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## **REVISED TIMELINE OF MAIN EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF METROPOLITAN ROMANOZ ERISTAVI, AND HIS ACTUAL BURIAL PLACE**

Certain dates associated with the life and activities of Metropolitan Romanoz, commonly accepted in scientific literature, have been clarified and unknown details were revealed, including the location of Romanoz's actual burial place.

**KEYWORDS:** Metropolitan Romanoz, Russia, grave, epitaph.

Metropolitan Romanoz, descendant of the Eristavs (i.e. dukes) of Aragvi, the leading Georgian clergy of the 18th century, was a prominent member of the Georgian community in Russia. Analysis of his activities shows that apart from religious and literary labours, Romanoz was involved in a political process initiated by King Vakhtang VI, with the goal to receive military assistance from Russia that would give opportunity to the kingdom of Kartli to survive in a hostile international environment. Romanoz's engagement in political processes was sparked by his kinship with the royal family: Romanoz was the brother-in-law of Prince Bakar. Metropolitan Romanoz shared political views of King Vakhtang VI who was for close ties and military cooperation with Russia and dislocation of Russian military forces on territories of Transcaucasus and Iran. Due to Russian orientation, Romanoz spent many years in Russia. Therefore, the higher number of accounts concerning Metropolitan Romanoz are found in Russian written sources, rather than in Georgian ones. Of note is the fact that a three-page article was dedicated to Metropolitan Romanoz in a very reputable encyclopedia "Russian Biographical Dictionary". Though

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a paper I presented on 27 January 2017 at the International Conference "History and Antiquities of the East Georgia Highland", 27-28 January 2017, Gudauri-Tbilisi.

even it is not exhaustive: there are gaps in our knowledge about life and activities of Metropolitan Romanoz. The study of written sources and newly found documents enabled me to reveal unknown details in the life and activities of Romanoz and to establish his final resting place that was earlier questioned.

Romanoz (Fig. 1) was a member of a prominent noble family: father – Giorgi Eristavi of Aragvi (NCM A150, colophon), mother – Darejan Kaplanishvili, daughter of duke Tamaz Kaplanishvili-Orbeliani (Dumin, Chikovani 1998, 262). Giorgi Eristavi of Aragvi was head of Tiflis, capital of Georgia. It was a responsible and profitable post. Giorgi was a headstrong and simultaneously tragic individual. At first he decided to side with King Erekle I, but subsequently sided with King Giorgi XI. Later on, he sided with King Vakhtang VI, but subsequently turned his back on him. Shortly Giorgi Eristavi reconciled with the king, but again in 1723 he turned his back on him, which forced Prince Bakar, Giorgi's son-in-law, to capture and execute him (Jamburia 2012, 25).

Romanoz's date of birth is not found in Georgian and Russian written sources, including the reputable Biographical Dictionary. Enriko Gabidzashvili, the prominent researcher of old Georgian written monuments, established this date indirectly. He took 1710 as a reference date, associating it with Romanoz's tonsure. Then he deducted 25 as an average age of tonsure from it. Consequently, E. Gabidzashvili suggested that Romanoz was born around 1685 (Gabidzashvili 1973, 79). The correctness of this date is, however, questionable, because the age of tonsure varied. Apart from that, the year of tonsure (1710) was also established indirectly. Based on a historical source, I have established that Romanoz was actually born at the end of 1695 – beginning of 1696 (The source will be discussed at the end of article).

Romanoz was tonsured a monk in a monastery of Gareji wilderness, where he spent twelve years (NCM Sd-2962). From a colophon of the Psalms copied and donated by him to the monastery where he lived (NCM A-914), we learn that this was the Natlismtsemeli monastery of Gareji. It was probably during Romanoz's stay in the convent that he composed the Synaxaric life of St. Dodo Garejeli (Gabidzashvili 1973, 79-80).

