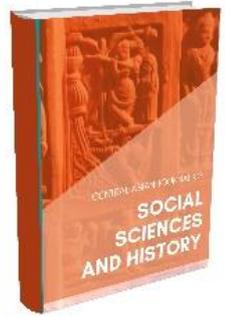




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Kingdom of Kakheti During the Time of Levan the First

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Abstract:

Similar to other parts of Georgia, the creation of Kakheti was resulted by a tense historical process. The traditional arrangement, agricultural development and the structure of ethnicity significantly differed from the contemporary image of Kakheti. We can single out several 'countries' on the territories of Kakheti settled by some different but neighboring tribes like Kukheti-comprising upper parts of Iveri gorge and the Alazani with the neighbouring mountainous parts; Hereti – the approximate North-Western parts of contemporary Azerbaijan (old Saingilo including mountainous areas of Dagestan, Sujeti – the left coast of the Ivleri i.e. Gare Kakheti an Kambechani –the territories of Kizikhi.

The borders of Kakheti region used to be changed periodically during the centuries under the influence of certain political events.

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Main Part: In remote period Kakheti comprised significantly smaller territories (the upper areas of the river Iveri i.e. the territories between Tianeti and Udjarma, the centre - Cheleti, Ujarma since the IV century). Some important roads were crossing Kakheti region. In early feudal period Kakheti region already comprised the territories of Ertso- Tianeti and Tush-Pshav-Khevsureti. At the end of the VIII century Kakheti and Hereti territories were added to Kakheti region and the whole Hereti belonged to Kakheti already from the XV century. From the XI century Telavi considered to be the centre of Kakheti and from the XV century Gremi took this function.

As for the territories of the contemporary Kakheti, as well as Saingilo and North-Western part of Azerbaijan (previous Shaki i.e. Nukhi mazra (administrative district), from early period of our history they were inhabited by the Georgian relating tribes and was known as Hereti according to Georgian manuscripts.

The kingdom of Kakheti represented one of the kingdoms of feudal Georgia in the later centuries and

its political borders were arranged in the following order: to the North – the Aragvi river, to the South and South-West the Kura (Mtkvari) river, to the north – the main mountain range of Caucasus. Till the beginning of the XVII century the border to the east was stretched till the junction of the rivers the Ior-Alazani and the Mtkvari and continued its way to the North alongside Adjinouri, used to cross the Agritchai river, passed the Gishi (Gishtchai) river and ended nearby the Caucasus range. Later the border was moved towards the North till the Khipitchai (the river Kari). From the Middle Ages Gremi considered to be the capital of Kakheti though from the 70s of the XVII century Telavi was the capital of this region.

The kingdom of Kakheti was bordered by Sheki (i.e. Shaki) – a feudal unity from the South-Eastern side and Dagestani from the North-Eastern and Northern parts.

From the northern side the kingdom of Kakheti was surrounded by the kingdom of Kartli. Pshavi and Khevsureti regions were united under the kingdom of Kakheti.

Shaki considered being the Eastern border which was isolated from Kakheti during the XIV century. The borders remained unchangeable during the 50s of the XVI century.

At the end of the XV century the united Georgia was divided into the following subkingdoms (samepo-samtavroebi): the kingdoms of Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti, headed by the Bagrationis and the administrative region (samtavro) of Samtskhe-Saatabago.

In the middle of the XVI century Samegrelo and Guria and a little bit later Abkhazia and Svaneti principalities were created.

The allies abandoned the weakened country and the enemies increased: Iran-Azerbaijan from the East side, Turkey from the South, Adigans and Leks from the North. The inner conflicts between the principalities heightened tension inside the country.

Though renovating measures taken by the government could not enhance the improvement of the situation still this success caused the changes of the inner and foreign affairs inside the country. Unfortunately everything changed for the worse by the end of the XVI century and instead of flourish the country slackened. The main event of this period was inner feudal battle which caused the final political dissolution of the country.

