



UNKNOWN BACKSTAGES OF GEORGIAN DIPLOMACY IN THE 80-IES OF THE XVIII CENTURY

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: December 30 th 2020	<p>Studying the external policy of the king Erekle II is a topical issue for the modern historiography. The information maintained in the archives of various European cities, namely of Vienna, Vatican and Venice, convey to us the fact that while exercising pragmatic attitude toward relations with the European countries the King of Kartli and Kakheti considered the interests of both his own country and of those European countries as well.</p> <p>Over the years 1781-82 Erekle II sends his ambassadors to Europe twice: first he sends a Capuchin monk Domenique who dies in Constantinople in uncertain circumstances not having reached the destination; after him Erekle II sends another Capuchin Mauro the Veronese who also dies for unknown reasons while still on his way. It is a very important fact that the letters sent by the King Erekle, unlike the ambassadors, reach their destination which is the Emperor's Court in Austria.</p> <p>The present article shows the international political background that the king Erekle II had at that time and that he attempted to use for the interests of his country.</p> <p>The plan of dividing Europe anew, officially developed by the relevant imperial authorities of Saint Petersburg and Vienna, aimed at neutralizing the Ottoman Empire and dividing its territories. According to the Greek Project, it was supposed to resurrect the Byzantine Empire that would be formally independent from Russia but factually acting as a marionette with the Romanov dynasty ruling in it and build Dacia Kingdom as a buffer between the Ottoman and the Austrian Empires.</p> <p>This project was topical for Erekle II who was trying to get involved in the international political processes to the maximum level as the king of a sovereign and independent country, as in the result of implementation of the Greek Project Georgia would obtain an environment of Christian countries instead of the previous encirclement by Muslim countries. Thus, Georgia would find herself in an absolutely different qualitative dimension that had been a sacred dream of the Georgian Kings at all times.</p> <p>This was why the Greek Plan held such a great importance for Erekle II. This international project was made secret by the empress Catherine the Great and Joseph II, therefore, the official pragmatic reason that Erekle II referred to when sending ambassadors to Austria which was obtaining financial support for two regiments was merely a mask behind which in reality the ambassadorial mission served the purpose of active involvement and participation in the implementation of the Greek Project.</p> <p>The Austrian Emperor's Court, on its part, was going to use this intension of the Georgian king for its own pragmatic goals which implied strengthening of the Holy Roman Empire that had been actually made fictitious by that time. The widely acknowledged and reputed international level diplomats of the Austrian Empire Kaunitz and Kobenzl were involved in the process.</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Treaty of Georgievsk concluded between Russia and Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti in 1783 laid the foundation for the new era to the History of Georgia. As further development of the events revealed, Imperial Court of St. Petersburg had more opportunities to wrap its aggressive policy in a legitimate cover and thus disguising the

expansive goals of the latter. However, the treaty envisaged the creation of a unified Christian space that would prevent foreign threats to the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti.

Therefore, the preludes of the Treaty of Georgievsk, its prehistory, the attempt of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti to have relations with Europe, the letters sent to the Emperor of Austria acquire a completely different content and ideological meaning.

2.PURPOSE

The aim of the present study is to present European preludes of the Treaty of Georgievsk based on documentary material, making it possible to find out the attitudes and goals of King Erekle of Kartli-Kakheti.

3.RESEARCH METHODS

We rely on the methodological principles of objectivity, historicism, determinism, alternativeness, reconstruction, developed in the theoretical studies by the following scientists: Charles-Victor Langlois, Charles Seignobos; Robin George Collingwood [Collingwood 1993]; Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch [Bloch 1952]; Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield [Lambert, Schofield 2004]; Abrams Lynn [Abrams Lynn 2010]; Brundage Anthony [Brundage 2017]; Gregory Ian, Ell Paul [Gregory Ian, Ell Paul 2008]; Hughes-Warrington [Hughes-Warrington 2007]; Iggers George, Wang Qiang Edward [Iggers, Wang 2013]; Akira Iriye [Iriye 2012]; Kaldellis Anthony [Kaldellis Anthony 2014]; Koselleck Reinhart [Koselleck 2004; Koselleck 2002]; Lukacs John [Lukacs John 2000]; Munro Doug, Reid John [Munro Doug, Reid John 2017]; Quigley Carroll [Quigley Carroll 1979]; Raaflaub Kurt [Raaflaub Kurt 2010].

