

*The Chronology of
the Archbishops of
Alaverdi
Part II*



XI century

Abba of Alaverdi Grigol (Choloqashvili)

Approximately 1664-1676

Grigol Choloqashvili was a representative of a noble family being in close relations with the Kakhetian royal family. His father – Revaz Choloqashvili was a *Sakhlukhutsesi* (court administrator) and a devoted companion of King Teimuraz I. Grigol Choloqashvili's brother, also Revaz Choloqashvili, was an active political figure.

The period of Grigol Choloqashvili's being an Abba of Alaverdi was distinguished with a relatively peaceful development of the Kakhetian Kingdom. In 1664, on Shah's request, the son of Vakhtang V Shahnavaaz, Archil, was sent to Iran, converted into Islam and granted the reign of Kakheti (1664-1675) under the name of Shah Nazar-Khan^{1*}. Soon after his ascending the throne, Archil transferred the capital city from Gremi to Telavi and renovated the churches of the whole Kakhetian Kingdom, "appointed bishops, strengthened faith and intensified building in the country".¹

Immediately after his crowning in Kakheti in 1664, King Archil resumes donations of Teimuraz I and Rostom Khan to Alaverdi St. George's Cathedral and promises not to break the practice.² There is no information on the identity of the Archbishop of Alaverdi of those times, though we assume that it must have been Grigol Choloqashvili.

The Head Priest of Alaverdi, Grigol Choloqashvili, is first mentioned in the existing materials in connection with Archil's marriage in 1667. In 1668 Archil married a granddaughter of Teimuraz I – the King of Kakhetians. Along with Kakhetian noblemen, the Head Priest of Alaverdi – Grigol (Choloqashvili), also played an important role in arrangement of the marriage of King Archil to Ketevan Bagrationi: “Kakhetians and Grigol of Alaverdi came to the King of Kakhetians, Archil and persuaded him to marry Ketevan, the granddaughter of Teimuraz.” Archil married Ketevan; “the joy of Kakhetians was immense”.³ It is noteworthy that the Archbishop of Alaverdi duly appreciates the political importance of the wedding. By marrying Ketevan Bagrationi, Archil Mukhranbatoni united with the royal family of the Kakhetian Bagrationis, thus strengthening his claims on the Kakhetian royal throne.

It is obvious that apart from political motivation, Grigol of Alaverdi must have been guided by his private interests as well. Grigol Choloqashvili's family was in close relations with the court of Teimuraz I. Grigol's father, Revaz Choloqashvili, sacrificed his life in the loyal service of King Teimuraz. Grigol himself must be assumed to be a supporter of the Kakhetian Bagrationis. As a result of the abovementioned marriage there appeared a lawful heir of the Kakhetian royal throne. Active interference of Grigol of Alaverdi into solution of such an important issue was evidence to his great authority.

Archil continued rehabilitation and renovation of the heavily damaged Alaverdi Cathedral, which had been initiated by Rostom.⁴ Apparently, Grigol of Alaverdi was one of those who participated in the rehabilitation of the Cathedral.

Two Deeds of Donation issued by Grigol of Alaverdi are available to us. One of them is dated by 1670 and was issued to Kirile, the Bishop of Bodbe⁵ and the second, with an un identified date - to a Papuna Gamsivashvili.⁶ Later, in the period of Nikoloz Andronikashvili's being the Abba of Alaverdi, Grigol of Alaverdi is mentioned in two documents of a similar content.⁷ The brother of Grigol of Alaverdi, a *Sakhlukhutsesi* (court administrator) Otar Choloqashvili, was claiming to the estate of his brother – Grigol of Alaverdi, from the Archbishop of Alaverdi, Nikoloz Endronikashvili, in the village of Engiani. The dispute was solved in favour of Nikoloz of Alaverdi and the property belonging to Grigol Choloqashvili remained in the ownership of Alaverdi.⁸

Grigol of Alaverdi is mentioned in the letter authored by the Catholicos-Patriarch of East Georgia, Nikoloz IX (Amilakhvari) dated by February 6, 1676, addressed to the Russian Tsar, Theodor the son of Alexy. In the present letter, the Catholicos is asking the Russian Tsar, Theodor the son of Alexy, to act as a mediator before the Shah of Iran to send Erekle to Kakheti for his crowning as a King. Beside the Catholicos, the following Kakhetian Bishops sign the petition: Grigol of Alaverdi, the Bishops of Bodbe, Rustavi, Ninotsminda, Nekresi and Sameba.⁹

Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz (Endronikashvili)

1684-1696

Before obtaining the Cathedra at Alaverdi, Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Endronikashvili was at the head of the Cathedra of Ninotsminda (1671-1679).

Nikoloz was the builder of one of the gateways of Ninotsminda Cathedral and of an iconostasis of a renovated and decorated Ninotsminda Cathedral, which is recorded in an inscription on its gateway dated by 1671¹⁰. Nikoloz is mentioned as a Bishop of Ninotsminda in inscriptions of David Gareja Monastery Complex dated by 1673 and 1674¹¹ and in a letter of February 6, 1676, addressed to the Russian Tsar by the Catholicos-Patriarch of East Georgia, Nikoloz IX. By this letter the Catholicos-Patriarch and the Kakhetian bishops are asking the Russian Tsar for mediation between them and the Iranian Shah to send Erekle Batonishvili for coronation as a King. Next to the signatures of the Abbas of Alaverdi and Bodbe, the signature of Nikoloz of Ninotsminda is also attached.¹² On departure of Archil from Kakheti, the supreme clergy of Kakheti took preliminary measures to crown the lawful heir of the Kakhetian throne – Erekle.

Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Endronikashvili happened to be a Head Priest during the rule of Khans appointed by the Shah in Kakheti (1677-1703). According to Vakhushti Batonishvili, Bezhan Khan was ruling in Kakheti through Revaz Choloqashvili and the *Mouravis* (managers) of Kiziki and Eliseni.¹³ Revaz Choloqashvili was the brother of Grigol

of Alaverdi. Again, according to Vakhushti, in case of decease of a bishop in Kakheti Kingdom, even in the period of the government of an Iranian official – Khan, a new candidacy nominated by the Kakhetian noblemen and bishops was sent for sanctification by Catholicos of Mtskheta on approval by the Khan.¹⁴ By the Deed of Prayer by Nikoloz of Alaverdi, dated 1685-1688, addressed to Ioseb of Tbilisi (the Archbishop of Tbilisi), it is obvious that Nikoloz Endronikashvili was sanctified as a Head Priest of Alaverdi by total disregard of the existing tradition.

Correspondingly, accession to the Cathedra of Alaverdi in 1684 was marked by aggravation of relationships with the Catholicos of Mtskheta. Nikoloz Endronikashvili put on the Head Priest's crown without permission and sanctification by the Catholicos. Such impertinence of the Archbishop resulted in a serious conflict. Finally, this attempt by Abba of Alaverdi failed, as the Catholicos of Mtskheta timely suppressed the separatist action of the Kakhetian Head Priest. To smooth the situation, Nikoloz of Alaverdi had to ask the Archbishop of Tbilisi – Ioseb for mediation before the Catholicos.¹⁵

There are no first-hand data about how the conflict was resolved. It is known that Nikoloz Endronikashvili retained the Cathedra. It might be that Catholicos Nikoloz Amilakhvari forgave him the misdeed owing to mediation and attempt by Ioseb of Tbilisi, or perhaps due to the events that took place in Kartli, namely, accession to the throne of Erekle I (1688-1703) and the change that took place on the Catholicos' throne – substitution of Nikoloz Amilakhvari (1678-1688; 1692-1695) by Ioane X Diasamidze, the situation ended favorably for Nikoloz of Alaverdi. The inspirer of the separatist action of Nikoloz Endronikashvili, a lawful heir of the Kakhetian Kingdom – Erekle I came to power.

