

Bejan Javakhia

Ilia State University

Georgian-Byzantine relations in the epoch of Constantine Porphyrogenitus

Georgia of Middle Ages, as well as other Christian states of eastern world was closely connected to the Byzantine Empire. Role of Byzantine is especially important in formation of Georgian Christian State in the Middle Ages. Throughout its existence Georgia used to tack between two aerals – the East and West. In early middle ages State of Georgia had to fight for its independence with two empires. Initially this was Iran, after The Arabs-on the East and the Byzantine Empire on the West. In this opposition Georgian states were permanently oriented to Byzantium as a country of the same religion.

It should be noted here that formation of Georgian State in the Middle Ages originally proceeded alongside with Hellenistic world, and later on in close connection with Byzantium. According to the idea developed in Georgian historical writings Georgia took Christianity from the Byzantine Empire. Ecclesiastic constructions took place in Georgia with great support and efforts of Constantine the Great. Georgian kingdoms and principalities of early Middle Ages recognized supremacy of the Emperor of Byzantium. Multiple proofs of this can be found in historical sources. One of such information is given in “Life of Kartli” (Kartlis Tskhovtreba) regarding King of Georgia Vakhtang Gorgasali, where there is a direct indication that the king of Georgia receives royal regalia from the Byzantine Emperor. The same can be said about existing in Western Georgia the Kingdom of Egrisi. In early Middle Ages Byzantium and Georgian kingdoms and principalities were connected not only due to their traditional Hellenistic culture and religion but due to resistance against Iran and The Arabs.

Our aim is to discuss relations of the Byzantine Empire with Georgia in the first half of the X century – in the ruling period of Constantine Porphyrogenitus (913-959).

Main issues that I would point out are: relation of the Byzantine Empire to Georgia in this period, its role and importance in the struggle of Georgian people against foreign conquerors, also role of Byzantium in integration of Georgian kingdoms and principalities. Apparently we can not ignore works by Constantine Porphyrogenitus as one of the most significant source of Georgian history.

It is true that discussion of these issues takes great effort as the sources of Byzantine-Georgian relations of this period are extremely scarce and not studied.¹ But we think that it is possible to single out and present essential issues which determine our research.

¹ Byzantine –Georgian relations of the period of Constantine Porphyrogenitus have never been a subject of special research. Also there are translated only some fragments of works by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. During this research works by famous byzantiologists like Dölger Fr, Runciman St, G. Ostrogorsky and Vasilev A.,(Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453 / bearb. von Franz Dölger, 1924, Müller, Andreas E. [Ed.]. - München [u.a.] (2003); Runciman, Steven, The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign: A Study of Tenth-Century Byzantium. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Ostrogorsky, George. History of the Byzantine State. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 1969; Васильев А. Византия и Арабы Политические отношения за время Македонской династии,

In the first place we would like to note that when speaking about Byzantine-Georgian relations we should underline general politics carried out by the Empire with other nations, which itself was determined by political doctrine of the Byzantine Empire. Thus discussion of Byzantine-Georgian relations should be presented on the background of relations of the Byzantine Empire with other Christian peoples in the Caucasus.

At the turn of the X century Georgia was split into several kingdoms and principalities. These were Kingdom of Egrisi-Apkhazeti in the West, Kingdom of Tao-Klarjeti in South-West, Kakheti Principality in the East and the capital of Georgia Tbilisi, occupied by The Arabs being a seat of Arab Amir.

At the turn of the X century due to events developing inside Arab Khalipate, Arab raids to Georgia and entire Caucasus were slowed down that gave a chance to Georgian kingdoms to step on the road of economical and cultural flourishing. From this epoch on there were created certain conditions for unification of economically and socially disintegrated Georgian kingdoms. Fight for unification was supported by a necessity of creation of an entire front against the Arab conquerors, though the Arabs tried to implement special policy preventing this unification to happen. Georgian kingdoms and principalities were not alone in their fight against the Arabs. Their allies were Armenian principalities and in the first place the Byzantine Empire. The Emperor of Byzantium, as a Christian ruler was a protector and supporter of Georgians. Georgian Principles fleeing from the Arabs applied for support to the Emperor of Byzantium.