4.REVIEW OF WRITTEN SOURCES

Records kept in the archives of various cities in Europe, in particular, Vienna, Vatican, Venice, Rome, clearly indicate that the King of Kartli-Kakheti considered the possibilities of European diplomacy seriously and tried to take advantage of this segment for the interests of his country. Accordingly, before signing the Treaty of Georgievsk, he sent two Ambassadors to Europe in 1781-82 [Shvelidze 2014:33-38].

Erekle addresses Europe once again in the late autumn of 1795, after the devastation of Tbilisi by Agha Mohmmad-Khan, when he sends one more Ambassade to the Emperor of Austria.¹ [Natsvaladze 2020 a:218-222; Natsvaladze 2020 b:7-8].

As a result of the tricks of Russian diplomacy, the first two ambassadors sent by Erekle to Europe cannot reach the place of destination. Both of them Domenic and Mauro Veronelli die in unknown circumstances. Nevertheless, the letters sent by Erekle still reach the Imperial Chancellery of Austria, where they are treated with special care.

A short part (only two letters) of the referred correspondence was published by Mikheil Tamarashvili [Tamarashvili 1902:402-404], after that Ilia Tabaghua worked in the archives of Vatican, Vienna and Venice [Tabaghua 2000]. In 1979, he published a research regarding the foreign policy of Erekle II and also attached the letters of Georgian King and other related epistolary materials [Tabaghua 1979].

Nino Daborjginidze published quite actual articles based on the Georgian materials recorded in the historical archive of Propaganda Fide in Vatican, general archive of Capuchins in Rome and archive of Theatines [Daborjginidze 2013:235-244; Daborjginidze 2019:197-211]. Maia Damenia, who studies the History of Catholic Missions in Georgia, published the description of the first volume of Georgian Materials recorded in the archive of Propaganda Fide.² [Damenia 2017]

British sources on Georgia are also important. They were published in two parts by Giorgi Kalandia [Kalandia 2020 a; Kalandia 2020 b]. He also published materials existing in British and Irish press on King Erekle [Kalandia 2017].

Initially, we have to analyze international political situation and find out the connection of Erekle's letters to political processes of the referred period in order to assess the Ambassade sent by Erekle to Europe based on the afore mentioned primary sources.

Based on the available letters of Erekle and correspondence related to them we can unequivocally assume that:

1. Something urgent happens in Europe in 1781-82;

The referred situation is confirmed by following evidence:

a) Page 44, Volume III of Georgian materials recorded in the historical archive of Propaganda Fide keeps an interesting document. On March 16, 1781 Capuchin Mauro Veronelli makes an insertion into the letter dated 14.03.1781: „This morning, March 16, King Erekle ordered me to ask Your Excellency to send Padre Domenico, who brought this letter, to Vienna as soon as possible, since he has many important things to do.” [Daborjginidze 2019:184]

b) A noteworthy and important detail is that the Capuchin ambassador Mauro Veronelli did not bring the translated letters to Europe in 1782, despite the fact that translating the letters needs quite a little time, allegedly a few days. It seems that even these few days are important for Erekle. Accordingly, Erekle has two choice - either delay the ambassador for a while and send him with prepared translated letters, or give Georgian letters hoping that someone in Europe will translate them. Erekle chooses to send the ambassador immediately.

2. This urgent case is not publicly declared and is strictly confidential;

Following materials are interesting to this regard:

a) Instructional letter of Erekle to Marco Veronelli translated into Italian. Here is the instruction Erekle gives to the Ambassador sent to Europe: „If your request has not been fulfilled by the referred emperor or any other king, it is a secret and no one should find out about it. Otherwise, disclosure of the latter will be rather harmful.“ [Tabaghua 1979:90]

b) Letter of Erekle II sent to Joseph II. Erekle writes: „It was his commission written in this report: Past years information reached to the Asian countries of our parties that your Highness and Majesty has a “**Sapari**” (**Secret**) over the Sultan of Turkey. This good news awakened a sense of devotion and joy in my mind. We sent Patri hoping to obtain the service of Your Excellency“[Tabaghua 1979:100]

Explanation of the meaning “Sapari” is extremely important. We believe that “Sapari” means a “Secret”, “Hidden Thought”. This can be clearly understood from the context. Erekle was delighted that Joseph II had a certain hidden thought towards the Ottoman Empire.