As for the XVI century Kakheti, the central authority of the kingdom, was significantly strong rather than the other parts of Georgia. The kings of Kakheti took serious political-administrative and military reforms. These reforms were mostly directed against the feudal lords, representing the highest layer of the society which consequently strengthened the central power of the kingdom. The central authority was oriented on the middle and lower feudal classes.

Under the reforms of the XVI century in Georgia the “saeristavo”-s (the administrative region) was changed into the “samouravo”-s (the administrative region). The whole country was divided into the numerous administrative territories which were headed by the chiefs called “mouravi”.

The XVI century reform in Kakheti caused consequential changes of socio-economic conditions of the region. Compared with the rest royal administrative part of Georgia, Kakheti region possessed better inner and foreign conditions. It considered to be the strongest and prominent according the countries economic arrangement. Silkworm breeding was conspicuously flourished which was one of the most important factors for the region’s foreign trade. (It is worth remembering that the kings of Kakheti

used to pay the tribute by silk). Winemaking was also highly developed at that period. The great amount of Kakhetian wine was taken not only to the neighboring countries but some other foreign countries as well. Kakheti was also famous for its special plant “endro” by which the high quality dye was produced. This plant was taken out from the country in great amounts in late feudal age. Closeness with the important trade way successfully affected on the development of trade in Kakheti region. Gilan-Shemakha-Astrakhan “silk road” represented the profitable factor for developing agriculture in Kakheti region during the feudal period.

Various inner political-administrative and military reforms taken by Kakhetian king enhanced the strengthening domestic economic and political conditions of the region. Thus Kakheti represented a well-arranged feudal state of that period.

In the XV-XVI century the development of agriculture, workmanship and trade in Kakheti caused the creation of numerous cities, where the population was increasing immensely.

Renovating activities such as the construction of palaces, trade houses, castles, fortresses, monasteries and the restoration of old buildings proved the economic growth of Kakheti in the XVI century.

Serious reforms taken by the central authority arranged the important socio-economic and political conditions in Georgia which helped in the strengthening the king’s power, solving the region’s economic problems and the arrangement of peasants taxation rights.

From 1476 Kakheti region was ruled by Alexander I, the son of Giorgi VIII - the king of the united Georgia. He ruled the kingdom of Kakheti till 1511. His political orientation did not oppose Iran though he was seriously opposed in carrying out his policy by his own son Av-Giorgi (Evil Giorgi).

During Alexander I reign the kingdom of Kakheti established the connection with Russia in 1491 for the first time in the history of Georgia.

With his own domestic and foreign policy Alexander I managed to keep peace inside the region and with enormous gifts he managed to release Iran’s aggression towards Kakheti. At the same time Alexander I did his best to establish connections with Russia in order for his kingdom to have the supporter.

After committing manslaughter and having killed his own father and brother, Av-Giorgi started to rule Kakheti in 1511. He governed the country till 1513.

Av-Giorgi had tense relations with Kartli before and after his reign. Later it appeared the only reason of his death. David X - the king of Kartli ordered his murder in the prison in 1513.

Av-Giorgi was left an infant son – Levani, who had been hiding for a while before ascending the throne. David X – the king of Kartli attempted to capture Levan for several times but in vain. With the help of the supporters Levan at last managed to ascend the throne in Kakheti in 1520. Levani ruled the kingdom till 1574. At last David - the king of Kartli was forced to agree on truce with Levan. The Shah of Iran immediately announced Levan as the king of Kakheti thus receiving the consent of obedience in return like David and Atabag.

As for the personal life of the king Levani, Georgian historiography keeps some details over this matter, though it still require some critical discussion. Still the main detail is obvious: the first wife of Levani was Mamia Gurieli’s daughter – Tinatin, with whom the king of Kakheti had one son – Giorgi. His second wife was the daughter of Sham Hal, with whom Levan had many children.

As we have already mentioned, Levani had close relationship with the chief of Guria as the King of Kakheti was his son-in-law. The second relationship was established with Simon I - the king of Kartli, who married Levan's daughter in 1559 and became his son-in-law. These relationships were caused by the tense domestic and foreign situation of that period. The king of Kakheti wished to have devoted allies in order to keep peace inside the kingdom. All these action indicated his inner regional interests and intention and didn't take any part in the arrangement of national affairs of the whole country.