From the moment of his accession, Nikoloz of Alaverdi vigorously took up establishing the disturbed church order

among the serfs and congregations of Alaverdi, the evidence of which can be found in numerous documents dated by 1865.¹⁶

According to documents dated by 1685-1694, *Sakhlukhutsesi* (court administrator), the brother of Grigol Choloqashvili, Otar Choloqashvili, had a dispute with Nikoloz Endronikashvili over the Alaverdi Church lands in the village of Engiani; eventually the case was solved in favor of the Cathedral and Otar Choloqashvili yielded the lands that had belonged to Grigol of Alaverdi to Nikoloz of Alaverdi.¹⁷

There are data about several Deeds of Donation dated by 1687 issued by Nikoloz Endronikashvili.¹⁸ According to a document dated by approximately 1688-1694, Erekle I put father Nikolaos of Mtatsminda Annunciation Monastery and his Abbot estate in Khodasheni under supervision of Nikoloz Endronikashvili of Alaverdi.¹⁹

Nikoloz Endronikashvili participated in the church assembly summoned by the order of Erekle I in 1690. The assembly was attended by Catholicos Ioane Diasamidze, Arsene of Ninotsminda, Nikoloz of Rustavi, Nikoloz of Sameba, the Archbishop of Kartli and other clergymen. The church assembly appointed Onopre Machutadze (Onopre of Gareji), a significant church figure and writer (1690-1736)²⁰ as an Abbot of David Gareja Desert (Hermitage). The resolution adopted by the assembly, titled "David Gareja Monastery Regulations" dated by March 12, 1690, was signed by

Nikoloz of Alaverdi and other bishops of East Georgia. His seal with the inscription: "devotee", was also attached to the documents.

In 1694 Abba of Alaverdi, Nikoloz Andronikashvili, along with Catholicos Ioane the Archbishop of Tbilisi - Nikoloz Choloqashvili, the Bishop of Rustavi and some lay noblemen participated in mediation of an "affair of blood" of the Guramishvili family initiated by Erekle I.²¹

Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz (Cholokashvili)

1695-1732

The Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Choloqashvili, whose succession in obtaining the status of an Archbishop of Alaverdi after Nikoloz Endronikashvili was documentally proved, before occupying the Cathedra of Alaverdi, was the priest of Sameba from the 70-ies of the 17th century²², and later – the Archbishop of Rustavi (1690 – 1694);

The existing information on Nikoloz Cholkashvili's status of the Bishop of Sameba is rather scarce. In the regulations of David Gareja Desert (Hermitage) dated by 1718 it is mentioned that Nikoloz Choloqashvili yet in his being the Abba of Sameba had inquired about the plundered lands of John the Baptizer's Lavra of David Gareja Monastery and returned them to the Monastery²³. By 1690 Nikoloz Choloqashvili is already the Archbishop of Rustavi²⁴. He is one of the participants of the church assembly summoned by the order of Erekle I in 1690, which was also attended by Catholicos Ioane Diasamidze (1688-1692; 1695-1700), Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz (Endronikashvili), Arsen of

Ninotsminda, Nikoloz Maqashvili of Sameba, the Archbishop of Kartli and other clergymen. The resolution adopted at the assembly, titled "regulations of David Gareja Monastery", dated by March 12, 1690, along with other bishops of East Georgia, was signed by the Bishop of Rustavi Nikoloz as well²⁵.

In 1694 the Bishop of Rustavi, Nikoloz Choloqashvili, along with Erekle I, Catholicos Ioane, Nikoloz Endronikashvili of Alaverdi, the Archbishop of Tbilisi, and some lay noblemen participated in mediation by Erekle I of an "affair of blood" of the Guramishvili family.²⁶

As can be clearly discerned in the existing documents, by 1694 Nikoloz Endronikashvili was the Abba of Alaverdi and Nikoloz Choloqashvili – the Bishop of Rustavi²⁷.

The Deed of Devotion given by Nikoloz Choloqashvili to Catholicos-Patriarch Ioane, is dated by the period of supremacy of Catholicos Ioane (1688-1700)²⁸. Presently the years of supremacy of Catholicos Ioane are known more exactly – these are 1688-1692 and 1695-1700²⁹. Based on the content of the Deed of Devotion, I consider it expedient to assume that the real date of the document is 1695. It is obvious from the document that Nikoloz, according to the active tradition, visits Catholicos Ioane in the Catholicos' residence in Mtskheta to receive sanctification and gives him the Deed of Devotion before accession on the Cathedra of Alaverdi. In 1694 Nikoloz is still mentioned as the Bishop of Rustavi, while in the Deed of Donation issued by Erekle I for Svetitskhoveli in 1695 he is already referred to as the Abba of Alaverdi³⁰. The Deed of Devotion is contemporary to his accession on the Cathedra of Alaverdi. Ioane Diasamidze accends the throne of Catholicos for the second time in 1695 too. Herewith, the Cathedra of Rustavi is vacant and the son of *Mouravi* (manager) of Kiziki - Zakaria Endronikashvili is

striving to accend it.³¹ Therefore, 1695 should be considered as the year of accession of Nikoloz Choloqashvili. Accordingly, giving the Deed of Devotion by Nikoloz Choloqashvili to the Catholicos should be dated by 1695 instead of 1688-1700.

In 1696 Nikoloz Choloqashvili, along with a number of Kakhetian clergy and nobility grants David Gareja Monastery with the Deed of Libartion. The old Gujars of Gareja Monastery were destroyed during the forays of Lezghins. However, the independence of Gareja Monastery was well-known even with no available documents to prove it. That was the reason for an assembly of Abba Nikoloz of Alaverdi and bishops and official of all Kakheti at the court of a Kakhetian Kizilbashi Khan to come to a unanimous decision on granting a total independence to the **serf** of Gareja Monastery.³² The document is sealed by Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Choloqashvili.

Nikoloz Choloqashvili is the second important figure after the Catholicos among the participants of church assembly of 1702. Based on the resolution of the assembly, “rules and orders” of monastery life were discussed at the assembly. Among the participants of the assembly are named the Bishops of Bodbe, Sameba, Cheremi, Kharchasho, Ninotsminda. The resolution of the assembly is approved first by Catholicos Evdemos II (Diasamidze) (1700-1705) and then by Nikoloz of Alaverdi³³.

In 1707-1708 the Catholicos of East Georgia – Patriarch Domenty IV (Damiane Bagrationi) is on a mission trip to Iran to confirm his rights of Catholicos on ownership of appropriate lands. According to Vakhushti Batonishvili, the Shah of Iran legalized the property in Kakheti to the Catholicos. On his return from Iran, Catholicos visited David II Imamqulikhan in Qaraghaji.³⁴ Domenty IV was received with great honor by David II and granted him with a deed on ownership of Catholicos’ lands in Kakheti. By this deed dated 1710 the Catholicos confirmed his lands. Presumably, along with David II and various Kakhetian bishops, Abba Nikoloz of Alaverdi was one of the hosts of Catholicos. He

must also have taken part in the reviewing procedure of the Catholicos' lands in Kakheti.

In his turn, Nikoloz Choloqashvili is anxious for renovation and expansion of Alaverdi property. In 1707 he handed over the old Deed of Donation of King of Kakhetians Alexander II to David Imamqulikhan for updating³⁵.

As a result of Nikoloz Choloqashvili's effort, Avtandil Amilakhori donated two farmsteads to Alaverdi.³⁶

Nikoloz of Alaverdi participates in church assemblies, verifies and approves resolutions and various documents.