Romanoz first visited Russia in 1722. This information is found in a letter dated 9 July 1722, sent by Darejan Archilovna to the Synodal office (CSHAL f. 796, N 769)<sup>1</sup>. The same date appears in an introductory part of a document issued in 1743, i.e. from a relatively later period (Decrees 1899, file 338, 322). Romanoz's first and follow-up visits to Russia coincide with a turning

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<sup>1</sup> Cited after Kavtaria 1965, 139, footnote 271.

point in the history of relations between Georgia and Russia. This was the time when King of Kartli Vakhtang VI planned to liberate his kingdom from the Persian yoke, and Peter the Great aimed to seize Caspian lands. The goals of the above two monarchs differed, though the both of them had to defeat the same adversary to realize their plans. Since 1722, the two monarchs started to exchange ambassadors<sup>1</sup>. King Vakhtang VI took the first step towards cooperation: in 1722 he sent Baadur Turkestanishvili to St. Petersburg with a special diplomatic mission. Metropolitan Romanoz visited Russia the same year. Taking into consideration registration date of the above-mentioned letter sent by Darejan Archilovna to the Synodal Office – 9 July 1722, Romanoz should have arrived in Moscow in June 1722. In biographical Dictionary this date is specified: he arrived in Moscow on 9 June, 1722 (Vinogradov 1918, 62). According to the recommendation letters, church service and donation raising was an official reason for the visit. Mikheil Gorgidze has suggested that Metropolitan Romanoz visited Russia on his personal initiative, though this consideration is not supported by facts. In my opinion, Romanoz was sent to Russia with an official diplomatic mission. The basis for such consideration is a letter published in Platon Ioaseliანი's book. According to it, Romanoz offered Peter the Great to send military troops to Kartli and to take possession of the Arshi fortress which belonged to Romanoz's feudal family: "A letter dated 1723, written by Archimandrite Romanoz, is preserved in diplomatic records of the Moscow archive... This Archimandrite, on behalf of his brothers – Otari and Bardzime Eristavi wrote that in exchange for Peter the Great's patronage they will hand over the Arshi Fortress, in vicinity of Dariali, to the Russians" (Ioaseliანი 1860, 45). There exists one more letter with a hint at conspiracy with the Russians. It was sent in 1723 by Otari Eristavi to his brother, Metropolitan Romanoz while the latter was in Russia. Otari mentioned rumours according to which Romanoz together with five hundred Russians was heading to Khevi. Otari cheered up his brother: "Bring them here. Let them take fortresses and castles" (Brosset 1861, 154).

It is evident that the above proposal was agreed with King Vakhtang VI: the permanent stationing of Russian troops in Arshi Fortress was a constituent part of a plan outlined by King Vakhtang VI in his letter to Emperor Peter the Great, sent in summer 1721 through Artem Volinsky, governor of Astrakhan. Involvement of clergy in negotiations was practiced in all countries and in all times. Georgian kings also used this method.

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<sup>1</sup> At this time, Vakhtang VI was still in power. According to Sekhnia Chkheidze, Shah of Iran removed his vassal Vakhtang VI from power on 10 January 1723.

The most known are the diplomatic missions of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani and Timote Gabashvili. There was one more Georgian clergy, archdeacon Gaioz, who in the second half of the 18th century carried out diplomatic missions for King Erekle and Gregory Potemkin (Palmov 1913, 52-53). He was educated in the Theological Academy of Moscow and enjoyed considerable authority in Russia. Analysis of available documents shows that Metropolitan Romanoz was an emissary of King Vakhtang VI. Apart from religious and literary activities, he liaised between kingdom of Kartli and Russian Empire on the issues of military assistance.

Kingdom of Kartli and Russia agreed on launching joint military campaign against Iran by end of 1722.<sup>1</sup> In accordance to the plan, in October 1722, Georgian troops led by Vakhtang VI moved on Ganja and camped near it, where Armenian troops joined the Georgians. They all waited for the arrival of Russian troops, though the latter did not join them as the Russians headed back to Astrakhan from the half way point – Daruband. Instead of sending troops, Peter the Great sent his negotiator, lieutenant Ivan Tolstoy to Kartli and informed Prince Vakhushti that the campaign was postponed till 1723. The Prince sent a messenger to King Vakhtang VI, informing him about postponement of the campaign and prompting the necessity of returning back to the capital.<sup>2</sup> On 22 November, Vakhtang VI returned to Tiflis and continued negotiations with Peter the Great through I. Tolstoy. At the same time, king of Kartli tried to repair strained relationship with Ottoman Turkey: on 29 November, 1722, King Vakhtang VI sent letters to Pope Innocent XIII and Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor and ruler of the Austrian Habsburg Monarchy, asking them assistance in negotiations with the Ottomans (Tabaghua 1967, 243). Meanwhile the situation worsened. Hostile attitude of Konstantine, king of Kakheti, towards Vakhtang VI made things worse. On 4 May 1723, King Konstantine seized Tiflis. King Vakhtang VI was forced to move first to Gori and then to Tskhinvali. In July 1724, together with his family members and numerous retinue, King Vakhtang VI set out for Russia.

