

THE POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE GEORGIAN KINGS WITH THE RULERS OF THE SHAKI KHANATE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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In the middle of the 18th century, there were struggles for hegemony among the khans of the South-Eastern Caucasus. As expected, the kings of Kartli and Kakheti got also actively involved in these conflicts. All this was caused by the chaos and disorder that began after the murder of Nader Shah (the night of June 19-20, 1747) in his empire. In Iran, fierce battles were going on between the seekers of the royal throne for the first place. In the South Caucasus were formed independent and semi-independent political entities. So, in order to expand their dominions, the rulers of the provinces and khanates of Iran took advantage of the extremely difficult situation in the state and started violent actions. The battles between them took place directly at the borders of Georgia, and naturally, the kings of Kartli and Kakheti could not remain in the role of observers. They soon got involved in the hostilities and battles.

Among these battles, in the mentioned period, military confrontations of King Teimuraz II (King of Kakheti in 1733-1744; King of Kartli in 1744-1762) and King Erekle II (King of Kakheti in 1744-1762; King of Kartli-Kakheti in 1762-1798) with the rulers of the Shaki Khanate: Haji-Chelebi Khan (1743-1746; 1747-1755) and his son, Agha-Kishi Khan (1755-1759) occupy quite outstanding place.

In the 40s of the 18th century, when mass uprisings took over Iran, Haji-Chelebi took the lead in the anti-Iranian uprising. In 1743, he declared himself the Khan of Shaki (i. e. Nukha) and together with his army, entrenched in one of the fortresses, he was successfully dealing with the attacks of Nader Shah's army. Those in the fortress found themselves in a difficult situation and in March 1746 they were forced to surrender to the enemy. Haji Chelebi, along with a few accompanying persons, appeared before Nader Shah and asked him pardon. The Shah of Iran forgave him. After the assassination of Nader Shah, Haji Chelebi again managed to become the ruler of the Shaki (1747-1755). It should be noted that during his rule, the Shaki Khanate experienced a great rise, advanced considerably in the South-Eastern Caucasus and became a powerful Khanate. Its capital, Nukha (since 1968, it has been called Shaki) has been greatly beautified and embellished.

From the first years of his rule, Haji-Chelebi Khan set himself the only goal - to unite the political units on the territory of modern Azerbaijan around his Khanate or even to restore the former state of the Shirvanshahs. It is not accidental that in an inscription dated 1162 AH (1748-1749), he names himself as Hakim of Shaki and Emir of Shirvan. After becoming acquainted with various literature, in our opinion, although Haji-Chelebi Khan had a claim on the Shirvan Khanate and maybe for a short time (in the early 50s of the 18th century) he was able to spread his power over a certain part of it, he did not manage to subjugate Shirvan completely.

At the beginning of the 50s of the 18th century, Haji-Chelebi little by little appears on the political scene. He took control of the Gabala and subdued the Sultanate of Aresh. After that, Khan of Shaki fought for some territories of Ganja and Karabakh. As for Haji-Chelebi's relationship with Georgia, it seems that initially he recognized the superiority of Kartli and Kakheti. A truce was made between him and King Erekle. We see Haji-Chelebi as an ally of the Georgians in the battle against the Karabakh Khanate in 1750, where Haji-Chelebi helped the victorious Georgian army with three hundred warriors. We think that the ruler of Shaki was slowly gathering his forces and waiting for the right moment. This moment came soon.

In February 1751, the Georgian army went to raid Djar. It must be necessarily noted that exactly Djar was a kind of transit and main stronghold region for the Dagestani bandits and robbers, where for decades they stored and distributed the looted goods and captives captured from Kartli, Kakheti and other parts of

the South Caucasus. Against the enemy, the Georgians also took with them the army of their sworn vassal regions. The Djaris also met the Georgian army prepared: they enticed the Sultan of Kaki, some khans of Dagestan and, most importantly, the Khan of Shaki, Haji-Chelebi, who from the beginning was in the camp of the Georgian kings. The battle took place on February 15, 1751, on the bank of the River Agri-Chai. Georgians had to fight a decisive battle right with Haji-Chelebi, where the Georgian army was defeated. For our part, we will say that Djari was an ancient Georgian territory. According to the information preserved in the "Chronicle of the Wars of Djari", at the beginning of 1728, the Ottomans allocated the seized by them territory of Georgia - the area on the other side between the Gavazis Tskali and Kapuchai - to the Dagestani Djaris for spreading Islam. The Djaris heavily taxed the conquered territory - the Georgian villages and forced the local population to accept Islam. This subjugated and taxed peasant was called Ingilyo. In this way, appeared Djaro-Belokani on the territory of Georgia. After all this, if the Georgians could return it, we think that historical justice would be restored. Secondly, the bandit attacks of Dagestanis against Georgia would be at least partially prevented.