We have numerous documents dated by 1700 and 1711 serving as evidence to Nikoloz Choloqashvili's participation in deals connected with serf domains and handling legal cases.³⁷

By the beginning of 18th century the Archbishop of Alaverdi keeps the leading role in the Kakhetian Kingdom and has the priority of setting privileges to Kakhetian bishops. In 1711 the King of Kakhs David Imamqulikhan grants Nikoloz Choloqashvili with a special deed where he mentions that by his order, the Archbishop of Rustavi is robed in a clothe of a high rank clergyman. David Imamqulikhan explains his decision to promote the Archbishop of Rustavi by his merit of keeping the King's flag and being a military leader and promises of Alaverdi not to allow such precedents and promote Kakhetian bishops without the knowledge of the Archbishop of Alaverdi. By this document the King seems to be apologizing to the Archbishop of Alaverdi. The document of Imamqulikhan is dated by December 11, 1711.³⁸ It is noteworthy that the Deed of Devotion of the Bishops of Bodbe and Rustavi are dated by December 17 of the same year.³⁹ Evidently, Nikoloz Choloqashvili obeyed the King's order, though the King's promise didn't seem to satisfy him, therefore, Zakaria Endronikashvili (of Bodbe) and Nikoloz

Cherqezisshvili (of Rustavi) present to him a special Deed of Devotion and promise obedience and loyalty.

According to Vakhushti Batonishvili, Lezghin attacks on Kakheti intensify in 1706-1710. Lezghins oppress Kakheti so much that David II Imamqulikhan (1709-1722) has to transfer the capital from Qaraghaji to Telavi. Nikoloz Choloqashvili's family also suffered from Lezghin raids. In 1715, his brother, the *Sakhltukhutsesi* (court administrator) and a brother-in-law of the Kakhetian King, Edisher Choloqashvili, was killed in a battle against the Lezghins.^{40*}

The gravity of the Lezghins' raids is well depicted in the Deeds of Charity of Nikoloz Choloqashvili dated by 1721 and 1728, where Nikoloz of Alaverdi thanks the serfs who had loyally served Alaverdi, sets them free and grants them grounds.⁴¹

Nikoloz Choloqashvili was not only a clerical, but also a significant political figure. On decease of King Erekle I, in order to confirm David II (Imamqulikhan) on the Kakhetian throne, he travelled to Iran, where he had to stay till 1715. During this period a formal ruler of Kakheti was a juvenile son of Erekle I – Teimuraz Batonishvili. According to Vakhushti Batonishvili, Kakheti was practically governed by Queen Anna Choloqashvili and the Head Priest of Alaverdi – Nikoloz Choloqashvili.⁴² Still, as noted by Vakhushti, the affairs of Kakheti are entirely managed by the Archbishop of Alaverdi, who is treated as an extremely reliable and smart person.⁴³

The situation got no better after return of David II Imamqulikhan to Kakheti. Oppressed by Lezghins, the leaders of Kakheti Kingdom are seeking the way out. ("The Kakhetians, troubled, reflected on what to do"). In the existing state of things, Nikoloz Choloqashvili brought up his own plan of problem solution. His strategy was opening the

gateway for Lezghins to the provinces of Kartli and Azerbaijan.⁴⁴

In 1723 Shah Tamaz deprived King Vakhtang VI of the throne of Kartli and granted it to the King of Kakhetians – Konstantine Mahmad Quli Khan. According to Vakhushti, Konstantine summoned Kakhetians for a council on this account. As it seemed, he did not wish to oppose Vakhtang, though Kakhetian noblemen and, according to Vakhushti, especially the Archbishop of Alaverdi, made the King of Kakhetians change his mind. Finally, the Archbishop of Alaverdi and his supporters managed to persuade Mahmad Qulikhan.⁴⁵

From 1723, the situation in Kakheti gets still harder. Along with the risk of assimilation with the Lezghins, Kakheti faces the danger from Ottomans, who had conquered Kartli and were trying to get hold of Kakheti as well. In 1725 Kartlians, who rebelled against Ottomans, called upon Konstantine to rule them.⁴⁶ Konstantine was defeated and took shelter in Ksani Saeristavo and then in Pshavi. The King of Kakhetians, surrounded by his noblemen, was a migrant in Pshavi for a whole year. In 1725 Lezghins managed to occupy Kakheti with the help of “Lezghinified” Kakhetian peasantry. They occupied practically the whole Kakheti except Telavi and Alaverdi.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Alaverdi is still in grave conditions. The Archbishop of Alaverdi is constantly a part of King’s suite and is actively involved in political activities. His congregation and vassals are abandoned. In a document without date, authored by Nikoloz Choloqashvili, he says: “When Kakheti was conquered by Lezghins, we migrated to the estate of Ksani Eristavi (feudal) in Ksani ravine.”⁴⁸ The mentioned document is dated by the years of supremacy of Nikoloz of Alaverdi, and according to the handwriting, it belongs to the period of 1695-1746. We assume that it is possible to identify the date of the document more precisely. Nikoloz Choloqashvili must have left Alaverdi and taken

shelter at the estate of Ksani Eristavi by 1725, after the defeat of Konstantine. Taking into consideration the events that took place further, he must have accompanied the King to Pshavi too. Therefore, the document must have been issued after the abovementioned events, between 1725-1732, before the decease of Nikoloz Choloqashvili.

Soon after Kakheti was conquered by the Lezghins, Kakhetian peasants rebelled against them and appealed to Konstantine who had migrated to Pshavi. The expelled nobility and clergy gradually returned to their vassals and congregations and took up rebuilding their shattered domination and Christianity.⁴⁹ Probably Nikoloz Choloqashvili returned to Alaverdi too.

The attempts of Ottoman Empire to conquer Kakheti failed for a long time. Finally Konstantine had to conclude a truce with the Ottomans and pay contribution and render service to them.⁵⁰ Still, Ottomans did not trust him. In 1731 the son of Esaq the Pasha of Tbilisi, Jusup-Pasha summoned Konstantine under pretence of demonstrating his favor towards him. Konstantine was cautious and was planning to flee to Pshavi. Nikoloz Choloqashvili waged negotiations between King Konstantine and Jusup-Pasha. It was Nikoloz Choloqashvili who finally made him visit Jusup-Pasha. Vakhushti Batonishvili clearly explains the reason of compulsion on behalf of Archbishop of Alaverdi, as he states that the failure of Konstantine to visit the Pasha would result in ravage of Kakheti by Lezghins and Ottomans. Ottomans killed King Konstantine, captivated the Georgian noblemen accompanying him, including Nikoloz Choloqashvili, who was beheaded and whose head was sent to the Sultan of Ottomans.

So tragically ended the long work of the Archbishop who had dedicated it to the Kakhetian Kingdom and its main church – Alaverdi.

Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Choloqashvili was a versatile figure. Apart from his clerical and political activities, he is remarkable for his constructional and publishing initiatives.

In the times of Nikoloz Cholqashvili significant constructional and rehabilitation activities took place in Alaverdi. According to historical materials, in 1698 the Bishop of Rustavi Zakaria Endronikashvili built the bell tower of Alaverdi.⁵¹ Based on the inscription of a golden icon of St. George's Cathedral of Alaverdi,⁵² Nicoloz Choloqashvili renovated a shattered fence of Alaverdi, 'by great efforts and high price paid' had St. George's icon engraved. The icon was ordered from the painting workshop of the Trinity and St. Sergiy's Lavra (in Zagorsk, near Moscow) and in 1721, by the order of Nikoloz Choloqashvili, the icon was completely engraved, except for the image of the saint and the symbol of the workshop⁵³ Also, the "second crown" of an Archbishop was "heavily decorated with gold" and the Gospel was engraved in "all gold". All the above was implemented by Nikoloz, as he himself states, "in the reign of David", i.e. in the period of rule of David II Imamqulikhan – between 1709-1722.

Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Choloqashvili cares for both material aid to Alaverdi and its cultural and librarian life. On request of Nikoloz, in 1714-1716, Demetre Mgalobeli and Zakaria Chilaishvili rewrote the collection of hymns prescribed for the whole year in calendar order in Alaverdi Church (A366, A379, A380). Nikoloz of Alaverdi saved from "raiders" the stolen "*Markhvani*" (book of prayers to be read during fasting) of the 16th century (A1404)⁵⁴. It is worth mentioning the activity of the daughter of Erekle I, Mariam Batonishvili in the Alaverdi Monastery in Nikoloz's being the Archbishop. Early widowed Mariam bagrationi, with the permission of her brother, the King of Kakheti David Imamqulikhan, became a nun in Alaverdi Monastery and changed her name to Makrine. Makrine was a great expert of her native Georgian, Armenian, Greek and French languages. Before becoming a nun in Alaverdi, by her request and funds was rewritten the collection of hymns for great Christian holidays which has been preserved in three manuscripts (A 366; A 379; A 380); she personally rewrote the second part of

the canonical collection of "the Divine Gujar (deed)" (Q 427), a hymnographic collection (S 3269) and others. Some of the most remarkable original works of Makrine Batonishvili are iambic "Praising", attached by her as an afterword to Saba's dictionary (H 1740) and hymns to the founder of Alaverdi Monastery, Ioseb of Alaverdi. (A 387; S3269; H 1762; H 2077). In addition to the hymns, she is the author of the a short biographic data of Ioseb of Alaverdi written for a *typikon*.²⁵⁴

Because of Nikoloz Choloqashvili's versatile talent and contribution, during the confirmation of his Deed of Charity, one of subsequent Archbishops of Alaverdi (the son of Pata Mouravi, Nikoloz), refers to him as to "a great Master in one of the documents dated by 1775."⁵⁶ Nikoloz Choloqashvili is one of the most active clerical, political and cultural figures. It is time to give him his proper place among outstanding Georgian figures of the boundary of the 17th-18th centuries.

Bibliography:

* Archil was a representative of an offshoot of the Bagrationis – the Mukhranbatonis. The Mukhranbatonis were notable for their perfect education, knowledge of literature and history and made a great contribution to the country's cultural development.

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The Chronology of the Archbishops of Alaverdi

(17-th century)

- 1. Abba Alaverdeli Philippe (Michabadze) 1590-1602/1604-1611**
- 2. Abba Alaverdeli Choloqashvili 1602-1604**
- 3. An unknown Abba of Alaverdi (perhaps Iovane Avalishvili) (approx. 1612-1627)**
- 4. Abba Alaverdeli Mitrophane (1628-1636)**
- 5. Abba Alaverdeli Zebede 1636-1648**
- 6. Abba Alaverdeli A Arsen (Avalishvili) 1648 - [1660]**
- 7. Abba Alaverdeli Grigol (Choloqashvili) Approximately 1664-1676**
- 8. Abba Alaverdeli Nikoloz (Endronikashvili)**
- 9. Abba Alaverdeli Nikoloz (Cholokashvili) 1695-1732**

*On the Interrelation of the Catholicosate
of Mtskheta and Alaverdi*

XVII Century

Part I



In the 15th-16th centuries the relations between the Mtskheta Catholicosate and Alaverdi developed in a very interesting way. In the middle of 15th century the united Georgian feudal monarchy broke up. In 1466 Kakheti was formed into an independent kingdom. Despite the break-up of the united state, the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia tried to retain the church unity in the country. This is confirmed by several Charters of Pledge and Oath submitted by the Archbishop of Alaverdi and other Kakhetian bishops to the Catholicos-Patriarch, in which they swear loyalty and obedience to him.¹ Kakheti remained ecclesiastically under the subordination of the Patriarchate of eastern Georgia. Unlike this period, by the first half of the 17th century there is scarce material reflecting the relations of Alaverdi and Mtskheta, which is mostly caused by the political developments occurring at that time. Due to the same reason, the character of these relations is unusual too.

At the turn of the 16th-17th centuries the Catholicos-Patriarch of eastern Georgia was Domenti II (circa 1595-1610)², and the Archbishop of Alaverdi was Philippe Michabadze (1590-1611). Relevant documentary material has not come down to us to ascertain the character of their relations. It is known that at the beginning of the 17th century upon the renewal of the military

operation with Ottoman Turkey Shah Abbas I invited the kings of Kartli and Kakheti too. In the retinue of the Georgian kings, along with the lay noblemen, there were Catholicos-Patriarch

Domenti II and Archbishop Philippe of Alaverdi. In spring 1604, after capturing Erevan, the Shah ordered Aleksandre to accompany him to Iran and sent him back to Georgia only in January 1605.³ Thus, during their stay with the Shah, Philippe of Alaverdi and Catholicos Domenti II, whose rule was approximately simultaneous, proceeding from the existing situation, must have had a common interest and close relations.

According to “Archiliani”, Teimuraz, approved as the king by Shah Abbas I, after the meeting in Kakheti with “all the Kakhetians, together with the Archbishop of Alaverdi, bishops, clergymen and laymen”, went to Mtskheta, where after the meeting with “the Catholicos, the archbishop and all the Georgians”, he was crowned, the divine service was celebrated, a feast was held and generous donation was offered.⁴ The Catholicos mentioned by Archil must be Domenti II, and Archbishop of Alaverdi - Philippe. So, the coronation of Teimuraz I as a Christian king occurred at Mtskheta by the participation and attendance of Catholicos Domenti, Archbishop Philippe of Alaverdi, other clergymen and laymen.

The rule of the next Archbishop of Alaverdi, Choloqashvili, was very short. The available information on the relationship of Choloqashvili and Catholicos-Patriarch Domenti concerns one delicate episode. The younger sister of Aleksandre II, Princess Thekla, took the veil at the Alaverdi nunnery. The Archbishop of Alaverdi and nun Thekla had a secret love affair. Finally, Princess Thekla together with the Archbishop of Alaverdi fled to the Kingdom of Imereti. According to Prince Vakhushti, the Patriarch of that time, Domenti II (circa 1595-1610), learned about this and anathematized Choloqashvili.⁵

In 1612-1616 the Catholicos-Patriarch of eastern Georgia was Iovane IX⁶, and the Archbishop Philippe of Alaverdi was already succeeded in his post by Iovane (Avalishvili) of Alaverdi. In

1616, due to the invasion of Shah Abbas I, the Kings of Kartli and Kakheti Teimuraz I (1606-1648) and Luarsab II (1606-1614) fled to safety to the Kingdom of Imereti. Catholicos-Patriarch Iovane IX moved to Imereti together with them. Iovane IX died in Imereti in 1617. The character of the alleged relations of Catholicos Iovane and the archbishop of Alaverdi in 1615-1617 is unknown, as there is no evidence concerning this.

The following Catholicos-Patriarch of eastern Georgia was Kristephore I (1616-1622)⁷, whose service coincided with the nominal reign of Bagrat VII (1615-19) and his son Svimon II (1619-1631) in Kartli. At that time Archbishop of Alaverdi was in western Georgia together with Teimuraz. There are no reports on the relations of Kristephore I and Archbishop of Alaverdi. Due to the political situation in Kartli at that period, it is doubtful that they had any relations.

Catholicos Kristephore I (1616-1622) was succeeded by Zakharia (Jorjadze) (1623-1632)⁸. Before becoming the senior priest of the royal court's church, Zakharia was the bishop of Nekresi, hence, before his enthronement as the Catholicos, hierarchically he must have been in the subordination of the Archbishop of Alaverdi. Zakharia was together with King Teimuraz in Imereti, seeking safety.

