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## **GEORGIAN WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF SAFAVID IRAN (THE 70<sup>S</sup> OF THE VXI CENTURY)**

The historical sources evidence that dynastic marriages played the salient role in regulating the relations between states. Based on this, it can be said that women represented one of the important segments of diplomacy in both internal and external relations. The “women’s issue” became particularly active from the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the relationships with Safavid Iran and did not lose its relevance even under the reign of subsequent dynasties of Iran. Women of the Georgian royal dynasty and other noble families were supposed to play the role of “mediators” and exert maximum “favorable influence” on the current political processes. This was the purpose of “marrying off” Georgian women to the Shah of Iran or sending them as concubines

The presence of Georgians in the service of Safavid Shahs fell within the sphere of interest of a number of researchers: E. Mamistvalishvili<sup>1</sup>, M. Svanidze<sup>2</sup>, H. Maeda<sup>3</sup>, N. Falsafa<sup>4</sup>. Among them M. Svanidze focused his attention and separately touched upon Georgian women in the harem of Safavid Shahs. However, it should be noted that the purpose of all works devoted to the issue is to identify the goal and role which the Georgians played in the controversy over the

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1 E. Mamistvalishvili, the ongoing political struggle in Safavid state and Georgians (1576-1578) (according to European sources), Matsne, History, Archaeology and Art History Series, Tb., 1977, №4, p. 107-117. (in georgian)

2 M. Svanidze, Georgians on the political arena of Iran and the Ottomans in the 16th-17th centuries, Sketches of Georgian-Ottoman history, Tb., 1990, p. 241-347. (in georgian)

3 H. Maeda, Georgians in Safavid Iran, Ethno-social origin of the four Ghulam families, Tb., 2008. (in georgian)

4 N. Falsafa, The life of Shah-Abbas the First, selective translation (fragments about Georgia and Georgians), translated from Persian by L. Zhorzholiani, foreword and notes by Prof. J. Stepnadze, Tbilisi, 2003.

succession of Shah Tahmasp I.

Our research aims to specify the identity of Georgian women at the court of Shah of Iran - Tamaz I (according to Persian sources – Tahmasp (1524-1576) and determine their status in the Shah's harem, in particular, to define the form of their marriage to the Shah and highlight the political role of Georgian women in the Safavid Iran.

The first publication about Georgian women was provided in "Tsiskari"<sup>1</sup> in 1860. In the article "Georgian Women, Historical Overview" Dmitry Bakradze writes that women in Georgia were well trained in literacy and needlework in their families, in addition, „the author emphasizes the peculiarity of their character and points out, that “the major part of Georgian women are naturally tactful, and having the sense of duty and responsibility they are honest and obedient by nature.” D. Bakradze writes about the historical mission of the Georgian woman: “Byzantine masters and noblemen often tried to marry Georgian women ... In the eleventh century, the emperor Michael-Doucas of Constantinople was married to the daughter of Bagrat IV, whose name was Martha, and Martha's cousin Irina was married to the Emperor's brother Isac Komnenus; The Seljuk Sultan Alf-Arslan was married to Bagrat's niece<sup>3</sup>. In the twelfth century, David II (meaning David IV Agmashenebeli – Kh. B.) had two daughters – Kata and Tamar. Kata was married to Alexia Comnenus, the son of Emperor Nicephorus Barian and the famous writer Anna Comnenus; Tamar was married to the ruler of Shirvan named Fadlon, who was converted to Christianity for Tamar's sake. In the fourteenth century, the Emperor Alexis II of Trabzon was married to a daughter of Beqa Atabag – from Meskhети. The history also evidences that in 1450, Emperor Constantine Dragose sent his ambassador with lots of gifts to Georgia to propose marriage to the daughter of King Giorgi VIII, but this affair fell through due to the death of Constantine the Great ... Georgian women were also courted by the deputies of the Arab Caliphate, or emirs, and the masters of Persia. ... History does not inform us details about women's status outside