Georgian participation in Byzantine army against the Arabs was a completely natural thing many examples of which we find in the sources of the period. Georgians systematically participated in Byzantine campaigns against Arab Emirates located in the gorges of the rivers of Aras-Euphrates and on the banks of the Vani Lake. Georgian rulers took part in Byzantine campaigns to the East as well. Bagrat, brother of the ruler of Tao-Klarjeti, Ashot Kuropalatis (923-936) took part in the besiege of Theodosiopolis (930) together with John Kourkous. It seems that Georgian war against the Arabs carried a religious character as it is seen in the sources of the given period. Thus coreligious Byzantium was a natural ally for Georgia. We think that struggle of Georgian people against The Arabs developed like Spanish Conquest. In the process of fighting against the Arabs rule in Georgia there was formed a unified Christian military outlook, reflected both in Georgian hagiographical and historical writings. In this fight there was outlined the necessity of unification of Georgian kingdoms

1902; Toynbee, Arnold, Constantine Porphyrogenitus and his world. Oxford, 1973). also scientific works in Georgian Historiography by Iv. Javakhishvili, S. Kakabadze, S. Janashia, M. Lortkipanidze and Sh. Badridze were there are discussed the relations of Byzantium with the East are extremely important for us. (Ivane Javakhishvili History of Georgian nation, v11, 1983 (in Georgian) ; Takhaishvili E., Sumbat Davitisdze's Chronicle on the Bagrationi of Tao-Klarjeti, "Materials for the History of Georgia and the Caucasus", 1949, vol. 27; Lortkipanidze M. Origin of new feudal principalities – works on Georgian history, v., 11, Tbilisi., 1973; Janashia S. Information about the Bagrations of Tao-Klarjeti by Constantine Porphyrogenitus-works of Tbilisi State University, XVIII, 1941; (in Georgian) Badridze Sh. Relations of Georgia with Byzantium and Western Europe, Tbilisi, 1984 (in Georgian)

and principalities and a general Georgian idea, which indeed was followed by the formation of a unified Georgian State.

Despite the fact that Georgians and other Caucasian Christians were involved in the consolidated front against the Arabs together with Byzantium, they did not always act in accordance with Byzantium. Disintegrated Georgian and Armenian principalities frequently fought on different sides, example of which we can see in the times of Constantine Porphyrogenitus. Also there should be noted the fact that often strong Byzantine Empire did not fully advocate the interests of its allies. The Empire not only ensured protection of the liberated lands, but tried to integrate them in itself. But as we have already mentioned Byzantine Emperors made concessions to Eastern Christian states for certain reasons. Exactly such fact is mentioned in the work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, when the ruler of Tao-Klarjeti Ashot Kuropalatis demands from the Byzantine Emperor to return back to him lands liberated from the Arabs by him and his relative Adarnese, which previously were directly included in the Byzantine Empire (meaning the territory of Theodosiopolis, Basian and adjoining community.), to which he receives the Emperor's approval.¹ Thus Byzantium regarded Eastern Christian peoples with caution, as their cooperation was very important for the Empire in its fight against the Arabs, especially when Byzantium did not have a quiet life in its West due to complications with Bulgaria. Though we must mention that the Byzantine Emperors were not driven only by Christian love, they had their own political aims and tasks. Their attitude to Georgians was very changeable according to different circumstances.