By 1625 Teimuraz returned to eastern Georgia as the king of Kartli and Kakheti. Catholicos Zakharia had good relations with the Catholic missionaries working in Georgia and tried to use these relations to the benefit of the country. Christophoro De Castelli refers to Nikoloz Irubakidze -Choloqashvili sent as an envoy to Europe at that time as the "envoy of the King and the Patriarch of Georgia". In 1626-1633 the episcopate of Alaverdi functioned. At the same time, according to the reports of Catholic missionaries, Archbishop Mitropane of Alaverdi was together with Teimuraz. The attitude of Mitropane of Alaverdi to Catholics was totally different from that of the King and the Patriarch, which soon became the cause for the conflict between the Catholicos and the Archbishop of Alaverdi. On May 11, 1628, Portuguese Augustine monks Father Ambrósio dos Anjos and novice Brother Pedro dos Santos arrived in Gori in order to transfer the holy relics of St. Queen Ketevan to Teimuraz. Teimuraz ordered Catholicos-Patriarch Zakharia Jorjadze and other clergymen to receive the holy relics of the Queen and place them at the Alaverdi church, in the ossuary of the Kakhetian kings. The holy relics were put in a precious coffin and taken to the Alaverdi church where they were placed on the altar. Among the clergymen and laymen attending this ceremony was Archbishop Mitropane of Alaverdi too. A conflict appeared between the latter and Catholicos Zakharia. The Catholicos,

who allowed Augustine monk Father Ambrósio to celebrate the divine service and preach a sermon, prohibited the Archbishop of the same see, the Archbishop of Alaverdi to celebrate the divine service and deliver a sermon. The conflict occurred in the presence of the Portuguese monks, which greatly offended the King. Teimuraz left the church. The monks having arrived from Constantinople tried to appease the King. The king blamed them in the incident that had taken place and went away. On June 29, 1628, Father Ambrósio wrote in his letter that “the patriarch did not allow the bishop to celebrate the divine service”.⁹ The exact reason of the conflict is unknown. It may be assumed that the disagreement occurred on the religious grounds, which is confirmed by the activity of the Greeks and their blaming by the Teimuraz, as well as different attitude of Catholicos Zakharia and Archbishop of Alaverdi to Catholic monks and personal disagreement between them.

Another conflict between Catholicos Zakharia and Archbishop of Alaverdi occurred in connection with the sacrament of baptism. According to the Archbishop of Alaverdi, educated in Greece, Georgian priests incorrectly performed baptism. Because of this, Mitrophan of Alaverdi baptized many noblemen again, Catholicos Zakharia prohibited him from baptizing for a second time. The Archbishop of Alaverdi did not obey the Catholicos, due to which, Zakharia blamed Mitrophan in heresy and anathematized him. In order to clear up the mess, Catholic monks personally attended the performance of the sacrament of baptism by Georgian priests. They were convinced that the Archbishop of Alaverdi was right, excused him and reconciled him with the Catholicos.¹⁰ In 1633 Rostom occupied Kartli, due to which, Teimuraz together with his retinue again moved to Imereti. The archbishop of Alaverdi also went to western Georgia. In my view, the above-mentioned allows to assume that the relations between Archbishop Mitrophan of Alaverdi and Catholicos-Partriarch Zakharia Jorjadze were quite tense and conflicting, which along with the disagreement in religious matters was also caused by personal relations.

Information on the subsequent Archbishop of Alaverdi, Zebede, is found in the charter of grant of an estate given by King Teimuraz to Arsen Avalishvili, dated 1630, written by Zebede himself. It is noted in the document that it was written “when the Catholicos of Georgia was great and wise Zakharia, but by the hand of the worst sinner Zebede”¹¹ Thus, in the very first document where Zebede is mentioned and which is written by him, Catholicos-Patriarch Zakharia is mentioned with respect, but the status of Zebede himself is not clear. On the basis of this charter of grant, it should be assumed that at that time both Arsen Avalishvili and Zebede

were with Teimuraz. It is known that beginning from autumn 1633 Archbishop Mitrophan of Alaverdi was in the Kingdom of Samegrelo, at the court of Levan Dadiani (1611-1657). Prince Levan of Samegrelo appointed him bishop of Tsalenjikha,¹² who in 1634-37 was raised to the rank of Metropolitan.¹³ According to the evidence of Russian envoys Fedot Elchin and Pavel Zakhariev, arriving in November 1639 from Moscow in Odishi to Levan Dadiani, on April 23, 1640, at the Ilori church of St. George they met Mitrophan together with the Catholicos-Patriarch Maksime Machutadze of Abkhazia (1639-1657) and Prince Vakhtang of Guria. Mitrophan of Alaverdi was in the retinue of the newly enthroned Catholicos-Patriarch of Abkhazia (western Georgia) and participated in the festive ceremony together with him.¹⁴ Thus, in 1633-1636 the Archbishop of Alaverdi was in western Georgia, and the Alaverdi see was vacant.

In 1632-1642 the Catholicos-Patriarch of eastern Georgia was Evdemos I (Diasamidze).¹⁵ who had been the Archbishop of Bodbe in 1617-1619.¹⁶ At the time of his enthronement, the king of unified Kartli and Kakheti was Teimuraz I (1625-1632). Evdemos Diasamidze was a person in attendance of Teimuraz. Along with the common national and political interests, they were also related by kinship. In 1633 when Rostom became the king of Kartli and Teimuraz moved to Imereti, Evdemos did not follow the latter. He remained in Kartli and acted secretly for the enthronement of Teimuraz.

In 1634 Teimuraz managed to return to Kakheti. Rostom and the Shah of Iran again recognized him as the king of Kakheti. In 1636 Archbishop of Kartli Iovane Avalishvili consecrated Zebede as the archbishop of Alaverdi, when Mitrophan of Alaverdi was still living. There is no direct evidence on the relationship of Evdemos Diasamidze and Zebede of Alaverdi (in 1636-1642). It is only possible to assume that they were driven by common interests, both must have been among the loyal and like-minded persons of Teimuraz I.

Teimuraz in his turn was not content with Kakheti and, instead of retaining peaceful relations with Rostom, continued to struggle for Kartli by various methods. In 1642 a great plot was organized against Rostom Khan. Along with Kartlian noblemen, Catholicos-Patriarch Evdemos Diasamidze was one of the inspirers of the plot.¹⁷ The plot was betrayed and Rostom put to

death the unruly catholicos together with other plotters (Catholicos Evdemoz is canonized by the Georgian Church and is commemorated on October 4).

Instead of Evdemoz Diasamidze, Rostom Khan with great caution appointed Catholicos Kristepore II (Urdubegisdze)¹⁸ (1642-1660). The struggle of Teimuraz for the unification of Kartli and Kakheti finally ended in a failure. In 1648 he again had to move to the Kingdom of Imereti. Rostom allowed Teimuraz to go to Imereti and sent Catholicos Kristephore II with him.

Shah Abbas II of Iran (1642-1666) granted Kakheti too to Rostom. The latter (1632-1658) ruled Kakheti in 1648-1656. Peace established for a while in the Kingdom of Kakheti.¹⁹ As soon as Rostom became the king of Kakheti, restoration works began. The king traveled around Kakheti together with Queen Mariam. He visited Alaverdi. The process of the restoration of Alaverdi and regulation of its serfs and estates began. At that period Arsen (Avalishvili) (1648-[1660]) was enthroned as the Archbishop of Alaverdi. During his service as the archbishop of Alaverdi, Queen Mariam officially confirmed to Alaverdi the charter of immunity of its estates granted by King Teimuraz.²⁰ King Rostom exempted the serfs of the Alaverdi church from state taxes by one half, left the half of the income to the church of St. George and the other half to the state.²¹ At the same time, according to the document of circa 1648-1651, during the service of Arsen of Alaverdi, serfs were returned to the church of St. George of Alaverdi.²² Unfortunately, it was impossible to find the documentary material reflecting the relations of Arsen Avalishvili and Catholicos-Patriarch Kristephore. However, it should be assumed on the basis of their personal characteristics known from available sources, that these relations must have had the character of peaceful coexistence. The restoration of Alaverdi and the regulation of its serfs and estates must have occurred under the supervision of Arsen Avalishvili.