Probably these events were the reason for Romanoz's delayed departure from Russia. Since the end of 1722 he was getting ready for return to his motherland, asking Russian officials to issue him a passport and to provide with an armed escort during travel, as well as with travel allowance. In February 1723 Romanoz was granted permission to leave, but he had to postpone the journey.

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1 In June 1722, the Russian Empire officially declared war on Safavid Iran.

2 On 23 September (12 September by old style) 1723 was signed the Treaty of St. Petersburg, which concluded the Russo-Persian War of 1722-1723.

Different viewpoints exist concerning the year of Romanoz's return to Georgia. The following is mentioned in a preamble of a recommendation letter written by Grigol II, Catholicos-Patriarch of Apkhazia (west Georgia): "Romanoz arrived in Moscow in 1722 and stayed with the emperor for five years" (NCM Sd-2962). According to this account, Romanoz remained in Moscow till 1727. M. Kavtaria agrees with this date (Kavtaria 1965, 139). T. Gelashvili supposes that Romanoz arrived in Tiflis in 1728 (Gelashvili 2012, 494). Her consideration is probably based on the following phrase from the above-mentioned letter: "He arrived in 1728". Apart from that, T. Gelashvili dated the seizure of Ananuri Fortress and massacre of the Eristavs' of Aragvi family to 1732 (Gelashvili 2012, 498) that is a misnomer (see below in the text).

Taking into consideration existence of several mistakes in the recommendation letter of the Catholicos-Patriarch, the account about a five-year stay of Romanoz in Moscow and his return to the mother land in 1727 or 1728 was called into question. To specify the date under consideration, I familiarized myself with decrees and orders issued in the 18th century by the "Organization of Orthodox Faith". I considered that due to scrupulousness of administrative clerks during registration of incoming or outgoing documents, these records were more reliable sources of information than recommendation letters. Information of our interest was found in an introductory part of Oder N 338 dated 22 March, 1743:

"In the past year 1722, the above-mentioned Archimandrite left the Kartli land and headed for Russia. In 1725, he was granted permission to travel back to Georgia. When in 1729 he returned back from Georgia to Moscow, he asked to entitle him to the salary... In 1730, Archimandrite once again left Russia for Georgia. When in 1732 he returned back from Georgia, he approached the Holy Governing Synod in Moscow and told that he was already a Metropolitan, and that he was ordained in 1730... In 1736, the above-mentioned Metropolitan Romanoz left Moscow for the third time and headed for Georgia. When in 1740, after departure from Georgia, he arrived in Kizlyar, he left the city at his own request and arrived in Moscow in June 1741. According to the Order issued by the Holy Governing Synod, the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergi was selected as the place of his residence... But the Metropolitan did not wish to stay in the Trinity Monastery of St. Sergi, and applied to give him permission to serve in Moscow with the same salary he used to receive" (Decrees 1899, file 338, 322).

From this Order we learn that Romanoz, who arrived in Moscow in 1722,

returned back to Georgia in 1725, not in 1727 or 1728. i.e. during his first visit to Russia, he spent three years and four months there (not five years as stated in the recommendation letter).

October 1725 is mentioned as the year of Romanoz's travel to Georgia in the Biographical Dictionary as well (Vinogradov 1918, 62).

As we learn from the same document, Romanoz returned back from Georgia to Russia four years later – in 1729, and in 1730 travelled back home.

A big number of Romanoz's trips from Kartli to Russia and back corroborates the consideration that King Vakhtang VI used him as a special envoy.