Special interests of Byzantium according to the sources of the period were most of all revealed in regard of Iberia (Tao-Klarjeti) and Egrisi-Apkhazeti (Western Georgia) Kingdoms, which in the early Middle Ages had the strongest Byzantine influence. Kingdom of Egrisi-Apkhazeti was a direct vassal of Byzantium; even the Church in this kingdom was subordinated to the Church of Constantinople. Many century rule of the Arabs created different living conditions in different regions of Georgia. Western Georgia where the Arabs could not hold the position gradually became stronger and already in the middle of the IX century, supported by Khazar Khanate, left Byzantine protectorate. Unified kingdom of Egrisi-Apkhazeti gradually covers the whole territory of Georgia and their close connections with the Bagratians of Tao-Klarjeti (Iberia) built the foundation for future unification of Georgia. Though this unification was preceded by the unification of Georgian Churches. From the middle of the X century Catholicos of Abkhazia stops its direct subordination to the Patriarchate of Constantinople and begins its integration into Georgian Church. This of course was in the interests of the kings of Western Georgia, as the unification of the Church would support unification of the state under their reign, as the kings of Western Georgia frequently crossed to Eastern Georgia occupying the principalities in Eastern Georgia. In Georgian historical sources we do not find much information about any opposition between the Georgian Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople on this ground.

¹ Constantinus Porphyrogenetus. *De administrando imperio*, Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik. Engl. transl. by J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, cap. 45 ; Константин Багрянородный *Об управлении империей*, текст, перевод, комментарий Под редакцией Г.Г. Литаврина и А.П. Новосельцева, М., 1989, С. 200

Georgian States took active part in the missionary activities of Byzantium in the North Caucasus. Clear evidence to this fact is seen in the letters of the Patriarch of Constantinople Nicholas the Mystic (895-925) to the kings of Egrisi-Apkhazeti Constantine III (893-922), and Giorgi II (922-957), where the Patriarch of Constantinople urges them to assist and support designated Archbishop of Alania. In his letters of 916-917, Nicholas the Mystic directly instructs the King of Egrisi-Apkhazeti on the issues of spreading Christianity in Alania. "You by the will of God have greatly contributed and enlightened Arkhont of Alania and all those, who together with him were worthy of christening".¹ From all Georgian and other Eastern sources it becomes clear that main role in introduction of Christianity in Alania was played by the Diocese of Mtskheta, where one can see as its part the Church of Western Georgia.² As we have mentioned the epoch of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, first half of the X century, was a very significant period in history of Georgia, as at this time there was laid a fundament for unification of Georgian state. In the process of the struggle for unification the role of Byzantium is extremely significant, as it became an ally of Caucasian nations in their fight against the Arabs. Fight against the Arabs made Caucasian kingdoms seek unification.

Like it is characteristic to the whole European world, monastic movement developed in Georgia in this period supported unification of Georgian kingdoms. In the process of unification of Georgian kingdoms leading part was given to Tao-Klarjeti principality, or the Bagratids of Iberia, as the rulers of the kingdom were called in the Byzantine sources of the period. The Bagratids of the South Georgia became the leaders of unification of State of Georgia. Implantation of the Bagratids in Tao-Klarjeti was supported by the Byzantine Emperors. According to a Georgian historiographer Sumbat the Davitisdze – Ashot The Great Kuropalatis strengthened his rule in Shavshet Tao-Klarjeti supported by the Greek Emperor – "strengthened his reign by the will of the Greek King".³ Georgian hagiographic writings also prove that Byzantine Emperors frequently attempted to interfere in the contradictions existing among Georgian kingdoms and principalities. According to Giorgi Merchule – "at that time Bagrat Kuropalatis by the will of God and by the will of his brothers and by the order of the King of the Greek received the title of Kuropalatis instead of Ashot Kuropalatis, his father"⁴. The order mentioned in this text is corresponding to a Greek word *keleus*. Generally speaking it was an accepted rule in Byzantine foreign relations to regard their letters to the subordinated to it countries as orders⁵. This is proved by Constantine Porphyrogenitus in his book "For Administration of an Empire"⁶, also the Emperor of Byzantium takes his chance to assign to the throne a desirable for him candidate after the death of the king of Egrisi-Apkhazeti Giorgi II (922-957). In order to avoid dispute about the heritage, two sons of Giorgi II, Theodos and Bagrat were sent to the court of Byzantine