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1 D. Bakradze, Georgian Women, Historical Review, Tsiskari, 1860, No. 4, pp. 251-280. (in georgian)

2 D. Bakradze, Georgian Women, p. 261-262.

3 Bagrat IV's niece was, at the same time, the niece of the Armenian (Tashir-Dzoraget) king Kvirike, i.e. -Armenian princess of Georgian mother. Apparently, D. Bakradze considers her to be Georgian.

their homeland; But there is no doubt that they must have had influence upon the sultans and shahs, which they used to their advantage as well as for their homeland”<sup>1</sup>.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century French traveler Chardin wrote rapturously: “Georgians are a splendid breed of people in the whole East and, one might say, over the whole world. In this country I have not met a single ugly person, whether man or woman, I have met only angelic faces. The majority of women are naturally gifted with the delicacy that you don’t find anywhere else. I think one can’t help falling in love if you take a glance at them. It is impossible even to draw a more beautiful face and body than a Georgian woman. They have tall, shapely, flexible bodies and are amazingly slender. Any make-up, which is used likewise by both the beautiful and the ugly, does not suit them, as it is the substitute for jewelry and is used as ornamentation in the same way as pearls, other precious stones and beautiful clothes are used in our country. ... Georgians are polite and philanthropic, and at the same time worthy and self-restrained.”<sup>2</sup>

In Georgian historiography, at first the interest was evinced in the Georgian women who were sent to the court of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629): K. Kekelidze writes: “...Those women from the families of kings and nobles were sent to the court of the Shah as wives and spouses of the ferocious tyrant either forcibly or voluntarily, in the latter case, with the purpose of avoiding and somehow mitigating the indignation and rage of this torturer through betrothal”<sup>3</sup>

At the outset of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Safavid state was created in Iran, which shortly afterwards began to pursue the aggressive policy towards eastern Georgia. The Kizilbash first invaded Kartli on the order of Shah Ismail I (1501-1524) and destroyed Tbilisi. Georgian chroniclers (Beri Egnatashvili, the third text of Life of Kartli and Vakhushti Batonishvili) write nothing about the captives taken from Georgia by Iranians. Georgian captives having been sent to the court of Shah Ismail I are not mentioned either by the anonymous author

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1 D. Bakradze, Georgian Women, Historical Review, pp. 264-265, 267. (in georgian)

2 Travels of Jean Chardin in Persia and other countries of the East (information about Georgia), translation from French, research and comments by MziaMgaloblishvili, Tb., 1975, p. 297.

3 K. Kekelidze, Etudes from the History of Ancient Georgian Literature, IV, Tb. 1957, p. 217. (in georgian)

describing his life, nor by “Tarikh-e Jahan-ara”.<sup>1</sup>

Georgian women first appeared in the harem of the Shah during the reign of the second representative of the Safavid dynasty - Shah Tahmasp I (1524-1576). It is worth noting that the information about them in Georgian historical sources is very scarce.

Beri Egnatashvili writes: “... Shah-Tamaz: talked to Atabag Kayk-hosro and asked to marry him (a woman – Kh. B.) a woman from his tribe. Atabagh did not have his own daughter, but he had a relative Otar Shalikashvili, whose daughter was voluntarily sent to the Khan as Atabagi’s relative, and the Khan married her.

And after the marriage she became his most beloved wife and the peace was established between Shah-Tamaz and Atabag.”<sup>2</sup>

Vakhushti Batonishvili writes the same: “After that Shah-Tamaz came and conquered the city of Tiflis (1548, the second campaign - Kh. B.) of Coronicone, from Tiflisi he sent the message to Kaikhosro Atabagi (Kaikhosro II (1545-1573 – Kh. B.) to give him his daughter as a wife. But Atabagi did not have a daughter, that is why he gave Shah the daughter of Otar Shalikashvili as Kaikhosro was their relative. Thus, Shah-Tamaz became his son-in-law and gave Atabagi a lot of gifts and left for Persia because the Khan had his brother in Georgia.”<sup>3</sup>