I reconsider the date of Romanoz's ordination as a Metropolitan found in modern scientific literature. Maya Shaorshadze considers that Romanoz occupied the chair of the Metropolitanate of Samtavro and Gori in 1737-39, when the chair became vacant after its former holder became Catholicos-Patriarch of East Georgia as Kirile II (Shaorshadze 2017, 324). According to archive documents, Romanoz was ordained a Metropolitan much earlier than 1737. In a document dated 4 March 1734, by which Romanoz and Archbishop Ioseb confirm that Hegumen Christopher arrived in Moscow together with the retinue of King Vakhtang (file N 2785), Romanoz is already mentioned as Metropolitan of Samtavro and Gori. According to the above-mentioned Order N 338, Romanoz was ordained a Metropolitan in 1730, while according to Georgian historian Platon Ioseliani, Romanoz was ordained a Metropolitan of Samtavro and Gori Diocese in January 1731 by Besarion, Catholicos-Patriarch of East Georgia (Ioseliani 1866, 124, footnote 38). The Biographical Dictionary also mentions that Romanoz was ordained a Metropolitan in 1731 (Vinogradov 1918, 62). Taking into consideration accounts found in the archive documents, T. Gelashvili makes a mistake when she proposes that "by 1722, Romanoz was already Metropolitan of Gori and Samtavisi (sic. - Samtavro is implied)" (Gelashvili 2012, 494). Her assumption is being abrogated based on an account found in the above-mentioned Decree, according to which at the time of Romanoz's arrival in Russia in 1722 he was the Archimandrite, not the Metropolitan.

Metropolitan Romanoz visited Moscow again in 1732 (file N 256, 1732).<sup>1</sup> The encyclopedic article specifies the date: he arrived in Moscow in February, 1732 (Vinogradov 1918, 63). On 25 August of the same year, Romanoz was granted permission to ordain priests and to celebrate the divine service. On the other hand, P. Ioseliani writes that Romanoz received permission to

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<sup>1</sup> Records from Samtavro and Gori Synodal archives. Cited after P. Ioseliani 1866, 123, footnote 38.

celebrate the divine service in December 1732, based on recommendation letter given by King Vakhtang VI (Ioseliani 1866, 123, footnote 38).

Subsequent events developed as follows: On 25 August 1734, Synod issued a Decree, according to which Metropolitan Romanoz had to stay in the Moscow church of the Savva Storozhevsky monastery (NN 2821, 2848). On 9 October 1734, Romanoz and Archbishop Ioseb received travel expenses for their visit to St. Petesburg (N 2801). On 13 December 1735, Romanoz was Hegumen Ioseb's witness who asked for financial support to redeem his nephew from Cherkezians' captivity (N 2939). In March 1736, Romanoz was granted permission to build a tent-type chapel near his house, but instead he built a wooden church (Vinogradov 1918, 63). On 7 July 1736, Romanoz was granted permission to consecrate a wooden church built by him without permission in Presnensky district (Presnya) of Moscow (N 2993).

In 1738, Metropolitan Romanoz returned back to Georgia (Vinogradov 1918, 63). He probably thought that this was the forever return, because he bought land from Iese Sologashvili. The land purchase deed is dated 21 February 1739 (NAG 1449-2176).<sup>1</sup> Romanoz's signature as of the witness is found on a deed issued on 23 March 1739. By force of the deed, Davit Tarkhnisvili passed his serfs and land to Giorgi Maghaladze (Berdzenishvili 1953, 34-35; NCM Hd-2792).

Soon, Metropolitan Romanoz's plans for the future were upset. In July 1739 a tragedy happened: with the help of a mercenary army of Lezgins (a Caucasian mountain people), Shanshe Eristavi of Ksani captured Ananuri fortress and killed all family members of the Eristavs of Aragvi (NCM NN 2960, 2962). Prince Vakhushti (Prince Vakhushti 1973, 912) and Papuna Orbeliani (Orbeliani 1981, 43) cite the same date of the incursion. The latter gave detailed description of the incursion:

“In July 1739, Shanshe Eristavi hired army of the Lezgins... and besieged Ananuri fortress. Bardzim Eristavi was in the fortress together with his brother and family members. Shanshe Eristavi and his brother Iese Kularaghasi came with their army and attacked. Defenders of the fortress were courageous. They killed so many Lezgins that the latter barricaded themselves with dead bodies and fought this way, as if Shanshe Eristavi's warriors were extraordinary men. The enemy found the source of water supply and blocked it. It was the summer, therefore the lack of water was unbearable. After the attackers gave the word of honor to Bardzim Eristavi, Utrut Eristavi's son and his

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<sup>1</sup> Cited after Shaorshadze 2017, 324.



family members left the fortress. [Utrut] wouldn't confide in the attackers, and locked himself in the "sheupovari" tower. Bardzim Eristavi was betrayed and killed. Abel and Givi were also killed. All who were with them were captured. Troops charged into the fortress. Church was devastated; holy icons were destroyed. A lot of prisoners were taken. Utrut, who was within the tower, was burned in the fire set to the construction. Men and women were killed. It was said that the number of the attackers was 12,000" (Orbeliani 1981, 43).