Part II



After the death of Rostom a representative of an offshoot of the Bagrationis – the Mukhranbatonis, a talented state figure Vakhtang V Shahnava (1658-1675) ascends the royal throne of Kartli. In 1664 the royal throne of Kakheti is granted to the son of Vakhtang V, Archil Mukhranbatoni. In 1664 the father and the son jointly govern Kartli and Kakheti. The internal policy aimed at the unification of the Georgian state turned out to be rather favorable for both Kingdoms: Kartli and Kakheti: “(The Kakhetians) were united with the Kartvelians in all ways” and “Kakheti was being built... and Lezghins dared no more attacks.”²³

In spite of a loyal attitude of King Rostom towards Christianity, during his reign the influence of the Christian religion considerably weakened, while Islamic traditions, on the contrary, gained power. The Mohammedan religion of the Kings of Kartli and Kakheti – Vakhtang V and Archil was nothing but a formality. From the very start of their governance, they took measures to strengthen the Christian religion which had yielded in the reign of Rostom, and greatly support the Georgian Church by renovating and rendering material aid to churches and monasteries.²⁴

In such conditions, the church of Kartli and Kakheti is united too. We have no first-hand data on the relationship between the Residence of Mtskheta Catholicos and Alaverdi, though taking into account the existing data we can approximately restore this relationship. In order to reinforce Christianity, Vakhtang appointed his cousin Domenty Mukhranbatoni, “a person worth of the church” as a Catholicos in 1660. Domenty III (1660-1676) is an associate of Vakhtang and an active pursuer of his policy. His construction activities, struggle to extirpate Islamic traditions and efforts to organize Catholicos’ serf lands are also worth mentioning, According to Vakhushti Batonishvili, Catholicos Domenty “added to faith and clerical order”.²⁵ In the period of Domenty III, specifically in 1664-1676, Grigol Choloqashvili, whose family was in rather close relations to the family of Teimuraz I, the King of Kakheti, held the status of Alaverdi.

In 1664, Teimuraz I was buried in Alaverdi family graveyard, according to his will. In accordance with the materials of Vakhushti Batonishvili, the Catholicos and bishops of Kartli and Kakheti gathered in Alaverdi to bury the long-suffering king in the family graveyard.²⁶ Among the attendants of the burial, there must have been Catholicos Domenty and Grigol of Alaverdi. (“Then the Catholicos and the bishops of Kartli and Kakheti gathered by the order of King Vakhtang and buried in Alaverdi “ (1664).

It is also probable that they jointly participated in the crowning as the King of Kakheti and wedding ceremonies of Archil Mukhranbatoni. Catholicos Domenty, who had been rather active in organizing the property of the Residence of Catholicos, asked Archil to re-confirm the old property Svetitskhoveli in Kakheti. Per Catholicos’ request, Archil renewed the Deed of Charity.²⁷ It should be assumed that the renewal took place in the presence of Grigol of Alaverdi. In the list of Svetitskhoveli, Archil is referred to as the renovator of the old donations to Svetitskhoveli.

²⁸

Church relationship between Domenty III and Grigol Choloqashvili in the period of their supremacy, as well as the lay policy of those times is calm.

Archil had not gained the royal throne smoothly. He had to struggle in order to come to power in the country granted to him by the Shah. A considerable part of noblemen considered Erekle a lawful heir of the throne and wished to view him as a King. Archil’s victory turned out to be temporary. In spite of his marriage to Ketevan Bagrationi, a great part of Kakhetian nobility and clergy supported Erekle Batonishvili.

A strengthened and peaceful Kartli-kakheti opposes the interests of Iran. Intended to change the existing situation, the Shah of Iran Suleyman (1666-1694), summoned from Russia a lawful heir of the Kakhetian royal throne – a grandson of Teimuraz I, the brother of the wife of King Archil – Erekle Batonishvili. The Shah of Iran promised to grant Erekle Batonishvili the royal throne of Kakheti and at the same time, the right to remain a Christian.²⁹ In 1674 Erekle was received with great honor and then sent to Iran by Archil. Erekle was met by a strong supporters’ group, a part of which accompanied him to Iran. The accession of Erekle on the Kakhetian throne is beyond doubt, so Erekle just quietly leaves Kakheti in 1675.

On Archil’s departure, a newly ascended Catholicos – the Archbishop of Rustavi Nikoloz Amilakhvari, along with Kakhetian bishops, took timely measures to send a letter to the Tsar of Russia on February 6, 1676 and ask him to act as a mediator before the Shah of Iran to let them crown Erekle Batonishvili as a King. The letter of Catholicos is signed by Grigol of Alaverdi, the Bishops of Bodbe, Rustavi, Ninotsminda, Nekresi and Sameba.³⁰ Of the above-mentioned

persons, father of Grigol Choloqashvili, was a *Sakhtukhutsesi* (court administrator) of Teimuraz I and fell victim to the loyal service of the King, the Bishop of Rustavi – Ioane Diasamidze (1676-1688) was an uncle of Erekle I (from mother's side); the Bishop of Ninotsminda was Nikoloz Endronikashvili, a future Archbishop of Alaverdi. The letter vividly demonstrates the attitude of the supreme clergy towards the crowning of a lawful heir, with whom many had close, and in cases, kin relations.

Appearance of Erekle on the political arena, although he never got the promised Kakhetian Kingdom on his visit to the court of the Shah of Iran, fundamentally changed the previously regulated and peaceful situation in Kartli and Kakheti to the worse.

By 1676 the Shah of Iran appointed the son of Vakhtang V, Giorgi XI Shah Navaz Khan (1676-1688; 1703-1709) to the throne of Kartli. As for the vacant Kakhetian throne, it was granted to neither Giorgi XI, nor to Erekle Batonishvili. Erekle strove for accession as a Christian King and with the hope of support from Russia refused to be converted into Islam. According to the chronicles of Parsadan Gorgijanidze and Paris chronicles, the Shah gave Kakheti to a “vassal of Erekle, a relative to the Bagrationis”, Gorjaspi Kakhbrishvili (1677-1683)³¹ In this regard, the Shah of Iran informed the Tsar of Russia that he had received Erekle with due honor, but would grant him the Kingdom of Kakheti only on his adoption of the Iranian rules and customs. (view page 119 of the same document).

The descendant of the Kakhetian Bagrationis, Erekle Batonishvili and his mother, Elene Diasamidze, still hoped for Erekle's coronation in Kakheti and were making special preparations for the event. Erekle was backed up by the aristocracy supporting the Kakhetian Bagrationis – an influential group of clerical and lay feudal lords. Care for the principal church of Kakheti and the place of graveyard of the Kakhetian Bagrationis from mother of Erekle I, Queen Elene Diasamidze, before her travel to Russia, her being in Russia or Iran, is quite natural.^{*32}

Still, a special donation of the Kakhetian Queen was the Archbishop's golden crown prepared by the order of Elene Diasamidze in Isfahan. According to the benefactor's inscription on the Alaverdi crown, Queen Elene ordered donated the crown to St. George of Alaverdi for the peace of souls of Teimuraz I, Queen Khoreshan, Queen Nestan-Darejan, David Batonishvili, the sons – Luarsab and Giorgi Batonishvilis (Erekle's brothers), for the health of Erekle and his family and for easing of her own soul.³³

Also it is not casual that in the same 1683, Elene donated serf lands to St. George's Alaverdi Church for the peace of souls of her sons – Luarsabi and Giorgi Batonishvilis (Erekle's brothers) and Queen Nestan-Darejan and the health of Erekle.³⁴

In 1677-1683 Kakheti is governed by Gorjaspi (Bezhan Khan). By this time Kakheti is significantly fortified and strengthened; Kakhetian noblemen hardly obey the Khan and behave independently. In his turn, Khan does not favor them and contributes to intensification of Lezghin raids and ravage of Kakheti. Kakheti openly expresses dissatisfaction with Bezhan Khan and requires his substitution. It is noteworthy that this change is dated by 1683. Contemporary to the above change is preparation of a crown for the Archbishop of Alaverdi by the order of Elene Diasamidze and the donation of lands to Alaverdi. The royal family of Kakheti and their confidants are well aware of the ongoing processes in Kakheti and the ground is well prepared for Erekle's coronation in 1683. Though, instead of Erekle who is ready to be crowned, "another Khan" (1683-1688) is being sent to Kakheti.