¹ Nicholas I Patriarch of Constantinople: Letters: Text and Translation, R.J.H. Jenkins & L.G. Westerink, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae VI, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae XX, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1973) ; Nicholas the Mystic, letters - *georgika*, Byzantine authors about Georgia, v IV, II, Tbilisi, 1952, p 214

² Ivanov C.A. Byzantine missionary. Can a barbarian become a Christian? Moscow, 2003, 182

³ Sumbat Davitisdze, Life and story of the Bagratids – Life of Kartli, v1, ed. S. Kaukhchishvili, Tbilisi, 1955 (in Georgian)

⁴ Giorgi Merchule, Life of Grigol Khandzeli – Georgian writings, Tbilisi, 1987. (in Georgian)

⁵ Ivane Javakhishvili History of Georgian nation, v11, 1983, p. 110 (in Georgian)

⁶ Constantinus Porphyrogenetus. De administrando imperio, Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik. Engl. transl. by J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, cap. 46

Emperor. But after the death of Giorgi's heir, opposition of king Demetre brought Theodos from Byzantium.

Relations between Byzantium and Georgian kingdoms and principalities in this period was expressed in granting titles of the Imperial court to the members of Georgian Royal family by Byzantine Emperors. About these titles there is vast information in Georgian historical and Greek sources as well. These titles are as follows: Magistros, Antipathos, Patricios, frequently met with the representatives of Meskh Bagrations, as for Kuropalatis, it seems that it was an auxiliary title for the head of the family. The title of the Kuropalatis was passed to the leaders of the Bagration family by inheritance, which is indicated in a Georgian source "Matiane Kartlisai (chronicles of Kartli) – obtaining a honorable title of a Kuropalatis is a tradition and rule of the house of Georgian Bagrations".¹

As soon as the Imperial honors were presented operators would give the person corresponding clothes and gifts sent with special messengers. A title of a Kuropalatis was considered among other Imperial titles and honors for court men as a supreme title, it was higher than the title of a Magistros. First a person was granted a title of a Magistros and after a title of a Kuropalatis, like it happened with Adarnese II, "after he became a Magistros of his father and than a Kuropalatis of his uncles". In Georgia in this period a title of a Kuropalatis is regarded as equal to the title of a king. In this regard especially interesting is a Georgian manuscript of the beginning of the XI century where it is written: - "Bagrat King of Apkhazians and Kuropalatis of Georgians"².

Granting of Byzantine Imperial court titles to Georgian rulers should not be taken as signs of dependence of Georgian kingdoms and principalities on Byzantium, rulers of other Christian countries also used to receive these titles from Byzantium, though they did not consider themselves subordinates to the Caesar. This must be the tradition which to our opinion existed all over the Christian world, when Christian peoples recognized nominal supremacy of the Byzantine Emperor. According to Byzantine sources Byzantine Emperors in this period supported the rulers of their friendly and obedient peoples with a payment for their services. Such is information about the ruler of Taron, Girogol, but with other rulers of Georgia and Armenia there is no such information found yet. Though there is an information given in the work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus that Eastern Christian rulers, Principal of Vaspurakan Gagik, Adarnese Kuropalatis of Iberia and the Principal of the Principals Ashot wrote to Emperor Romanos Lekapinos (920-944) with great dissatisfaction demanding explanations why only the Principal of Taron received royal payment, while they did not they receive any, that the Emperor was to pay them the same, or the Principle of Taron should not have any payment either.³

As we have already mentioned relations of Georgian State units to Byzantium was not always the same. They changed according to circumstances, though never left the boundaries of simple

¹ "Chronicles of Kartli" – Life of Kartli (Kartlis tskhovreba) v1, ed. Kaukhchishvili S. Tbilisi., 1955, p 278 (in Georgian)

² Lortkipanidze M. Origin of new feudal principalities – works on Georgian history, v., 11, Tbilisi., 1973 (in Georgian)

³ Constantinus Porphyrogenetus. De administrando imperio, Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik. Engl. transl. by J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, cap. 43; Константин Багрянородный Об управлении империей, текст, перевод, комментарий Под редакцией Г.Г. Литаврина и А.П. Новосельцева, М., 1989, С. 182

protection and influence. Byzantine Emperors never interfered in the domestic affairs of Georgia, if we do not take in view granting Imperial titles, which in a way conditioned strengthening of rights of a new ruler in his own country.