It is worth noting, that Eskander Monshi, who describes four campaigns of Shah Tamaz to Georgia in separate subsections of his work (1540/1, 1547, 1551, 1553/4), does not speak about sending Shalikashvili’s daughter to him. One of the cases when women (and sons) of the Georgian nobility were presented to the Shah’s commanders was the fourth campaign (1554), about which Eskander Monshi writes: „ در این یورش زیاد از سی هزار اسیر به دست جیوش دریا. خروش در آمد از آن جمله آنچه زنان و دختران و پسران عظماء و آژنواران بود در این یورش - “In this campaign more than 30,000 captives were taken by the army “furious as the sea”. Among them, those who were wives, daughters and sons of aristocracy, gentry and noblemen were assigned to the Shah’s most noble

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1 Three XVI-century Persian sources on Georgia, translated from Persian, introduction, notes and references added by Nana Gelashvili, Tb. 1990, pp. 21-28.

2 Beri Egnatashvili, Akhali Qartlis Tskhovreba, text one, Qartlis Tskhovreba (History of Georgia), II, text established according to all major manuscripts by S. Kauhchishvili, Tb. 1959, p. 364.

3 Batonishvili Vakhushti, Description of the Georgian Kingdom, Qartlis Tskhovreba (History of Georgia), IV, text established according to all major manuscripts by S. Kauhchishvili, Tb., 1973, pp. 715-716.

Sarkar (commanders – Kh. B.) in the “Khutistavi” account.<sup>1</sup> This incident took place in Kartli. However, previously, when the Kizilbash’s army was encamped in Samtskhe, they took prisoners during their third campaign in 1551. As Hasan-Rumlu writes, Iranians “took Georgian women of a beauty like fairies” as captives from Samtskhe.<sup>2</sup> Thus, as we learn from the sources provided, Georgian women should have ended up in the harem of the Kizilbash nobles and the Shah of Iran in 1548, 1551 and 1554. Relying on Georgian sources, out of those women Shah Tahmasp I married the daughter of Otar Shalikhvili in 1548, and the rest of them were taken captives. There was another circumstance, in particular, Georgian kings and princes sent selected girls and young men to the Shah’s court every year as “gifts”, some of whom remained in the Shah’s harem, and others were distributed as gifts to Kizilbash nobles and officials (we will refer to this issue below).

In Persian historiography the issue of the heirs of Shah Tahmasp I was exhaustively provided by the Iranian historian Nasrullah Falsafi, who, based on the data from Persian sources, gave us the detailed succession of Shah Tamazi’s children and the names of their mothers. Unfortunately, neither Georgian nor Persian sources mention the Georgian names and surnames of these Georgian women (except Shalikhvili), accordingly, this issue remains obscure in historiography. In many cases, however, the Persian names of these women are known.

According to Iranian historian Nasrullah Falsafa, the mothers of four out of 12 princes who were heirs of Shah Tahmasp I were Georgian women. They are: Soltan Zadeh Khanum – the mother of the fourth, Shah’s most favorite son, Heydar Mirza; Zahra Baji – the mother of the sixth son, Mustafa Mirza and the ninth son, Ali Mirza; Khanfarvan Khanum is the mother of the eighth son – Imam Quli Mirza<sup>3</sup> (we have a different opinion on this issue, which we will refer to later). One of 8 daughters of Shah Tahmasp, Zeynab Begum pre-

1 ۱۳۹۰، نارەت، یدارم دیرف شش و گ ه ب، یسابع یارآ ملع خیرات، نام کرت گی ب ر دن کس ۱۲۱۱، ص. ; Eskander Monshi’s Reports on Georgia, Persian text with Georgian translation and preface published by V. Futuridze, Tb., 1969, p. 21;

2 Information of Hasan Rumlu about Georgia, Persian text with Georgian translation and preface was published by V. Futuridze, notes attached by R. Kiknadze, Tb., 1966, p. 29.