In difference from Prince Vakhushti and Papuna Orbeliani, Tedo Zhordania gives 1738 as the year of the attack. The date is found in his Chronicles, in a comment about Bardzim Eristavi supplied to the family tree of the Eristavs of Aragvi: "†1738. Shanshe Eristavi of Ksani exterminated entire family [of Bardzim Eristavi] in 1738 (Chronicle of Kartli 92-4)" (Zhordania 1897, 534).

T. Gelashvili dated the Ananuri incursion to 1732 (Gelashvili 2012, 497-498) that is a misnomer. As I have already mentioned, according to the above-mentioned archive documents, in 1732 Metropolitan Romanoz was in Moscow. Actually, Ananuri fortress was devastated in 1738-39.

Shortly after Ananuri tragedy, Lezgins plundered the monastery of Gareji, therefore Romanoz decided to return back to Russia and began to make arrangements: on 14 August 1739, he sold the land purchased the same year (on 21 February 1739) to Prince Abdula-Beg (CAG 1449-2147)<sup>1</sup>, and by the end of 1739 he moved to Imereti. As Metropolitan Romanoz mentions in his letter sent to the Synod, "Godless people in a single day killed my brothers, relatives, mother and one thousand individuals. They plundered and burned down everything to ashes, and took prisoners. They were looking for me to kill. I escaped. For eight months I stayed with king of Imerety. In August, I reached Kizlyar with big efforts, via mountains (NCM Sd-2974). From this letter we learn that in August 1740 Romanoz arrived in Kizlyar and from there sent a letter to his sister asking to assist in receiving citizenship of Russia. In June 1741, Romanoz was already in Moscow (Decrees 1899, file 338, 322). At first, the Synod assigned him to serve in the church of St. Sergius in the Trinity Lavra. In 1743, after submission of two requests, Romanoz was transferred to the church of Archangel Michael's Miracle at Chone in Kremlin, with the same salary (Vinogradov 1918, 63).

That's when Romanoz compiled the collection "Tsintsili Ghaghadebisa" ("High Sounding Cymbals") (NCM A-150). In a testament to it he writes that the manuscript was completed in September 1745.

<sup>1</sup> Cited after Shaorshadze 2017, 325



In 1748 Metropolitan Romanoz got seriously ill. After recovery, namely on 26 August 1748, he asked the Synod to grant him a permission to travel to Georgia, as he intended to enter the monastery of Davitgareji and to be buried there. On 16 January 1749, he received the rejection letter in which it was underlined that he had promised to keep Russia's permanent resident's status (Vinogradov 1918, 64). On 10 May 1749, Romanoz applied to the Synod once again. This time his request was satisfied. He immediately headed to Georgia (Ioseliani 1866, 124, footnote 38; Syn. N 128). I don't exclude that during this visit to his motherland, Romanoz prepared for himself a grave in St. Nicholas church of Davitgareji desert (This issue will be discussed a bit later). It is unknown why didn't he stay in the monastery of Davitgareji for the rest of his life as he planned earlier. And once again, in 1752 Romanoz headed for Moscow. This time he took with him St. Nino's Cross, the most prevalent holy relic of Georgian people.

The story about smuggling of St. Nino's cross out of Georgia to Russia is given in Anton Natroshvili's book about Svetitskhoveli: "For safety reasons, this cross was several times moved to the Trinity church at the foot of the Kazbegi Mount, and to Ananuri church of the Most Holy Mother of God. In 1749, while travelling to Russia, Metropolitan of Tiflis Romanoz secretly took the cross and gave it to Prince Bakar who lived in Moscow" (Natroev 1901, 130, footnote 2). Priest Markoz Tkemaladze repeated the story verbatim (Tkemaladze 1904, 24). According to Prince Davit, Metropolitan Romanoz took St. Nino's Cross from Arshi Fortress and carried it out of Georgia to Russia (Prince Davit 1941, 27).