In this regard we can bring one interesting fact that should have taken place in the first half of the century. Constantine Porphyrogenitus himself tells that Patrikios Ashot Kiskas, in spite to Magistros Gurgen decided to pass Artanuji Fortress (922) to Romanos Lekapinos (922-944). When the representative of the Emperor received the fortress and erected the Imperial flag on the fortress as a sign of appropriation, and apprised the Emperor, everybody new about passing of Artanuji over to the Greek and the news spread across Georgia quickly. Everybody was indignant by such kind of impudence of the Greek. Magistros Gurgen (**Passed away** 941) and Magistros Davit (Davit II), brother of Ashot Kuropalatis (**Passed away** 936) immediately wrote a letter to the Emperor and threatened him: if you do this and invade the very heart of our country, then you should know that we will leave your services and take the side of the Arabs; We are strong enough to fight Romans and if we are obliged, we will take not only Artanuji Fortress and its adjoining territory, but we will fight against your country as well. The Caesar scared by the threat sent a message to the Georgians: I knew nothing, and it was done without my permission, I have not ordered anything like it to my representative and it is only his fault, - he blamed Romanos his guiltless official and sent an urgent message to him: immediately leave Artanuji, bring the son of Adarnese Kuropalatis, Ashot here, so that we grant him the title of Kuropalatis. The official representative of the Emperor, Constantine Patricios according to the Emperor's order took Ashot, son of Adarnese Kuropalatis to the Capital where he was given the title of Kuropalatis.¹ This fragment from the book by Constantine Porphyrogenitus is very important from the point of view of Georgian –Byzantine relations. It seems that the Emperor of Byzantium is not the ruler of Georgia, he is just a protector and he could not integrate Georgian territories in his state, even though it was a wish of a Georgian ruler. Theophanous the Continuer also describes the visit of a Georgian Ruler – Ashot Kuropalatis to the Capital of Byzantium “On the 20th of February, year of the 10th Indiction (923) passed away the wife of Romanos, Theodora. In the same month was crowned Sophia, spouse of Christoporos. At that time Georgian Kuropalatis was visiting Constantinople, who marched though splendidly decorated square, he was received with honors and glory. And taken to Hagia Sophia, so that he could see with his own eyes its beauty, splendor and rich decorations. The Cathedral was decorated with golden brocades. The Kuropalatis was led inside. He much astounded with wonderful and grand decorations said: “This is the true house of God and holy place, and left for his country”². We see the similar information about visiting Constantinople by the Georgian Kuropalatis and his reception by the Byzantine rulers in the compositions of Pseudo –Simon Magistros³ and Grigol Amartol⁴.

¹ Constantinus Porphyrogenetus. De administrando imperio, Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik. Engl. transl. by J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, cap. 46; Константин Багрянородный Об управлении империей, текст, перевод, комментарий Под редакцией Г.Г. Литаврина и А.П. Новосельцева, М., 1989, С. 208-210

² Продолжатель Феофана, Жизнеописания византийских царей, СПб, 2009, с. 249

³ Pseudo-Simeon (or Pseudo-Symeon Magistros) is the conventional name given to the anonymous author of a late 10th-century Byzantine Greek chronicle