3 N. Falsafi, The life of Shah-Abbas the First, selective translation (fragments about Georgia and Georgians), translated from Persian by L. Zhorzholiani, foreword and notes by Prof. J. Stepnadze, Tbilisi, 2003, pp. 8-9.

viously called as Anna Khanum, had the Georgian mother<sup>1</sup>. M. Svanidze suggests that the mother of Zeinab Begum could have been the daughter of Shalikashvili, mentioned in Georgian sources.<sup>2</sup>

H. Falsafi points out: “Many wives of Shah Tahmasp were among those concubines and daughters whom Emirs of Gurjestan sent to the Shah every year along with other gifts and tributes.”<sup>3</sup>

The interest is evinced in the terms provided by the Iranian historian: “Slave” and “Daughter.” In our opinion, these terms unequivocally distinguish the legal status of a woman in the Shah’s harem. “Slave” (concubine) is an indicator of lower ancestry and indicates her unprivileged position in the harem, whereas “daughter” should denote a female representative of a noble family. Moreover, the status of “Shah’s wife” is very conventional in historiography. In general, a Shia Muslim, including the Shah, was allowed to have only four wives. At the same time, he could be in a temporary marriage (*sighe*) with a woman, as well as have an immeasurable number of concubines. Therefore, all women (including Georgian women) who were mothers of the Shah’s children could not be his wives.

Haydar Mirza’s mother, Soltan Zade Khanum, held a special position among Georgian women in the harem of Shah Tamaz I. As chroniclers write, Shah Tahmasp had a special attitude towards Haydar Mirza. He loved him exclusively and gave the right to give advice to his father in the state affairs, and the latter took his advice into consideration. Haydar was the only prince who had the right to be in the court of the Shah as an adult. D’ Alessandr, the ambassador of Venetian Republic, who arrived in the Safavid State in 1571, writes: “Heydar Mirza enjoys great confidence of the Shah. He is eighteen years old. He is short but with a very beautiful look. Heydar Mirza is a great orator and a brilliant rider<sup>4</sup>”.

N. Falsafa writes: “And in the royal harem, Soltan Zade-khanum, who was Georgian and loved by the Shah more than any other wife, was preparing the grounds for her son’s enthronement through Georgian commanders who had great influence and power at the

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1 N. Falsafi, *The life of Shah-Abbas the First*, p. 8

2 *Sketches of Georgian-Ottoman history*, p. 243.

3 N. Falsafi, *The life of Shah-Abbas the First*, p. 8

4 *Travels of Venetians in Persia (A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the XV and XVI centuries)*, vol. 49, London, 1873, p.125.

royal court.”<sup>1</sup> Later, one of the suspects in the Shah’s death was Sol-tan Zadeh Khanum along with his Georgian supporters.

In 1573, the sudden illness of Shah Tahmasp triggered the struggle for the throne among the princes in the palace. Georgian and Circassian clans clashed with each other in Iran. The Circassians wanted to enthrone their candidate Ismail Mirza (later Shah Ismail II) who was Circassian on maternal line. At that time Ismail was imprisoned by the Shah’s order in Alamut prison because of the disobedience to him. He was supported by some of the Kizilbash Amirs and the Circassians having been promoted in the palace. But the main support was his sister Pari Khan Khanum, who was a highly influential figure.

According to Eskander Monshi Georgian Zaal-Beg is considered to be the leader of the Georgian group: “... Zaal-Beg, who belonged to this group (supporters of Haydar – Kh.B.) and whose sister was included among the wives of the Shah as well as was the mother of several princes, hated Sultan Ismail’s supporters, also, he always served in the Shah’s bathes.”<sup>2</sup>

In the last years of Shah Tahmasp’s life, especially from 1573 (after his illness), the Kizilbash Amirs no longer trusted Georgians with the life of the Shah. “Ismail Mirza’s supporters agreed that Zaal-Beg was ungrateful and the Sufis, faithful to the state, did not trust him any longer. We will not allow, they said, that at the time, when his majesty is so weakened, he (Zaal-beg) should go to bath and serve there; we are not safe from his treachery.”<sup>3</sup> As Eskander Monshi tells us, “The Georgians wondered why they wanted to prevent them from performing their service.”<sup>4</sup> Even this service of Zaal-Beg’s and that of Georgians, generally, clearly evidence that they had earned Shah Tahmasp’s great trust, because, in fact, he entrusted his life to Georgians when he was in the most vulnerable position. Zaal-Beg and several other Georgians were responsible for the Shah’s security in the royal bath.