Historian Platon Ioseliani proposed two different versions: "According to our chronicles, on order of King Teimuraz II and by zealots of the clergy, this cross as a relic of early Christianity was moved to the domain of the Eristavs of Aragvi and laid in Ananuri church of the Most Holy Mother of God during the turbulent times. Later on, Metropolitan Timothy took it to Russia (1749) and gave it to Prince Bakar, son of Vakhtang, who lived in Moscow" (Ioseliani 1843, 10, footnote 14). As one can see, the scholar suggested that it was Metropolitan Timothy (Timothy Gabashvili should be implied – L.M.) and not Metropolitan Romanoz who took the cross to Russia. 23 years later, P. Ioseliani published a book in which he wrote that it was Metropolitan Romanoz (not the Metropolitan Timothy) who took St. Nino's cross to Russia in 1749 (Ioseliani 1866, 123). Another historian Mose Janashvili also wrote that it was Metropolitan Timothy who took the cross to Russia: "During the turbulent times in Georgia, the cross made of vine branches was concealed in the Trinity church in Kazbegi. Then it was moved to Ananuri and later on to Arshi Fortress. In 1749, Metropolitan of Georgia Timothy took it secretly to Russia and presented it to Prince

Bakar” (Janashvili 1886, 143, footnote 1).

It is convincingly documented that in 1749 Metropolitan Timothy was not in Russia. He visited Moscow during the first days of March in 1738. This date is corroborated by the chancery record dated 23 March 1738: “According to the chancery of the Synodal Office in Moscow, two Metropolitans from Georgia – Arsen and Timothy were visiting Moscow. The former was on a private visit, and the latter one had to deliver secret letters”. Metropolitan Timothy returned back to his motherland in 1742, after his second mission to Russia. One should take into consideration that Timothy Gabashvili, who was sent to Russia on the diplomatic mission by King Aleksandre V, had received the assignment to settle an uncomfortable issue: there was a suspicion that the family members of the late King Vakhtang VI have embezzled the gifts sent by Aleksandre V to Peter the Great. Due to this, relations between Vakhtang’s family members, as well as the entire community in general and Timothy have strained. Therefore, it is unlikely that the latter would take the most holy relic of the Georgian nation to Russia in order to present it to Prince Bakar.

Presumably, Platon Ioseliani made an involuntary mistake when in his book published in 1843 he ascribed taking of the cross to Russia to Metropolitan Timothy instead of Romanoz. Mose Janashvili repeated the mistake in his book.

Of note is the fact that P. Ioseliani mentions Ananuri church and M. Janashvili notes Arshi Fortress as the last shelters for St. Nino’s Cross in Georgia. The both were in ownership of the Eristavs of Aragvi. Therefore, Metropolitan Romanoz, as a member of the feudal family of the Eristavs of Aragvi, had a good opportunity to secretly take St. Nino’s Cross to Russia.

Without specifying the source, T. Gelashvili writes that according to certain account, King Archil was the one who took St. Nino’s cross to Russia (Gelashvili 2012, 497). This viewpoint widely circulates on internet, and again without specifying the source. I consider that this viewpoint is a misnomer. It may be based on an erroneous interpretation of an actual event. Namely, it is well known that when in 1686 King Archil travelled to Moscow, he took with him the Holy Nail and a fragment of the Holy Cross from Georgia. Supposedly, the previous account is a result of confusion of the Holy Cross fragment with St. Nino’s Cross.

More convincing to me is the version that it was Metropolitan Romanoz who took St. Nino’s Cross to Russia, since the relic was kept in his family fortress.

Metropolitan Romanoz died on 30 January 1753 (Vinogradov 1918, 64). The earliest account about the date of his death and place of burial is found in P. Ioseliani’s book. The scholar cites an archive document (N

313, 1753): “Metropolitan Romanoz died on 30 January 1753 in the city of Chelsiar (sic. - P. Ioseliani’s comment). On 13 March, according to his testament, Romanoz was buried by Hillarion, Bishop of Astrakhan, in the Dormition church of Astrakhan” (Ioseliani 1866, 124, footnote 28). The same information is found in an article published in the Russian magazine “Astrakhanskie Eparkhial’nie Vedomosti” N 24, 1880. According to the article, “Georgian hierarchs – Archbishop of Sameba Ioseb, and Metropolitan of Gori Romanoz are buried in the north-west corner of the lower chapel. Their graves are not accompanied with tombstones... The latter was travelling to Moscow, when he fell ill in the city of Chiorni-Yar<sup>1</sup> and died on 30 January 1753.<sup>2</sup> Their belongings passed in the possession of the church. Some of the items are kept in the sacristy till now” (Vedomosti 1880, 374).