One important point of his domestic policy was his attitude towards the mountainous people. He promised them to give pastures in plain though these people had to take part in his campaigns in return. Thus he managed to place the mountainous people from Tusheti, Pshavi and Khevsureti under his command.

At the end of the XV and the beginning of the XVI centuries Kakheti was already divided into several administrative regions called "samouravo" which were headed not by secular but religious figures i.e. bishops. Each bishop was the "king" on his own territories.

We find several manuscripts about the king's donation to the churches and monasteries. These documents prove the king's positive attitude towards the church. Furthermore he was the founder of Archangel Church in Gremi (1565y) which attracts visitors' attention even nowadays.

Beside Georgia King Levan was well-known in Western Europe. The Pope called him "Levan Dzangamul". He was known as the "Glorious King of Georgia".

He was very careful in taking foreign policy in order not to harm his own country, especially in the relations with Dagestan, Russia and Iran.

In the XVI century Georgia didn't already represent the field of cultural relations as it was years before, but absolutely abandoned country which was trapped between two oppressors.

In the XV-XVI centuries the relations between Kakheti region and Dagestan was gradually changed. Dagestan, which was under the influence of Georgia before, carried out an attack and the east part of Georgia particularly Kak-Eniseli and Tchiauri appeared in danger.

By the XV century a small administrative region called Sashxlo was created on the coast line of Caspian Sea in the mountainous part of the Caucasus. This administrative region –samouravo tended to unite the mountainous tribes. From the very time of its creation Sashxalo contended against Kakheti and it was the endless opposition between them. The situation especially tensed in the XVI century. During the 20s the southern regions of Dagestan was captured either by Shah- Ismail or Selim I - the Turkish sultan. The situation was seriously tensed in the second half of the XVI century. Shamxal claimed some parts of Dagestan but Kakheti region didn't want to cede these territories with the fear of losing own spring pastures and the country would have remained separated and ruined. Levan- the king of Kakheti didn't show indulgence towards Dagestan. He managed to extrude people of Dagestan from his own territories.

The situation seriously changed after Osmals' supremacy. From that time Sashamxlo became a dangerous neighbor for Kakheti region.

During the reign of Levan several Leks' settlements from Avaria and Tsakhui appeared on the territories of Pipiniti i.e. Tshari which was the eastern part of Kakheti region. They came here with the permission of the Georgian king and served for the country. They had different obligations to

implement for the favor of Kakheti kings such as carrying down the peaces of ice from Caucasus. The problems connected with Shamkhali and Dagestani regions caused the strengthening of relationship with Russia.

Because of the mass disorder inside the country and the increasing number of enemies forced Georgian politicians to search for the foreign allies outside the country. The orientation towards the European countries appeared hopeless during the fight against Osmals' surrounding.

It was the moment for rising connection with Russia in order to receive support from the powerful Christian country.

In 1552-1553 Georgian ambassadors left for Russia. In 1564 Ivan IV received king Levan under his support and sent his troops for strengthening Georgian fortresses. Unfortunately the difficulties on the international level forced the king Levan to send Russian troops back in 1572.

In 1551 Shah-Tamaz managed to capture the territories of Shaki with the help of the king Levan which became Sepians' ordinary province.

Levan considered to be Shah's vassal officially and used to pay tribute 20000 "Dukat" (amount of money). Besides, in case of war with Osmals, Levan had to support the Shah with 1000 young and brave horsemen.

Iran had tense relationship with Osmals and Kartli, thus possible connection with Kakheti region was convenient for Iran at that time. (Peace of 1555). Though Shah-Tamaz intended the annexation of Kakheti region. After Amasia Treatment (Peace) he decided to strengthen Iran's power over Kakheti which simultaneously caused counter-activities from the vassal country's side.