In the meantime, the Catholicos-Patriarch of East Georgia is Nikoloz IX Amilakhvari (the son of Iotam) (1678-1688; 1692-1695), who was an Archbishop of Rustavi before becoming a Catholicos. The royal throne of Kartli is occupied by Giorgi IX, the son of Vakhtang V Shahnavaz, a descendant of the Mukhrani Bagrationis. Soon after coronation of Giorgi IX, he appoints Nikoloz IX as the Catholicos. The King and the Catholicos are related by blood.*

In spite of another failure, Erekle, being in Iran, still gets ready for taking the reign in Kakheti. The strategy of Erekle and his supporters is first of all based on achieving not only a political, but also an ecclesiastic independence of Kakheti Kingdom from Kartli. The fact of Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Endronikashvili putting on a crown specially ordered in Iran without receiving due authorization from the Catholicos asserts the above thesis.³⁵ In 1685 Nikoloz already obtains the Cathedra of Alaverdi.**

Nikoloz Endronikashvili happened to hold the Cathedra of Alaverdi in the period of governance of Kizilbashi Khan Abbas Ziaf Oghly (1683-1688) in Kakheti. Vakhushti Batonishvili, narrating of the ongoing events in Kakheti, mentions that Kizilbashi Khan ruled in Kakheti through Revaz Choloqashvili *Mouravis* (manager) of Kiziki and Eliseni.³⁶ In case of decease of a bishop, these Kakhetian grandees nominated a candidature which was then sent by a Khan for sanctification to Catholicos-Patriarch of East Georgia.³⁷ In other words, in the rule of Kizilbashi Khan as well, the candidature nominated by the Kakhetian noblemen and bishops was sanctified by the Catholicos on Khan's approval. As it becomes clear from the Deed of Pray of Nikoloz of Alaverdi dated by 1685-1688 addressed to Ioseb of Tbilisi with a request to act as a mediator and a conciliator before the Catholicos.³⁸ Nikoloz Andronikashvili crowns himself with no prior authorization from the Catholicos and ascends the Cathedra without his sanctification. The relationship between the Catholicos and the self-crowned Archbishop of Alaverdi gets so complicated that in order to solve the conflict, the Archbishop of Alaverdi has to ask the Archbishop of Tbilisi – Ioseb for mediation before the Catholicos.

The content of the document is rather significant and clearly depicts the actual state of things and in a certain way explains the reason for the willful act of the Archbishop of Alaverdi. As it seems, in the given period (1685-1688) the relationship of Kartli and Kakheti is so tense that Kakhetians can barely even visit Kartli. According to Nikoloz Endronikashvili, this must have been the reason for his failure to visit Mtskheta personally to worship Svetitskhoveli and receive the pardon from the Catholicos.

Nikoloz Endronikashvili states himself that traditionally the Archbishop of Alaverdi is sanctified by the Catholicos of Mtskheta. He realizes well the precedent of his action and promises that after his death no Archbishop of Alaverdi would wear the crown without sanctification by the Catholicos.

The document vividly shows both the great indignation of the Catholicos and the fact that the separatist action was committed by The Archbishop of Alaverdi as a result of advice and interference by the third party. It is clear that Nikoloz Endronikashvili would not initiate such a deed with no support and encouragement from the Kakhetian royal family and their supporters. In this regard it is worth to note his own remark: "I did wrong, but the affair and the time made me do it". Finally, as it seems, the effort failed and The Archbishop of Alaverdi is asking the Archbishop of Tbilisi to mediate before the Catholicos and persuade him to grant him the Deed of Pardon and reconcile him. The whole letter serves as evidence to the dominance of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Mtskheta as of the supreme clerical sovereign of Georgia.

In this rather complicated period, Catholicos-Patriarch Nikoloz Amilakhvari managed to suppress the effort by the Kakhetian leaders timely and retain Kakheti under the ecclesiastic subordination of the Residence of Catholicos of Mtskheta.

Finally, Erekle I made sure he would not be able to inherit the throne by staying Christian, so he adopted Islam and took the name of Nazarali-Khan. In return to the compromise, he received the royal throne from the Shah of Iran. However, instead of the desired Kakhetian throne, the Shah granted him the throne of Kartli and confirmed him as a King (1688-1703). The Shah also donated to him a part of Kakheti – Kiziki and Tusheti. By this action, the Shah of Iran opposed the descendant of the Kakhetian Bagrationis – Erekle I to the Mukhrani Bagrationis.

According to Parsadan Gorgijanidze, the only person who did not appear before the newly crowned Erekle in Kartli was Catholicos-Patriarch Nikoloz. This fact is mentioned in Paris chronicles too.³⁹ Offended Erekle informed the Shah on the incident, who punished the refractory Catholicos by depriving him of his title. According to Vakhushti Bagrationi, among the

opponents of Erekle were other clergymen of high rank as well. Erekle dismissed the unruly Catholicos and appointed his uncle, the Archbishop of Rustavi Ioane Diasamidze (1688-1692;

1695-1700) instead. In this regard Vakhushti Batonishvili emphasizes that before that, no Catholicos had been substituted with the interference of a lay person. Erekle implemented such a substitution.⁴⁰ By this action the King got rid of his opponents among the clergymen of a high rank and appointed those who were loyal to him.

In our opinion, the reason for the protest of Catholicos was neither his support of Giorgi XI nor accession of Erekle instead. As is vividly shown in the letter of Catholicos dated by 1676, the Catholicos, previously an Archbishop of Rustavi, realizes well the grave situation in Kakheti abandoned by Archil: Lezghin raids intensify, the country faces the danger of being converted into Islam. So the Catholicos of Georgia timely and adequately reacts to the situation and along with Kakhetian bishops solicits for Erekle's coronation. At this time, Erekle as a person is a suitable candidature for him. Along with other bishops, the same letter is signed by Nikoloz Endronikashvili, who at this time is the Archbishop of Ninotsminda.

However, the events that took place in 1683, particularly preparation for accession of the Archbishop of Alaverdi without Catholicos' permission and sanctification, his willful accession and the resulting conflict changed the Catholicos' attitude towards Erekle Batonishvili. It is evident that Catholicos is well aware that Nikoloz Endronikashvili would hardly be the initiator of this kind of affair without any support or encouragement from the Kakhetian royal family. Consequently, a failure in this conflict would not only be that of the Archbishop of Alaverdi, but also a great defeat of the Kakhetian lay leaders inclined to separatism, led by Erekle Batonishvili. It is clear that under such circumstances, the relationship of Catholicos and Erekle Batonishvili would become tense.