This defeat harmed the authority of Georgians in the South Caucasus and discredited their primacy. It is true that in the same year (summer of 1752), King Erekle very impressively and effectively defeated one of the fighters for power in Iran, Azad Khan Afghani, at Kirkhbulakh, near Yerevan, thereby rehabilitating the defeat of Agri-Chai in a way, but this victory was not a full guarantee of gaining hegemony in the South Caucasus. Haji-Chelebi Khan was in the way of Georgian kings to gain the primacy in the mentioned region. The coalition, created under his leadership was still in force.

Georgian politicians properly assessed the situation and formed an opposite coalition against Haji-Chelebi, together with Khans who were dissatisfied with the latter.

In March 1752, the Georgian army, reinforced by warriors from Ossetians and some tribes of Dagestan, arrived in Ganja. There, the Georgians were joined by their supporter khans.

It seems that the Georgian kings noticed the treachery of the abovementioned khans, and, after inviting them to the Georgian tent, suddenly captured and imprisoned them. Azerbaijani historians do not recognize the fact of betrayal. According to them, Erekle II revealed his intentions with this action, which was to take over the above-mentioned khans and take possession of their khanates.

Indeed, if not finding out treason, why would the Georgian kings seize the khans, by the support of which they, at that time, were going to defeat the strongest khan of the South-Eastern Caucasus and their first rival for the primacy, Haji-Chelebi? However, the fact that King Erekle II could not fully trust them and made such a decision, is also admissible.

It should be noted that the seizure of abovementioned khans - this extremely risky event - was organized in a very disorganized manner. The Georgian and the North Caucasian warriors who were with them, started looting the captured khans very recklessly. The Georgian kings could not calm down the warriors who turned into an unbridled crowd. Hearing this, Haji-Chelebi moved towards Ganja with his army. On that day, the Friday of Passion Week 1752, the battle did not take place because of nightfall. And, the next day, on March 28 (April 8, by the Gregorian calendar), on Great Saturday, the army of Haji-Chelebi brutally defeated the army of undisciplined Georgians near Ganja.

After this defeat, as was expected, started the continuous invasions of the Dagestanis on the territory of Georgia, as well as the invasion and raids of the South Caucasian Muslim khans following the anti-Christian policy of Haji-Chelebi, which lasted for several months. Even Tbilisi itself was in danger.

Georgians, by their own forces and with the help of the auxiliary army from the North Caucasus, which joined the Georgian army in August 1752, defeated the army of Aga-Kishi near Tulkitapa (Tulkitepe) in September of the same year, after which the influence and authority of the kings Teimuraz and Erekle were restored in the South Caucasus.

Shortly after these events, Agha-Kishi and then even Haji-Chelebi Khan wanted to march on Georgia again, but their attempts ended in without results.

After that, we see Haji-Chelebi fighting alongside Nursal Beg - Khan of Avaria in 1754, in a campaign against Georgia. The decisive battle took place near Mtchadijvari and ended with a famous victory of the Georgians.

In 1755, Haji Chelebi, while trying to establish his hegemony over Shirvan Khanate, defeated by Huseinali Khan of Quba. It was in that year that Haji-Chelebi died, who was replaced by his son, Agha-Kishi (1755-1759).

We also see the army of the Shaki Khanate against Georgia in the battle of Kvareli in 1755. The Khan of Avaria, Nursal Beg, wanted to go to campaign against Georgia again. He gathered an army of 20 thousand warriors came to Kvareli, and from there he summoned an auxiliary army, among which was the army of the Shaki Khanate. At the end of July 1755, this army, the number of which reached already 30 thousand warriors, arrived at Kvareli fortress and then besieged it. The kings of Kartli and Kakheti decided to send an army to raid Djari. The Djaris left the fortress of Kvareli and returned to their homeland in fear. They were followed by other armies, among which was the army of the Shaki Khanate.

It is also worth noting that after Haji-Chelebi, the Shaki Khanate gradually began to decline. In the following years, it was no longer such a strong political entity in the mentioned region.