Georgian Kuropalatis which from the end of the IX century became a “Kingdom of Georgians” during the time of all its existence (IX-XI c.c.) is a vassal of the Byzantine Empire. Relation of Tao-Klarjeti Bagratians to Byzantine Emperors is expressed in the information given by Constantine Porphyrogenitus about sending of Khrisobulla (golden credential) to Georgian Bagratians by Romanos Lekapinos, the Khrisobulla contains agreement of the Kuropalatis, confirmed by the oath and signed by themselves, that they will defend loyalty to our country, fight against our enemies and protect our friends, subjugate the East to our kingdom. That they will take the fortresses and serve to us to the glory of our country.¹ The functions of a vassal to Byzantium are reflected only in insurance of border security and military alliance; at the head of the state is the house of Bagratians, middle branch of Ashot, a representative of descendants of Bagrat, realizing supreme power and carrying the title of a King and Kuropalatis. The house of Ashot consisted mainly of two branches: Klarj and Tao owners. Other Bagration owners - representatives of Ashot’s other branches nominally are subordinated to the Bagratians, but actually are independent rulers. Splitting of the territory of the house of Bagratians among his descendants, supported by the Empire was beneficial to stabilization of Byzantine influences. At the same time, from the point of view of domestic administration the Bagratians practice complete independence.

It is notable that the representatives of Ashot’s middle branch, who nominally possessed superiority of the house of Bagratians and carried the title of the King of Georgia, were rather inert in foreign policy, as they have never expanded the boundaries of their kingdoms.

After the death of King of Georgia Adarnase (passed away 923) the title of the King was inherited by his son Davit (923-937). Davit was succeeded by his brother Bagrat Magistros in 937-945. 945-858 are the years without the King, when none of the Bagratians carried the title of the King of Georgia. This circumstance, as they think, is a result of Byzantine intrigues, due to worsening of relations as caused by problems regarding Artanuji Fortress and Basiani region. The title of a King of Georgia was restored in 958, when the brother of Bagrat Magistros, Sumbat, son of Bagrat the Prince of the Princes (958-994), grandfather of Bagrat III and father of Gurgen the King of the Kings) was recognized as such.

Composition of Constantine Porphyrogenitus is the best source describing redistribution of Royal and Prince powers in Georgia. It gives interesting materials not only about the political life of Georgia and the history of Georgian-Byzantine relations, but it is significant source about state administration system in Georgia, about origin of unified Georgian State, the royal house of Bagratians and Georgia’s relations with foreign countries. Information given in the work of Constantine Porphyrogenitus VII about the origin of the Bagratians completely meets the theory developed in

⁴ Georgii monachi chronicon, ed. de Boor, C.. 2 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1904, Repr. 1978

¹ Constantinus Porphyrogenitus. De administrando imperio, Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik. Engl. transl. by J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, cap. 45; Константин Багрянородный Об управлении империей, текст, перевод, комментарий Под редакцией Г.Г. Литаврина и А.П. Новосельцева, М., 1989, С.198

Georgian historiography about the divine origin of the Bagration dynasty. The theory about the Bagratians descending from Prophet David emerged in Georgian historiography much earlier, and was created as it seems to strengthen the idea of independence and originality of Georgian Kingdom. According to Giorgi Merchule Grigol Khandzteli addresses Ashot Kuropalatis (passed away in 826) in the following way "You the king named a child of Prophet David and the Lord". Similar information is preserved in other chronicles of "Kartlis Tskhovreba" (Life of Kartli). Namely in the chronicles of Juansher and Sumbat, son of Davit. The work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus is also very interesting regarding participation of Georgians in the political and military affairs of The Byzantine Empire. Information about the history of Byzantium and other nations given by Constantine Porphyrogenitus who was one of the most important political figure and educated person of his time is especially significant and its further profound research will give answers to many disputable questions existing in historiography.¹

In the work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus "About the Ceremonies" there is interesting information about the state administration system in Georgia. In the part of the work where the author gives description of which signets of which value should be attached to the letters sent to Georgian Kings, indicating that the Kuropalatis of Georgia must be sent credentials of two solids, and be addressed as "Christ loving Kuropalatis"². In this work there are also mentioned other principalities included in the Kingdom of Iberia or Arkhonts, four Arkhonts are subordinated to the Kuropalatis: Arkhont of Veriasakh in Iberia, Arkhont of Karanat in Iberia, Arkhont of Kveli in Iberia and Arkhont of Ajara in Iberia³.