The situation was changed at the end of 50s and the beginning of 60s in XVI century which was caused by some certain circumstances: in 1559 Levan's daughter married Simon I, who was the enemy for Iran. In 1560 Shah -Tamaz forced Iese Batonishvili, who was the Georgian hostage in Iran from 1558, to receive Muslim religion. By this action Shah-Tamaz intended to prepare Muslim marionette to be sent back to Georgia.

In the 60s of the XVI century the connection between Iran and Kakheti regions was gradually ruining. Such relationship could hardly remain any kinds of political forms. Kakheti factually considered to be independent from Iran and for remaining such situation Levan I implemented certain political activities.

1555 Amasia Treatment could be acceptable for the Georgian king and the rest of the governors because it implied the precedence of uniting the different regions of Georgia under one country. Though there didn't exist objective reasons for uniting the country. The desire of Kartli to unite the parts of Georgia under one country implied not the internal processes of the country, but the political traditions remained from the old period, which was the main obstacle for the unity. In such conditions Kartli region couldn't bring the real danger to independence of Kakheti. We should also take into consideration the main fact that at that time Kakheti represented economically and politically the most powerful kingdom among the kingdoms of whole Georgia. The power of the king was stronger in Kakheti rather in Kartli. At the same time Kakheti was the only region where the feudal subgroups didn't exist and there was no ground for feudal conflicts. Unfortunately such conflicts weakened the authority of Kartli.

Many important centers were opened in Kakheti at that time according to the region's cultural

development. Cultural and literary centers existed in Georgia such as Gremi, Telavi and as well as Alaverdi which represented the important episcopacy cathedral. Davit Gareji was the significant educational centre.

Kakheti was the leader in the field of constructions among the rest of the regions of Georgia in the XVI century. A new capital Gremi was magnificently enlarged at that time. Many palaces and churches were built or reconstructed. All these construction and renovating activities as well as the orthodox icon paintings indicate the flourishing prosperity of Kakheti kingdom in the first half of the XVI century. It's worth mentioning Shuamta cathedral, as well as the complex of churches in Gremi for proving this statement.

Conclusion: After the death of Levan I the historian Vakhushti Batonishvili stated the following: "The king died in his old ages and left the powerful kingdom to his people". The king died in 1574 "...and was buried in Archangel Church".

It was peace in Kakheti kingdom during the long reign of the king Levan I and the reason for such conditions was serious and ingenious political activities from the king's side. During the Persian invasion he tried to fit his activities with the surrounding conditions even if the reduction of the king's rights were needed for solving the country's problems. That's why Levan announced Persian's supremacy over Georgia and was ready to pay the tribute as he had no other way. In 1550 Levan attempted to make contacts with Russia. Even Russian troops were sent to guard Georgian fortresses for a short period of time. But when Shah-Tamas finished fighting against Osmals, king Levan sent Russian troops back to their country for avoiding aggression from the Khan's side. Inside the kingdom the king tried to keep peace and rules. He also tried to abolish robbery. He announced Gremi as the capital of Kakheti, where he built a wonderful palace and the royal church.

The division of the kingdom into certain administrative parts – Samouravo in the first half of the XVI century indicated the king's powerful governance over his kingdom. So he appointed certain noblemen as the heads of these administrative parts in Kiziki, Kaki-Eniseli etc. But later these noblemen started gathering the power against the king's authority.

According to the military construction Kakheti was divided into four parts which were called Sadrosho. One of this military parts belonged to the king. These military divisions were headed by the bishops. The leading division was headed by the bishop from Bodbe monastery, the left division was ruled by the bishop from Rustavi and the right division – bishop from Nekresi. Thus the Royal Court managed to support the unity in the terms of military organization, because the bishops kept close connections with the king rather than the noblemen.

At the end we can say that Levan I, the king of Kakheti during 1518/1520 – 1574, with the help of the sensible policy managed to organize the inner and foreign affairs of his country so well that he didn't damage the kingdom of Kakheti. At the time when Kakheti was announced as the vassal country of Persia, he still tried to negotiate with Russian centralized country. During his reign, king Levan managed to solve such serious problems which were characteristic for the XVI century Kakheti kingdom taking into consideration general political situation existing at that time in the country.

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