3. This urgent and secret case is directly related to the political life of Georgia;

After the ambassador Domenico, sent by Erekle, dies in Constantinople in 1781 under unknown circumstances, Erekle sends another ambassador within the shortest period of time, who has exactly the same purpose as the first one.

Erekle II writes to Joseph II: “Long before this letter, last year, I sent Patri Domenico, who was in Tbilisi. I relied him my request to Your Highness, which was not mentioned in the letter. We told him orally how important it was. But Patri Domenico died on the way. Our assignment of that time is appropriate to the present one.” [Tabaghua 1979:104]

4. The Emperor of Austria Joseph II is rather highly involved in this mysterious and at the same time urgent case;

This version is confirmed by the fact that the main addressee of Erekle's letters is the Emperor of Austria. On the other hand, despite the fact that Erekle's letters are in Georgian, the Austrian royal court takes the task of translating the letters more seriously than usual that lasts for almost a year and a half.

The most important is that the translation of letters was managed by Wenzel Kaunitz, a world-class diplomat of the Austrian Empire [Tabaghua 1979:113-175], whose name is associated with the diplomatic revolution of the 50-60-ies of the XVIII century - the rapprochement of long-time traditional enemies Austria and France.[Manasyan 2019:264-266; Monastireva 2009:155-159]

5. Participation of Georgia in this mysterious and urgent case is prevented by the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg

In a small letter sent by Cardinal Hrzan to Wenzel Kaunits, containing a brief summary of Erekle's request, there are two important issues.

Cardinal Hrzan: writes: „I hope that the Russian Royal Court will understand this step correctly. It is clear that Prince Erekle's request for this precious gift must be fulfilled“ [Tabaghua 1979:118].

The first one is the most important message from this text - Imperial Court of Austria is not sure that Russia will approve its desire to assist Georgia. Moreover, it happens when on the one hand Russia has quite good relationship with Austria [Petrova 2011:39-82], and on the other hand claims to have common faith with Georgia [Tsagareli 1898:4-28].

The second message of this text is quite radical - Cardinal Hrzan believes that Erekle's request - the training of two battalions in an European manner and granting necessary funds for its maintenance should be fulfilled.

Out of this small record, the third message becomes evident - the Imperial Court of Vienna clearly sees that satisfying the referred request is within their own interests. Therefore, the position of Cardinal Hrzan is categorical and clear: “that Prince Erekle's request for this precious gift must be fulfilled“ [Tabaghua 1979:118].

6. The referred urgent and secret affair is directly related to the Russian Empire.

Cardinal Hrzan lists all letters Erekle sent to Europe: „Letters to His Holiness, to the kings of Naples and Sardinia. Letters sent to Venice are on the way with their translations. This is followed by copies and translations of the letters, possibly addressed to the Queen of Russia. This letter differs from other ones as it bears neither signature nor title at the beginning.“ [Tabaghua 1979:119].

Naturally, it must be categorically ruled out that the letter addressed to the Queen of Russia was accidentally given to Mauro Veronelli by Erekle and sent to the Emperor of Austria. It should be underlined that this letter bears no date and the addressee is also unknown.

We consider it to be a message to Joseph II, as Erekle points out to him that the Austrian-Georgian relationship, could not bring dissonance into benevolent Austrian-Russian relations due to its officially confirmed sympathy towards Russia.

7. We are facing a secret urgent case in which the interests of Austria, Russia and Georgia are revealed.

Senior Patri Andreas writes to Marco Veronelli in a letter of recommendation: „The respectable Patri Mauro, presenting this letter, who is a St. Franciscan Capuchin and missionary of an Order of Friars Minor existing in Verona, was sent to Russia (for diplomatic affairs) by the righteous people of Europe, in order to facilitate the success of their proposal.“ [Tabaghua 1979:88]

Senior Patri Andreas refers to Mauro Veronelli as sent to Russia. This means that before going to Vienna, Mauro was instructed to have some consultations in Russia.