The Iranian historian Sharaf Khan Bidlisi writes that the maternal uncles of Heydar Mirza and Imam Quli Mirza were Alikhan Gurji and

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1 The life of Shah-Abbas the First, p. 9

2 Eskander Monshi’s Reports on Georgia, Persian text with Georgian translation and preface published by V. Futuridze, Tb., 1969, p. 25-26.;

3 Eskander Monshi, p. 26

4 Eskander Monshi, p. 26



Zaal Gurji.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen above, Eskander Monshi also writes that Zaal Gurji's sister was the wife of the Shah, who had several princes. Heydar's ascension to the throne was also supported by the Ustajlu tribe, whose leader, Hussein-Beg Ustajlu, was the teacher of Mustafa and Imam Quli who were Georgian princes from the maternal line.<sup>2</sup>

D. Katsitadze points out that: "Amirs of Ustajlu tribe proclaimed their pupil, the fifth son<sup>3</sup> of Shah Tamaz I, Haydar Mirza to be the Shah, his mother was a Georgian woman, the daughter of Shalikashvili. Heydar Mirza's enthronement was supported by the Georgians promoted at the Shah's court (brother of Heydar Mirza's mother Alkhan (//Alikhan – Kh.B.) Gurji, Zaal Gurji, Tahmasb Gurji, Daud Gurji and others)."<sup>4</sup>

N. Falsafi writes that after Shah Tamazi in Iran "... the brave and famous Georgian commanders – Zaal, Daud and Tamaz – brothers of Imam Quli-Mirza's mother Khanfarvan Khanum tried to enthrone Heydar Mirza ... because Heydar Mirza's mother was also Georgian. These Georgian commanders were famous among the Kizilbash tribes for their bravery as well as the huge property and estates that they owned in Georgia".<sup>5</sup> N. Falsafi also mentions Heydar Mirza's uncle Alikhan Gorji.<sup>6</sup>

We cannot clarify why Khanfarva Khanum's brothers (Zaal, Daud and Tamazi) had to support the enthronement of Haydar-Mirza, if the heir to the throne was also the son of their own sister?

According to the reports by Eskander Monshi and Sharaf Khan Bidlisi as well as based on N. Falsafi's research, we deem that Haydar Mirza's mother was Soltan Zade Khanum and her brothers were Zaal Beg Gorji and Alikhan Gorji (N. Falsafi believes that Soltan Zadeh Khanum had only one prince, Haydar Mirza, which we cannot agree on). In addition, given the historical narratives, we believe that Soltan Zadeh Khanum must have been the mother of not one but two princes (Haydar Mirza and probably Ali Mirza).

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1 K. Tabatadze, Information about Georgia by Sharaf-khan Bidlisi, Caucasian-Near-Eastern Collection, Tb. 1962, p. 175.

2 J. Hammer, Ibid. p. 475; Qartlis Tskhovreba, II, p. 517. E. Takaishvili, Three Historical Chronicles, pp. 86-87; Materials on the History of South Georgia (XV-XVI centuries), textual publications, studies and research by Sharashidze, Tb., 1961, p. 42

3 D. Katsitadze considers Haidar Mirza was fifth prince of Shah Tahmasp.

4 D. Katsitadze, History of Iran, III-XVIII centuries, Tb. P. 399 – 400

5 N. Falsafi, The life of Shah-Abbas the First, p. 9

6 N. Falsafi, p. 10



Thus, based on the collation of data of sources, in our opinion, the sons of Soltan Zade Khanum were: the fourth prince of Shah Tahmasp – Haydar Mirza and the eighth prince – Imam Quli Mirza, the son of Zahra Baji was the sixth prince – Mustafa Mirza and the son of Khanfarvan Khanum was the ninth prince – Ali Mirza.