Mikheil Kavtaria assumed that at the end of his life, Metropolitan Romanoz returned back to Georgia, died in Gareji and was buried there (Kavtaria 1965, 142). This assumption is based on a colophon found on a folio of the manuscript “Tsintsili ghaghadebisa” (NCM A-150) and written some time after its completion: “Metropolitan of Georgians Romanoz is buried in the Gareji desert, within St. Nicholas church, where his tombstone can be seen.” Russian traveller Andrey Muravyov also has seen a tombstone in the interior of St. Nicholas church of Gareji, but attributed the tomb to King Aleksandre and even published its epitaph (Muravyov 1848, 104). At present, there is a single tombstone within the church, epitaph of which is unreadable. Taking into consideration that there are many mistakes in Andrey Muravyov’s book, I can assume that the account about existence of King Aleksandre’s tomb in St. Nicholas church is a misnomer, and it might be Metropolitan Romanoz’s empty grave prepared in advance. Tradition of preparing own graves in advance existed in some Georgian monasteries till late Middle Ages.

As I found out, Metropolitan Romanoz is not buried in Astrakhan but in Moscow. Location of his grave is mentioned in a guidebook of a Moscow church. Namely, this is the church of St. John the Baptist on Presnya. According to the guidebook, Metropolitan Romanoz was interred within the sanctuary of this church. “Above the table of prothesis of the main sanctuary is set a grave marker made from white stone and engraved with inscription” (Mikhailov 1997). Uncertainty concerning the place of burial of the Georgian hierarch was due to location of his grave within the sanctuary which is separated from the nave by iconostasis. As a result, the grave

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1 At that time, Chiorni\_Yar was a city of the Astrakhan province.

2 Order N 679 of the Synod, dated 5 April 1758 (Libr. Astrakh. cons.) is cited.

marker remains invisible to the congregation.

Here follows the complete text of Metropolitan Romanoz's epitaph (Fig. 2) and its English translation:

«Помяни Господи Романа митрополита и остави ему всякаго согрешения его словом и делом елика согреших в мире сем. От юности своя поживе мира сего 27 лет, архимандритом 16 лет, во архиепископстве 14 лет. Всего поживе 57 лет”.

“God honour Metropolitan Romanoz and relieve him the sins which he has committed in this world. In this world he has lived 27 years of youthful life, being Archimandrite for 16 years and Archbishop for 14 years. He lived 57 years in all.”

It was not occasional that Metropolitan Romanoz was interred in the sanctuary of the church on Presnya: Georgians had their settlement on Presnya. It was Romanoz who on 19 June 1736 asked for permission from the Synod to consecrate the church on Presnya to the Nativity of John the Baptist. And finally, for certain period of time, this church was the religious-administrative centre of Georgian congregation in Russia.

Text of the epitaph enables us to calculate the year of Romanoz's birth with a fair degree of certainty. Taking into consideration that, on the one hand, Metropolitan Romanoz died on 30 January 1753, and on the other hand, his age of death mentioned in the epitaph is 57, it can be convincingly stated that Romanoz was born in the end of 1695 – beginning of 1696.

The very fact that the location of Metropolitan Romanoz's grave has become known, is very important for the history of Georgian community in Moscow.

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1 Dates of Romanoz's ordination as Archbishop calculated from the epitaph and mentioned in the archive document do not match. Namely, according to the text of the epitaph, this happened in 1738/1739, and according to the archive document – in 1730/1731. The Holy Synod of Russia officially recognized Romanoz as Archbishop and Metropolitan in 1732, therefore there is a mistake in this fragment of the epitaph text.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS:**

CSHAL – Central State Historical Archive of Leningrad

NAG – National Archives of Georgia

NCM – Depository of the National Centre of Manuscripts