8. In addition to funding of the two regiments mentioned in Erekle's letters, the King of Kartli-Kakheti has a more important, hidden, secret request to the Emperor of Austria.

Erekle writes to Joseph II: „Oral message given to Patri Mauro will thoroughly assure you. Your Highness, please trust him in everything whatever he tells you.“ [Tabaghua 1979:104]

6. RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on a joint assessment and analysis of the above mentioned facts it should be determined whether Erekle's attempt to be connected with Europe was an idealistic step, or a precise and well considered political decision.

We have studied international processes in the 50-80-ies of the XVIII century, international political situation existing in Europe and throughout the world thoroughly. While analyzing these processes and the world history, it is clear that the eight components mentioned above are clearly outlined in the plan for the redistribution of Europe, known as the "Greek Project", envisaging the division of the Ottoman Empire.

This plan, which existed for quite a long time in various forms [Kapterev 1914: 26-102; Zhigarev 1896:5-22], acquired conceptual formulation in 1780 during a secret meeting between Catherine II and Joseph II in Mogilev. [Ivonin 2007:31-43] (It is noteworthy that Joseph arrives in Russia incognito and travels to Russia with the name of Count Finkenstein [Ivonin 2013:99; Ivonin 2011:32-33]) It acquired final shape in the letter of Catharine, who sends a letter to Joseph II on September 20, 1781. [Russian Archive 1880: 281-291; Arneth 1869:143-157]

It was decided to redistribute Europe at the expense of the partition of the Ottoman Empire during the secret visit. The Byzantine Empire should be restored, and the court should be obtained by Constantine II, the grandson of Catherine II, reigning independently from the Russian Romanov dynasty, and a buffer state Dacia would be created to unite Moldavia, Wallachia, and Bessarabia. It would be a kind of protective space that will separate Austrian Empire from the Muslim environment. [Russkaya Starina 1892:1-4; Zorin 2001:35-37; Griffiths 2013:352-360; Markova 1986:5-11]

Due to the fact that the Ottoman Empire had claims over Western Georgia [Svanidze1990:299-234] and at the same time was the inspiration for the constant invasions of mountaineers from Dagestan and Chechnya to eastern Georgia [Botsvadze1990:144-189], actually causing the destruction of the statehood of Kartli-Kakheti, Erekle was directly interested in all the international political processes aimed at weakening the Ottomans.

Accordingly, we should realize the phrase from the letter of Erekle II sent to Joseph II: „Your Highness and Majesty has a "Sapari" (Secret) over the Sultan of Turkey" [Tabaghua 1979:100] The question is, to what extent can we suppose a war with the Porte in this hidden thought? I think this version shall be ruled out, as traditional political relations and quarrels between Austrian Empire and Turkey, the latter being the initiator of this controversy, can not be used as a concept expressing the hidden thought.

Therefore, we think that this "hidden thought" should mean an event referring to the interests of Austria, Turkey and Georgia. We think such coincidence of interests is a "Greek Project". This is one more proof that the main purpose of the Ambassade sent to Europe by Erekle is unambiguously related to the "Greek Project".

It is an important fact: two emperors agreed to keep this project a secret to avoid complication of political processes from the side of Ottomans. [Zorin 2001:38-45] However, it is noteworthy that this initiative was still disclosed. The fact is that the whole Russia in Catherine's time was organized based on the ideology of the "Greek Project". This is well reflected in the architecture, literature, and royal insignia of the Russian Empire of that era. Even public opinion is inspired with the referred idea [Zorin 2001:58-88]. Consequently, it was no secret that already popular topic before the Russian invasion of Constantinople, gained even more popularity in the 80-ies of XVIII.

Nevertheless, Erekle follows the rule of inspiration for a simple reason - Joseph II and Catherine II believe that the agreed redistribution plan of Europe should be kept secret and not disclosed. A serious statement of involvement in international political processes should be made in accordance with diplomatic etiquette. Therefore, Erekle remains faithful to the rules established by the rulers of two great empires.