Relying on the Persian sources, Khanfarvan-khanum's brothers Daud and Tamazi, as well as Soltan-zade-khanum's brothers Zaal and Alikhan, who were promoted at the royal court of Safavid Iran, belonged to the lineage of Georgian nobles, as they owned huge holdings and estates in Georgia.

Shah Tahmasp died on the night of May 14, 1576. Haydar-Mirza was proclaimed Shah of Iran by his supporters. In the third text of "Life of Kartli" we read: "On the first day of May of Coronicon, Tuesday, Khan Shah-Tahmasp died and Alikhan-Sultan, the son of Ustajlu and Iotami wanted Heydar-Mirza to rule."<sup>1</sup> "Meskhetian Chronicle" suggests the same: "On the first day of Coronicon, May 1, Tuesday, Khan Shah Tahmasp died, and Alikhan-Sultan, the son of Ustajlu and Iotam wanted Haydar-Mirza to rule."<sup>2</sup>

According to Munejim-Bashi, in the process of struggle for the throne, Heydar Mirza acted on the instructions of his mother.<sup>3</sup> This recording highlights Sultan-Zade Khanum's active involvement in domestic politics.

According to W. Hintz, the dissemination of the news about the Shah's death caused a great excitement throughout the city. Shah Tahmasp's last wish was also announced, that all Emirs and subjects of the Safavid dynasty should have been subordinated to Heydar. But a considerable part of the population met this news with distrust.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the followers of Heydar gathered in the palace of the commander of the division – Hussein Beg Ustajlu. They had constant contact with Heydar, who was locked up in the royal palace, through the women delivering letters<sup>5</sup>. As we can see, the Shah's Harem was in the hands of a Georgian woman – Heydar Mirza's mother. This also indicates her privileged status.

According to the existing versions about Shah Tahmasp's death, Georgians were involved in his death (European authors write about

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1 Qartlis Tskhovreba, II, Tb., 1959, p. 517.

2 E. Takaishvili, Three Historical Chronicles, Tiflis, 1890, pp. 86-87.

3 W. Hinz, op. cit., p 53.

4 W. Hinz, op. cit., p 46

5 W. Hinz, op. cit., p 46

it): In J. Hammer's opinion, the Shah was poisoned by Heydar-Mirza's Georgian mother, so that the Shah would not have changed his earlier decision (will) about Heydar's ascension to the throne, and thus, could not have deprived his son of the right to ascend the throne. "So she wanted to ensure his son's unimpeded ascension to the throne through the Shah's early death."<sup>1</sup> According to another version, Hakim Ibn Nasr from Gilan, one of the doctors of the Shah, was Heydar Mirza's supporter, that was why, he poisoned the Shah."<sup>2</sup>

According to Sharaf-Khan Bidlisi: "Ali Khan Gurji and Zaal Gurji, who were the maternal uncles of Heydar Mirza and Imam-Quli Mirza, left Heydar Mirza in the chambers of the royal palace on the advice of Bahram Mirza's son Sultan Ibrahim Mirza, so that. ... after the death of the Shah, he could ascend to the royal throne".<sup>3</sup>

Heydar Mirza's half-sister Khanfarvan Khanum played a crucial role in the ongoing processes in the Safavid royal court. He pretended the obedience to Heydar and congratulated him on his ascension to the throne. At the same time, she immediately informed his uncle Shamkhal, the ruler of Circassians, and warned him that if he had not immediately taken the appropriate measures all the power would have fallen into the hands of Georgians.<sup>4</sup> Ferikhan Khanum managed to hand over the outer perimeter of Shah's Harem to her supporters. As T. Minadoi writes, in fact, Heydar turned out to be imprisoned in harem by Ferikhan Khanum, Ismail II's sister, who was waiting for Ismail to come to Qazvin and decide Heydar's fate.<sup>5</sup>

