in Imereti) took advantage of the situation and declared himself King of Kartli. Quarquare did not like it and released George VIII. He supposed that he would fight against Bagrat. George VIII did fight Bagrat but lost the battle and was forced to move to Kakheti. Thereby there was formed a separate kingdom of Kakheti.

In 1479, after Bagrat's death Constantine (the grandson of Alexander I) ascended the throne. Since 1476, Alexander (the son of George VIII) reigned in Kakheti. Aftermath of the internal political battles between the kings and princes, Georgia was disintegrated, and at the end of the 15th century it was finally divided into the Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti Kingdoms and Samtskhe Saatabago.

Georgian kings and princes applied to the West again for assistance. Given the position of Georgia on the reconciliation of Orthodoxy and Catholics, and the fact that the Georgian representatives did not sign the union of the Ferrara-Florence council (apparently, they did not attend the signing ceremony at all), the attitude of the council organizers towards Georgia would be negative. The fact that there is no more correspondence between the Kingdom of Georgia and the Pope Curia since the 20s to the end of the 90s of the 15th c. (at any case there is no evidence of that) should be explained by the cool relationships between them.

In 1490, the King of Kartli, Constantine II expelled the Ottomans from Tbilisi and Kartli, and intended to annex Kakheti, Samtskhe and Imereti. He posed the question at the Darbazi session, but the members of the Darbazi did not advise him to take that step because they did not see any chance of success. The King agreed with their advice. In fact, in 1490 Darbazi legally confirmed the disintegration of Georgia into kingdoms and principalities.

To improve the situation of his country fallen in political and economical hardship, the King of

Kartli sent a special letter to the Pope through the monk Neil of the Order of St. Basil. Konstantin II pledged obedience to Pope Alexander VI and asked for restoration of the old relationship with the Church of Rome and supported the unification of the Eastern Church with the Church of Rome. He asked the Pope to encourage the kings of the Western countries for a holy war against the Saracens. The king asked for sending him a Decree of the Council of Florence on condemnation of the mistakes of the Greeks [11:219]

In 1496 the Pope sent a reply to Constantine II wishing peace to Alexander VI, the King of Kartli and giving him an apostolic blessing. He wrote that monk Neil delivered him a letter from which he learned about the desire of the King of Kartli to fight the rebels against Christianity. The pope sent him a Decree of the of Ferrara-Florence council (the king had asked) suggesting distribution it in all Georgian provinces. If those provisions are adopted, "then we will all be united and close ... then no hostile weapon can do us any harm ... Lord will win over them" [11].

That communication between the Pope and the King of Kartli was not followed by any significant result. The "warm" response of Pope Alexander VI did not consider any concrete result. Although the

relationship became warmer, Georgian Orthodox Christianity did not change. Indeed, the Georgian people were not against establishing relationship with the Western Catholic world, but not at the expense of orthodoxy. The second half of the 15th century was a period of political, economic and cultural crisis for the Kingdom of Georgia.

Conclusion

In the 15th century the main foreign enemies of Georgia were the Ottomans. The country needed Western aid to survive. The only way for that was to end the schism between the West and the East. However, Georgia had strong religious position and refused to renounce Orthodoxy. The aftermath of the ecumenical council (a clear example is general disregard for the Union adopted by the Ferrara-Florence council) encouraged such decisions. Georgia did not receive any assistance from the powerful countries. Various problems existing in the world throughout the century did not allow even the benevolent countries (having their own problems) to give a hand to Georgia. Thus, Georgia, which was a powerful country in the 11th-12th centuries, fell in an overwhelming crisis and was politically disintegrated in the 15th century.

ისტორია

კრიზისული პერიოდი საქართველოს ისტორიაში (XV ს.)

რ. მეტრეველი

აკადემიის წევრი, საქართველოს მეცნიერებათა ეროვნული აკადემია, თბილისი, საქართველო

აღორძინების გზაზე მდგარ საქართველოს XIV საუკუნის ბოლო ოცწლეულში ახალი, რთული პრობლემები გაუჩნდა. 1386 წელს საქართველოს (ისე როგორც მახლობელ აღმოსავლეთსა და ევროპა-აზიის სხვა ქვეყნებს) შემოესია შუააზიელი მხედართმთავარი თემური (ტამერლანი) – გათურქებული მონღოლური ტომის ბეგის თარაღაის შვილი. თემურ-ლენგის შემოსევებმა (1386-1403 წწ. – საქართველოს რვაგზის შემოესია) უმძიმეს მდგომარეობაში ჩააყენა მთელი სამხრეთი კავკასია. განადგურდა ქართული ეკონომიკა, კულტურა, სოფლის მეურნეობა. ვითარება განსაკუთრებით მძიმე იყო პოლიტიკური თვალსაზრისითაც. მომთაბარეთა აგრესიის წინააღმდეგ საქართველო მარტო აღმოჩნდა. საქართველოში მიმდინარე შინაპოლიტიკურ ბრძოლებს მძიმე საერთაშორისო ფონი ჰქონდა. საეტაპო მნიშვნელობის იყო 1453 წლის 29 მაისს კონსტანტინოპოლის დაცემა. ურთულეს გარემოცვაში მოყოლილი ქვეყანა ცდილობდა ურთიერთობა დაემყარებია დასავლეთ ევროპის ქვეყნებთან და მათი დახმარებით, როგორმე გაერღვია შექმნილი გარემოცვა. ნიშანდობლივია, რომ ქრისტიანული ეკლესიების გათიშვის შემდეგ (1054 წ.) ქართულ მართლმადიდებლურ და კათოლიკურ (რომის ეკლესია) ეკლესიებს შორის ურთიერთობა თითქმის არ შეწყვეტილა. თუმცა ეს არ იძლევა საფუძველს ვამტკიცოთ ქართული ეკლესიის, რომის კათოლიკური ეკლესიის მხარეზე ყოფნა. საქართველოს სახელმწიფოებრივი და რელიგიური პოზიცია მტკიცე აღმოჩნდა – მან არ დათმო მართლმადიდებლობა. ამგვარ გადაწყვეტილებას ხელს უწყობდა მსოფლიო საეკლესიო კრებების შედეგები (ნათელი მაგალითია ფერარა-ფლორენციის კრების მიერ მიღებული უნიის საერთო უგულვებელყოფა). საქართველომ ვერ მიიღო რაიმე დახმარება ძლიერი ქვეყნებისაგან. XI-XII საუკუნეებში ძლიერი საქართველოს სახელმწიფო XV საუკუნეში მძლავრმა ყოველმხრივმა კრიზისმა მოიცვა და პოლიტიკურადაც დაიშალა.

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