In this respect, the secret case Erekle decided to send an ambassador to Europe twice could only have been a "Greek Project" drawn up by Joseph II and Catherine II envisaging the redistribution of Europe through the neutralization of the Ottoman Empire.

However, here is another interesting and important point explaining the segment of this task, in particular, the haste of Erekle. While analyzing Erekle's letters, no one in historiography has referred to this point earlier. However, we believe that the basic motivation of Erekle's ambassade can be specified by clarifying these points.

An exact answer must be given to the question - What does Erekle strive for, why does he consider it necessary to send an Ambassade to Vienna immediately? Moreover, he hurries so much that considers translation of the letters to be less important than the arrival of the ambassador in Vienna on time.

While studying the narrative sources and documents of the referred period we have revealed a rather interesting fact - One of the most interesting events in the Russian-Austrian relations in the early 80-ies of the XVIII century is the trip of Prince Paul to Austria with his wife in 1781-82. [Khavanova 2016:97; RIO 1872:70-97].

Paul is the future emperor, although he does not have a warm relationship with his mother Catherine, this is a time when tensions between them is not at a critical stage. The grand "Greek Project" that forms the future of

Catherine's grandchildren (Children of Paul and Mary) - Alexander remains the Emperor of Russia and Constantine becomes the founder of Byzantine dynasty, is naturally within the sphere of Paul's interest. Accordingly, he is entitled to take part in behind-the-scenes negotiations on this issue.

Erekle has an excellent chance to send an ambassador who will have the opportunity to meet not only the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, but also the heir of the Russian throne Paul who is in Austria. Accordingly, taking into consideration the great interest of the Austrian Imperial Court, it is quite realistic for Joseph II to have a desire for holding a three sided meeting that would solve the most important issues for all three countries.

We think that the main topic Erekle wanted to convey to Joseph II was not written in the letters, but was given to ambassadors in a form of oral instruction. The King of Kartli-Kakheti uses this universal diplomatic practice. Mikheil Tamarashvili writes: „The Polish Capuchin took all his (Mauro Veronelli m.n.) papers to the nuncio in Vienna and told him that the deceased Patri Mavro had many instructions personally from the King of Georgia.” [Tamarashvili 1902:402]

Based on the joint analysis of documents and primary sources, the referred fragment can serve as one more proof that basic topic for Erekle's European Ambassade was a "Greek project" and participation of Georgia in this project.

We think that Elder Patrice Andreas is fully aware of the purpose of Erekle's Ambassade as well as the essence of oral instruction. We believe that traces of the latter can be found in the letter sent to the Emperor of Austria.

"Such thing (it might mean the involvement of Erekle in the Greek Project – m.n.) must be clearly done through the Congregation of the Faith Propagation, so for your and God's sake, as well as for the benefit of this mission, never make unfortunate and persecuted ones shiver with fear. Because the power of your sovereignty is so famous among the barbarian people that the will of your state, as well as caution in the face of unbelievers and heretics, leads to respect and protection as well." [Tabaghua 1979:86]

The fact is that if we consider the high importance and attention Imperial Court of Vienna pays to Erekle's correspondence, it is obvious that nothing will hamper the meeting of Erekle's ambassador with the Emperor of Austria. As for Prince Paul, we think that due to diplomatic etiquette, he would not have objected three sided meeting.

One more interesting detail: In the letter of elder Patrice Andreas referred to the emperor it is quite clear that oral request of Veronelli contains the issue which may not be repeated in the future: „ We do not know in advance the amount of spiritual benefit these parties will have in the future. Therefore, we beg Your Majesty to show your mercy and kindness towards that Patr Mavro sent to the court of these supreme kings, and render him assistance in holding an audience with the secondary kings. I hope they will fulfill the request." [Tabaghua 1979:86]

We suppose that Paul, heir of the Russian throne is also implied among those secondary kings.

That is why Erekle tries to use the unique chance of a three sided meeting and negotiation, the possibility of which would be quite low in other time.

Negotiations with the Russian Prince and Emperor of Austria is the exact goal Erekle aspired to. He is in a hurry to ensure a meeting of his ambassador with Paul in Vienna and use this rare opportunity. We think that a meeting of this format was quite real taking into consideration the political situation of that time and more or less identical political interests of all three countries.