When the Georgians and a part of the Kizilbash learned of the situation at the royal court, they tried to seize the Qazvin palace and rescue Heydar. Zaal-Beg, who broke into the palace and tried to free his nephew, fought with the particular dedication. This provoked Ferikhan-khanum who gave the order to kill Heydar. Her supporters found Heydar in the harem dressed in women's clothes and

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1 K. Tabatadze, Information about Georgia by Sharaf-khan Bidlisi, Caucasian-Near-Eastern Collection, vol. 1962, pp. 159-186; Sharaf-khan ibn Shamsaddin Bidlisi, Sharaf-nameh, Translation, foreword, notes and appendices by E. I. Vasileva, vol. 1. II, M., 1976, p. 229.

2 J. Hammer, Geschichte des osmanischen Reichen, II b., Pest, 1834, 83. 475 – E. Mamistvalishvili, op. cit., p. 109.

3 K. Tabatadze, Information about Georgia by Sharaf-khan Bidlisi, Caucasian-Near-Eastern Collection, vol. 1962, pp. 159-186; Sharaf-khan ibn Shamsaddin Bidlisi, Sharaf-nameh, Translation, foreword, notes and appendices by E. I. Vasileva, vol. 1. II, M., 1976, p. 229.

4 J. Hammer, Geschichte des osmanischen Reichen, II b., Pest, 1834, 83. 475 – E. Mamistvalishvili, op. cit., p. 109.

5 T. Minadoi, Historia della Guerra fra Turchi et Persiani, Venezia, 1588, 83. 8 – cited. E. Mamistvalishvili, op. cit. p. 112.

beheaded him. He ruled for only 11 hours.<sup>1</sup>

The next day, Ismail's supporters seized Zaal-Beg and other supporters of Heydar in their homes and executed them.<sup>2</sup> According to Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, Zaal-Beg was killed in a clash in the palace garden.<sup>3</sup>

Hussein-Beg Ustajlu took the other princes (raised by him), who were Georgian in maternal line, in the direction of Kumi and Kashan, so as to enthrone one of them there.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that they were also killed on Ismail's orders, as the further traces of these princes are lost in Persian sources.

It's interesting when and from which part of Georgia could Sol-tan-zade-khanum enter the harem of Shah Tahmasp?

It is known that Heydar Mirza was born in 1554, hence, his mother must have entered the Shah's harem a year or two earlier. As mentioned above, in 1551, during the campaign to Samtskhe, the Kizilbashs took the captives of noble families. If we allow this option, Heydar's mother could have come from Samtskhe. But as M. Svanidze notes, at that time the Meskhetians do not appear to be engaged in the struggle for power in Iran.<sup>5</sup> And this, logically, excludes Samtskhe as the origin of the woman.

The following circumstance is particularly noteworthy: namely, in January 1547, during his second campaign, when Shah Tamazi was heading back, he was paid a visit by the King of Kakheti Levan and the King of Imereti Bagrat who declared their obedience. They brought gifts to Shah and returned bestowed by the Shah as well.<sup>6</sup> Levan always tried to keep the peace. He always sent the Shah the gifts and Haydar's mother may be one of them.

Eskander Monshi refers to the brother of Heydar-Mirza's mother – Alikhan Gorji as the brother of Alexander II (1574-1605), the king of Kakheti: "Ali-Khan Georgian, the brother of Alexander Khan, who was in Shaki, failed to find the strength to stay [there] and had to surrender, and Lala Pasha vigorously entered Shirvan"<sup>7</sup> (the mentioned is about the battle of Childir. Ali-khan Gorji seems to have escaped the wrath of Shah Ismail II). The historian J. Hammer names Alikhan Gorji as Alikhan Mirza,<sup>8</sup> which

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1 E. Mamistvalishvili, op.cit. p. 113.