Thus as we have mentioned in the epoch of Constantine Porphyrogenitus a very complicated process of unification of Georgian kingdoms and principalities takes place in Georgia. This of course develops on the background of oppositions. This process was finished in the 70ies of the X century by unification of Georgia headed by the dynasty of Bagratians. We think that in this process the role of Byzantium was significant, which did not loose its interest in Georgian Kingdoms afterwards, Georgian elements also making important contributions in the life of the Byzantine Empire which was very clearly reflected in this period during the upraise of Barda Scliaros, when Georgians greatly supported the Imperial power in suppressing the revolt.

Regarding Georgian Kings and Principles the Byzantine Empire always followed one main rule: it never called the Principles the Kings, but instead used the title of an "Arkhont". Both in official Byzantine state documents and works of byzantine writers they never used the word King for Georgian rulers, instead they used the word a Principle (Arkhont *Ἀρχὼν*) also an Eksusiat (*ἐξουσιαστής*) a title of an owner, possessor. Such attitude to the title of Georgian rulers continues

¹ There is interesting information in the works by Constantine Porphyrogenitus about the City of Artanuji, as a political and economical center. According to his description, - according to him, in Artanuji, which advanced in the IX century, goods were brought from Trabzon, Iberia, Abkhazia, all the countries of Armenia and Syria. It makes a huge income on customs taxes. Constantinus Porphirogenetus. *De administrando imperio*, Greek text ed. by Gy. Moravcsik. Engl. transl. by J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, cap. 46

² Constantini Porphorogeneti imperatoris *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, libri duo, Bonnae, 1829-1830, II p. 687-688

³ Constantini Porphorogeneti imperatoris *De ceremoniis*, II p. 687-688

until later period of the XI-XII centuries, after creation of the unified Georgian State, which points to arrogant attitude of the Byzantines, Byzantine government wanted to underline that Georgian Kingdom had a lower position in international life and stress the importance of influence of the Byzantine Empire on Georgia.

The Byzantines applied the title Eksusiat which apparently is a higher position than an Arkhont to the rulers of Egrisi-Apkhazeti and it expressed a tighter political link, the Eksusiat was actually considered to be a representative of the Emperor in his kingdom. The Patriarch of Constantinople Nicholas the Mystic (922-957) in his letter sent to the King of Egrisi-Apkhazeti Giorgi II addresses him as “a brilliant Eksusiat of Abkhazia” (τῷ περιδοζῷ εξουσιαστῇ Ἀβασγιαζ). Despite this fact we would like to mention here that relations existing between Byzantium and Egrisi-Apkhazeti Kingdom did not expand beyond the boundaries of friendship and allies, described by the Patriarch of Constantinople Nicholas the Mystic in his letter, where he asks Giorgi II “to defend the purity of friendship” and preserve “the spirit and loyalty of an ally”.

Thus, during the rule of Constantine Porphyrogenitus Georgia is still a segregated into kingdoms and principalities country, among which more significant were Egrisi-Apkhazeti and Tao-Klarjeti Kingdoms, who initiated formation of a unified Georgian State. These kingdoms and principalities were vassal countries of the Byzantine Empire and recognized the supremacy of the Byzantine Emperor, they received titles of the Imperial servants, but on this stage their subordination to Byzantium was reflected only in ensuring of border security and military alliance.

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Summary

Bejan Javakhia

Ilia State University

Georgian-Byzantine relations in the epoch of Constantine Porphyrogenitus

Main issues that I would point out are: relation of the Byzantine Empire to Georgia in the epoch of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, its role and importance in the struggle of Georgian people against foreign conquerors, also role of Byzantium in integration of Georgian kingdoms and principalities. Apparently we can not ignore works by Constantine Porphyrogenitus as one of the most significant source of Georgian history.