Hence, based on the referred conclusion study shall be conducted in one more different direction. A specific answer must be given to the question - what did Erekle want to achieve from this Ambassade? What result should be considered as optimal one in case of organizing a three sided meeting?

The British researcher Donald Rayfield specifically points out the strategic importance of the Caucasus for the enhancement of Greek Project. "Russia and Austria, - writes the English scientist, - have already agreed on the so-called "Greek Project" in which they planned to expulse the Turks from Europe: Catherine would "strengthen" this project by incorporating South Caucasus into Russia." [Rayfield 2019:357]

Erekle understands the attitude of great powers towards Georgian kingdoms very well. While Erekle is quite popular in Europe, the Old Continent thinks through the stereotypes of Peace of Amasya. Caucasus is not considered as a unity/combination of states or state formations for the latter. For them, the Caucasus is a political and religious conglomerate forming desirable environment for any empire to conquer it in the future.

This is the imperial doctrine consistently followed by world empires. The Caucasus, especially united, is a dilemma for all great empires. Hence, all great empires, from XII Century A.D to the Era of Erekle, made their contributions to neutralize the Caucasian trump card. Consequently, in the 70-80-ies of the XVIII century, the Caucasus, divided into multi-confessional, political units, was an ideal choice for large states. This political or confessional diversity reasonable creates the illusion that any large state will be able to take advantage of the turmoil, multilateral religious or political conglomerate existing in the Caucasus. This can be a post-theoretical stage of imperial version: divide and rule.

Accordingly, the great powers, including Austria and Russia, are faced with a specific choice:

1. They have to recognize the independence of the kingdoms in the Caucasus and use the goodwill of the Caucasians rationally in the implementation of the Greek Project, that will provide a solid ground to their preferred option for the redistribution of Europe, or

2. They should not refuse imperial ambitions and use the political conglomerate and confessional diversity of the Caucasus in order to expand their territory and catch a strategically important region.

Russia chooses the first model of relations with the Caucasus and Austria - the second one.

Erekle wants to remind himself to Europe within the format of this choice. To prove that the second way, the alliance of the Caucasus, is more profitable for the implementation of the Greek Project rather than Russian intrigues for the enhancement of the positions. Erekle is quite popular in Europe, he is known as a fierce fighter against Ottoman Empire and Iran. Europe relies on him and he gains quite a lot of authority among the great powers as one king [Kalandia 2017:37-88; Kalandia 2020:71-100]. However, his personal recognition does not fully reflect the popularity and recognition of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti. On the one hand, Erekle as a person and on the other hand as a state ruled by him is clearly separated in European consciousness.

7.CONCLUSIONS

"Secret plan named as "Greek Project" for the redistribution of Europe, is the reason Erekle strives to establish intense relationship with the Emperor of Austria, being the Holy Roman Emperor as well [Mitrofanov 1907:102-208] that is not an ordinary status. It becomes rather significant while resolving the issue on a large scale [Natsvaladze 2020c:18-22; Natsvaladze 2020d:28-41].

We believe that a new systematic model for the defense of Christian world is formed within the referred context, which implies to restore the borders of the Roman Empire. The role of the Emperor of Austria, being Holy Roman Emperor at the same time, as well as Russia and Georgia, as the most important part of the Orthodox world, is quite important in the referred situation, that will lay a foundation for a qualitatively different Europe.

Thus, the Ambassadors of Erekle are organically connected to the most important European political processes, giving Georgia the opportunity to avoid the model of Amasya Peace Treaty [Shvelidze 2014:9-13] and to be established as a single independent entity within the international community of that period, where Russia itself is considered on a rather influential scale.

The Russian imperial concept, not recognizing the independence of the Caucasian states and kingdoms (even Peter I referred himself as "the ruler and sovereign of the kings of Iveria, Kartli and Georgia") from the beginning of the XVIII century [Yuzefovich 1869:25; Guruli 2012:7-8]; turned this important project into an utopia hindering the development and civilized transformation of both Georgia and Russia into a qualitatively different dimension.

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