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THE STATUS OF THE MONASTERY OF THE CROSS IN JERUSALEM IN THE FIRMAN ISSUED BY SULTAN SULEIMAN I IN 1538 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Abstract

Sultan Selim I (reigned 1512-1520) issued a decree in 1517 that placed churches and monasteries, including the “Gurjs' Monastery of the Cross,” under the authority of Dorotheos II Atala, the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, who served from 1505 to 1537.

Sultan Suleiman I (1520-1566) in 1538 presented a firman to Patriarch Germanos of Jerusalem (1537-1579). In this firman, the churches and monasteries of Jerusalem are named in the same order as in the firman issued by Selim I in 1517, except that the Jvari (Cross) Monastery is referred to as the “Jvari Monastery of the Mingrelian - Gurjs”.

Naturally, the following questions arise: 1. When did it happen and what caused this change? 2. What impact did the new status have on the Jerusalem Monastery of the Cross?

The research revealed: The king of Imereti Bagrat III (1510-1565) in 1535 annexed Samtskhe to Imereti, and gave Adjara and Chaneti to Gurieli. This fact caused discontent of Levan Dadiani – "duke" of Odishi. He visited Sultan Suleiman between 1535 and 1538 and pledged allegiance to him. In return, the Sultan confirmed Levan Dadiani's right to the Jvari Monastery. For this reason, Levan Dadiani later refused Bagrat III to participate in the battles against the Ottomans in 1543 and 1545.

The disagreements between the Georgian kings and rulers also affected the Georgian churches and monasteries in Jerusalem. In the second half of the 16th century, the Georgians lost several monasteries. The Cross Monastery was in dire economic straits due to increased taxes by the Ottoman authorities. From the beginning of the 17th century, in the Cross monastery, two igoumens have been confirmed – one from Eastern Georgia, the other from Western Georgia. It is possible that the firman of 1538 became the basis for the appointment of two igoumens in the Cross Monastery. However, this issue yet has to be clarified.

Keywords: *Suleiman I, firman, Levan I Dadiani, Jerusalem, Monastery of the Cross, Monastery of the Mingrelian Gurjs.*

Selim I (1512-1520), pleased with the conquest of Jerusalem in 1517, issued a decree by which the churches and monasteries, among which the “*Gurjs' Monastery of the Cross*” is named, transferred by the Pact of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644) and the decrees of subsequent sultans, remained under the authority of the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem Dorotheos II Atala (1505-1537).

Selim I died in 1520. His son, Suleiman I (1520-1566), ascended the throne and, in 1538, presented a firman to Patriarch Germanos of Jerusalem (1537-1579). In this firman, the churches and monasteries of Jerusalem are named in the same order as in the firman issued by Selim I in 1517, except that the Jvari (Cross) Monastery is referred to as the ***“Jvari Monastery of the Mingrelian Gurjs”***.

Naturally, the following questions arise: 1. When did it happen and what caused this change? 2. What impact did the new status have on the Jerusalem Monastery of the Cross?

According to *“Akhali Kartlis Tskhovreba”* [New Life of Kartli, 1st half of 18th century], when the Georgian kings: George IX (1525-1527), the king of Imereti Bagrat III (1510-1527), and the king of Kakheti Levan (1520-1574), who were on campaign in Jerusalem, returned to their kingdoms, *“after that the atabag of Samtskhe Kvarkvare took Sultan’s side”*. Beri Egnatashvili does not tell us what caused this, but he describes in detail the dramatic events that happened at that time: Enraged, Bagrat III allied himself with Kakhaber Gurieli and Levan I Dadiani – “duke” of Odishi (1533-1572). He captured and imprisoned the Atabag of Samtskhe, Kvarkvare. In 1535, Atabag of Samtskhe, Kvarkvare, died in captivity. In the same year, Bagrat III annexed Samtskhe to Imereti and gave Adjara and Chaneti to Gurieli. This fact caused discontent among Levan Dadiani, and he refused to allow Bagrat III to participate in the battles against the Ottomans in 1543 and 1545.

The fact that the Monastery of the Cross in Jerusalem is referred to in the 1538 firman as ***“Jvari Monastery of the Mingrelian Gurjs”*** suggests that the offended Levan Dadiani visited Sultan Suleiman between 1535 and 1538 and pledged allegiance to him. In return, the Sultan confirmed Levan Dadiani’s right to the Jvari Monastery.

In 1546, Bagrat III captured Levan I Dadian and imprisoned him in the Gelati bell tower, but Levan Dadian escaped from captivity. He again ruled over Odishi and became completely independent from the king.

In 1557, Levan I Dadiani, pursued by Bagrat III and George II Gurieli, traveled to Istanbul and requested warships from Sultan Suleiman. The Sultan presented Dadiani with nine ships and recognized his independence from the Imereti Kingdom, which is further evidence that their cooperation began in 1538. It is also clear that the main reason for Levan Dadiani's refusal to participate in the battles against the Ottomans in 1543 and 1545 was the 1538 firman.

The disagreements between the Georgian kings and rulers also affected the Georgian churches and monasteries in Jerusalem. In 1524-1541, the Georgians usually won almost all legal disputes against the Franciscans, whereas from 1545 these disputes ended in favor of the Franciscans. Apparently, the reason was not only the strong Franciscan lobby at the Sultan's court, but also the fact that Bagrat III had annexed Samtskhe to Imereti, which led to the wars between the Ottomans and Georgia in 1543 and 1545.

In the second half of the 16th century, the Georgians lost several monasteries. The Cross Monastery was in dire economic straits due to increased taxes by the Ottoman authorities. From the beginning of the 17th century, two igumens have been confirmed in the Cross monastery – one from Eastern Georgia and the other from Western Georgia. Their endless conflict, together with external factors, ultimately led to the Cross Monastery being taken out of their hands. It is possible that the firman of 1538 became the basis for the appointment of two igumens in the Cross Monastery. However, this issue remains unclear.