Byzantium regarded Eastern Christian peoples with caution, as their cooperation was very important for the Empire in its fight against the Arabs, especially when Byzantium did not have a quiet life in its West due to complications with Bulgaria. Though we must mention that the Byzantine Emperors were not driven only by Christian love, they had their own political aims and tasks. Their attitude to Georgians was very changeable according to different circumstances

the epoch of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, first half of the X century, was a very significant period in history of Georgia, as at this time there was laid a fundament for unification of Georgian state. In the

process of the struggle for unification the role of Byzantium is extremely significant, as it became an ally of Caucasian nations in their fight against the Arabs. Fight against the Arabs made Caucasian kingdoms seek unification.

Georgians systematically participated in Byzantine campaigns against Arab Emirates located in the gorges of the rivers of Aras-Euphrates and on the banks of the Vani Lake. Georgian rulers took part in Byzantine campaigns to the East as well. Bagrat, brother of the ruler of Tao-Klarjeti, Ashot Kuropalatis took part in the besiege of Theodosiopolis together with John Kourkous. It seems that Georgian war against the Arabs carried a religious character as it is seen in the sources of the given period. Thus coreligious Byzantium was a natural ally for Georgia. We think that struggle of Georgian people against The Arabs developed like Spanish Conquest. In the process of fighting against the Arabs rule in Georgia there was formed a unified Christian military outlook, reflected both in Georgian hagiographical and historical writings. In this fight there was outlined the necessity of unification of Georgian kingdoms and principalities and a general Georgian idea, which indeed was followed by the formation of a unified Georgian State.

Relations between Byzantium and Georgian kingdoms and principalities in this period was expressed in granting titles of the Imperial court to the members of Georgian Royal family by Byzantine Emperors, Relations of Georgian State units to Byzantium was not always the same. They changed according to circumstances, though never left the boundaries of simple protection and influence. Byzantine Emperors never interfered in the domestic affairs of Georgia, if we do not take in view granting Imperial titles, which in a way conditioned strengthening of rights of a new ruler in his own country

Composition of Constantine Porphyrogenitus is the best source describing redistribution of Royal and Principle powers in Georgia. It gives interesting materials not only about the political life of Georgia and the history of Georgian-Byzantine relations, but it is significant source about state administration system in Georgia, about origin of unified Georgian State, the royal house of Bagratians and Georgia's relations with foreign countries. Information given in the work of Constantine Porphyrogenitus VII about the origin of the Bagratians completely meets the theory developed in Georgian historiography about the divine origin of the Bagration dynasty. The theory about the Bagratians descending from Prophet David emerged in Georgian historiography much earlier, and was created as it seems to strengthen the idea of independence and originality of Georgian Kingdom. In the work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus "About the Ceremonies" there is interesting information about the state administration system in Georgia. In the part of the work where the author gives description of which signets of which value should be attached to the letters sent to Georgian Kings, indicating that the Kuropalatis of Georgia must be sent credentials of two solids, and be addressed as "Christ loving Kuropalatis"¹. In this work there are also mentioned other principalities included in the Kingdom of Iberia or Arkhonts, four Arkhonts are subordinated to the Kuropalatis: Arkhont of Veriasakh in Iberia, Arkhont of Karanat in Iberia, Arkhont of Kveli in Iberia and Arkhont of Ajara in Iberia

¹ Constantini Porphyrogeneti imperatoris De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae, libri duo, Bonnae, 1829-1830, II p. 687-688

Thus, during the rule of Constantine Porphyrogenitus Georgia is still a segregated into kingdoms and principalities country, among which more significant were Egrisi-Apkhazeti and Tao-Klarjeti Kingdoms, who initiated formation of a unified Georgian State. These kingdoms and principalities were vassal countries of the Byzantine Empire and recognized the supremacy of the Byzantine Emperor, they received titles of the Imperial servants, but on this stage their subordination to Byzantium was reflected only in ensuring of border security and military alliance.

Keywords: Byzantium, Georgia, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus Egrisi-Apkhazeti, Tao-Klarjeti, De Administrando Imperio, Ashot Kuropalatis