In the period of Ioane X (1688-1692; 1695-1700) being a Catholicos, the relations between the Catholicos and the Archbishop of Alaverdi are peaceful. Nikoloz Endronikashvili retains the status of a Head Priest and is still in the rank of an Archbishop. According to the document dated by 1690, the Archbishop of Alaverdi is one of the participants of the church assembly summoned by Erekle I, along with Catholicos Ioane X. By this time we have a completely different situation: a candidate for the Kakhetian royal throne is the King of Kartli, a Catholicos is a suitable figure for him and the Cathedra of Alaverdi is occupied by an Archbishop who had not long before rebelled by his own encouragement. In the given reality, separatism of the Head Priest of Kakheti would make no sense. In the document dated by 1690 Ioane X refers to himself as to the "Catholicos sanctifying Kartli and Kakheti"⁴¹

In 1694 Abba of Alaverdi Nikoloz Endronikashvili, along with Catholicos Ioane, the Archbishop of Tbilisi, Nikoloz Choloqashvili (of Rustavi) and some lay persons is a participant of mediation of an "affair of blood" of the Guramishvili family initiated by Erekle I.⁴²

It is worth mentioning that by 1695 the subsequent Head Priest of Alavedri – Nikoloz Choloqashvili, before accension to the Cathedra presents the Deed of Devotion to Catholicos Ioane Diasamidze.⁴³

The traditional subordination between the Residence of Catholicos and Alaverdi is maintained.

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³⁰ *Переписка Грузинских Царей съ Российскими Государями, от 1659 г. По 1770 г., СПб, 1861, стр. 92, 93;*

³¹ Tskhovreba Sakartveloisa (cxovreba saqarTveloÁsa) (parizis qronika) (ed. G. Alasania), Tbilisi, 1980, p. 119;

* In 1635 Erekle donates to Alaverdi for the welfare of Alaverdi a small silver candlestick; in the 60-ies-70-ies of the 17th century he ordered in the workshop of Stroganovs an embroidery of "deposition" (1654-1674) for Alaverdi Cathedral. According to the will of Queen Elene, her son Erekle donated and placed it in Alaverdi. Thus, the donation took place after the decease of Elene. Queen Elene had ordered from a famous Russian icon painter, Simon Ushakov St. George's icon for Alaverdi.

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³³ The Central Historical Archive 1449-112;

* The wife of the brother of Catholicos, Givi Amilakhvari, is Tamar, the sister of Giorgi IX. Givi is the chief of Saamilakhvro, the commander of Zemo Kartli *Sadroshe* (military unit) and the *Mouravi* of Gori, a person in close relations with the royal court.

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Summary

Because of a special significance of the Alaverdi eparchy it had been a subject of interest of many Georgian scientists. However, it had never been studied in a monographic way. I intend to publish a book on the history of the Alaverdi monastery and eparchy. The chronological framework of the work includes the period from the foundation of the monastery (VI century) to XVIII century.

The work prepared for one year's period within **Farig** grant will be a significant part of the book and the contribution of the foundation and its importance will by all means be mentioned while publishing the book.

With the help of **Farig** we were able to study the main themes of history of the Alaverdi eparchy of XVII century. A number of Georgian and foreign narrative sources, published epigraphic materials, published and unpublished documentary sources have been worked at and systematized. These systematized materials make it possible to prepare in a short time the remaining issues of the history of Alaverdi of the mentioned period that were not included into the one-year grant. These issues are: social and economic conditions of Alaverdi, serf lands (in chronological order), the property of the Catholicos of Mtskheta in Kakheti, Alaverdi as a cultural and educational center, etc.

The study of the history of the Alaverdi eparchy in view of its contemporary political history is important and informative not only from the point of view of the history of church, but also for the study of the history of West and East Georgia and for establishment of various events and facts that had been unknown before, as well as for their chronological specification.

A serious obstacle for our work was a lack of sources and absence or inaccuracy of the existing documentary materials, which required additional research. The Georgian version of the work is much more extensive, as it contains references to corresponding extracts from both documentary and narrative sources which we refrained from translating due to the complexity, specifics and volume of the old Georgian language.

The presented work consists of the four main topics and its content is as follows:

1. Historical sources about the Alaverdi eparchy (XVII century);
2. The Alaverdi eparchy (XVII century);
3. The Chronology of the Archbishops of Alaverdi (chapter I and II)
4. On the Interrelation of the Catholicosate of Mtskheta and Alaverdi

Chapter I of the work is “The Historical Sources on the Alaverdi Eparchy”. It briefly reviews the Georgian, Eastern and Western narrative sources used in the work and their significance for the research of the issue.

During the work, as a result of matching of the Georgian and foreign narrative and documentary sources it became possible to date anew several historical documents. Those were, for example, the Deed (Ad 600) issued by king Teimuraz to Zebede, [Abba] of Alaverdi, newly dated by 1636-1648 instead of 1612 on the basis of prior research; the Deed of Agreement (Hd – 14687) issued by king Teimuraz to Zakaria Avalishvili, newly dated by 1641-1648 instead of the thirties of XVII century, the Deed of Devotion, presented by Nikoloz Choloqashvili to Catholicos-Patriarch Ioane X (Ad 74), newly dated by 1695 instead of 1688-1700, etc.

Chapter II presents the chronology of the Archbishops of Alaverdi. Because of the volume of the text and bibliography, as regards the chronology, this chapter is divided into two parts (the first and the second part of XVII century). So far, the Georgian historiography has known only five chief priests of Alaverdi, as well as the estimated years of their leadership: **Ioane Avalishvili, Zebede, Arsen Avalishvili, Nikoloz Endronikashvili and Nikoloz Choloqashvili**. As a result of the research, four more Archbishops of Alaverdi of XVII century and the years of their leadership and the details of their activity were additionally identified. These are the following Abbas of Alaverdi: **Philippe Michabadze, Choloqashvili** (first name is unknown), **Mitrophane** (I keep working on identifying his family name) and **Grigol Choloqashvili**. The identification of these persons gave us the possibility to define the years of leadership of the already known chief priests of Alaverdi with more precision. Moreover, our efforts to get some precise details from their biographies revealed a number of interesting and important facts and there emerged new topics of interest and issues requiring further research.

While working on the definition of the chronological order we came to know that archbishops of Alaverdi actively participated and played an important role in the processes taking place in the country from political, diplomatic, military, strategic and cultural points of view.

Close relations of Abbas of Alaverdi with the Kakhetian royal court and their participation in the decision-making process concerning issues of national importance (marriages of kings, political and strategic decisions and even governing the country) are worth mentioning. This is clearly demonstrated by the information obtained on each of the above persons.

Chapter III provides an insight on the main stages of the political history of the Alaverdi eparchy. The study of chronology and the activity of Abbas of Alaverdi helped us a lot in restoration of the history of the Alaverdi eparchy in XVII century. A very hard period for the politics of the Kakhetian kingdom was reflected on the life of the Alaverdi eparchy. As a result of the research we identified the periods of activity and abolishment, the restoration and the strategic importance (e.g., its role as a fortress and a centre of rebellion) of the Alaverdi eparchy, etc.

Chapter IV reviews the nature of relationship between Alaverdi and the residence of the Catholicos of Mtskheta. Based on the data of the sources revealed are all facts of such relationship throughout XVII century, the influence of political events on this relationship, the times of peaceful co-existence and confrontations, the reasons for conflicts, the effort and the failure by the Alaverdi see to gain independence from the residence of the Catholicos of Mtskheta. According to the results of the research, the traditional subordination between the residence of the Catholicos of Mtskheta and Alaverdi is maintained by the end of XVII century.

The complex study of the history of the Alaverdi eparchy provides new opportunities for the study of the other eparchies of Kakheti. The history of the main spiritual center of the Kakhetian kingdom is an important part of the history of the Georgian church and is very important for the Georgian history and culture in general.

The photo of Alaverdi Church by G. Bagrationi.

- 1. The Gold Headdress of the Alaverdi Archbishop, XVII century. Was donated to Alaverdi church by Queen Elene Diasamidze in 1683. (Georgian National Museum. Sh. Amiranashvili Art Museum).**
- 2. The Mitre of Alaverdi Mitrophan(e)(also known as Gelati Mitre), XVII century. (Georgian National Museum. Sh. Amiranashvili Art Museum.)**