2 W. Hinz, op.cit., p. 53.

3 Sharaf Khan ibn Shamsaddin Bidlisi, 1976, p. 230.

4 J. Hammer, op. cit., p. 475.

5 D. Svanidze, Sketches of Georgian-Ottoman history, p. 248.

6 History of F. Gorgidzhanidze, Edition S. Kakabadze, Tbilisi, 1926, p. 5; Hasan Rumlu's information on Georgia, p. 25.

7 Eskander Monshi, p.30.

8 Materials on the history of South Georgia (XV-XVI centuries), textual publications, studies and searches by Sharashidze, Tbilisi, 1961, p. 42.

means prince. One thing is clear: Alikhan Gorji must have been a blood relative of King Alexander, as his close connection with the Georgian royal dynasty is obvious. M. Svanidze suggests that the surname of Alikhan-Gorji and Soltan-Zade Khanum should have been Iotamashvili.<sup>1</sup> However, in the third text of the “Life of New Kartli” and the “Meshkhetian Chronicles” the name Iotam is mentioned as only the above-mentioned persons’ father.

The name of Heydar Mirza’s mother also indicates the close relation with the Georgian royal family. The name – Soltan-Zadeh Khanum, which means the child of the noble. The word “Soltan” is also found in the name of Shah Khudabande’s mother – Soltan Khanum Begum. She was the child of the chief of the Musa Vali tribe, i.e. it seems that the origin of these women was reflected in their own names. Thus, we believe that Soltan-Zade Khanum must have come from the family of the Kakhetian nobleman named Iotami, the close relative of the royal dynasty.

As regards the question of marriage with the Shah of Iran: - based on Georgian and Persian sources we believe that resulting from the origin of women, Shah Tahmasp I may have been married to the daughter of Shalikhshvili and Soltan Zade-Khanum. So far, we cannot say the same about Zahra Badji.

As for the daughter of Shalikhshvili, Vakhushti Batonishvili considers her as the mother of Shah Khudabande: Vakhushti writes that “at that time Shah Khudabande was not there (meaning the invasion of Lala Pasha into Georgia - Kh. B.), due to this, his mother (who was the daughter of Otar Shalikhshvili) covered the sword with veil and sent to King Svimon (as it is customary for Georgians) and told him: “Take whichever you like and go to your country to fight against Ottomans with all your talent.”<sup>2</sup> This narrative itself is dubious and artificial: either take a sword and fight like a man or cover your head with a veil like a woman – it shows that Svimon was hesitant to return to Kartli and fight against the Ottomans, which cannot be true.

M. Svanidze rightly points out that Shalikhshvili’s daughter was not the mother of the prince and she had only one daughter from the Shah, because the Meskhetians were not seen in the struggle for power in Iran at that time.

Shah Khudabande’s mother was Sultanum Begum (died in 1593), alias Sultan Khanum (alias Soltanami Torkeman) Mavsilu or from the Musawali tribe. She was Kizilbash, the daughter of Musa Sultanie Torkemani of Mavsilu. Some modern Iranian historians consider her to be the mother of Heydar Mirza and other children of the Shah (we deem it is not correct.)

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1 M. Svanidze, *Essays of Georgian-Ottoman History*, p. 244.

2 Vakhushti, 1973, p. 411.

Thus, in the 70s of the XV century, one of the wives of Shah Tahmasp I, the mother of Prince Heydar, a Georgian by birth, Soltan Zade-khanum, actively participated in the ongoing struggle for power in Safavid Iran. The so-called Georgian clan (Georgian mothers of the Shah's princes and their brothers) was gathered around her trying to put their own candidate on the Iranian throne. The strong position of Soltan Zade Khanum in harem was determined by the following circumstances: he was married to the Shah, had two princes, belonged to a Georgian (Kakhetian) noble family and at the same time must have been a close relative of the royal dynasty. Her brothers Alikhan Gurji and Zaal Gurji held high positions at the Shah's court and were trusted by Tahmasp I.