

## SECTION XXVI. HISTORY, ARCHEOLOGY AND CULTUROLOGY

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### KING OF IMERETI SOLOMON I AND THE PROJECT OF RESETTLEMENT KABARDIANS TO GEORGIA

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**Abstract.** *This article presents unknown fragments of political and diplomatic relations between Georgians and Kabardians in the 70-80s of the XVIII century. It reviews the project of Erekle II King of Kartli-Kakheti to resettle Kabardians to Georgia. As it was observed not only Erekle II King of Kartli-Kakheti, but also Solomon I King of Imereti participated in the project. Accordingly, it is confirmed that the project to resettle Kabardians to Georgia belonged not only to Erekle II King of Kartli-Kakheti, but also to Solomon I King of Imereti.*

#### Introduction

The issue of Kartli-Kakheti's relations with the peoples of the North Caucasus occupies a particular place in the formation of a United Caucasian State. Control over the passes of the North Caucasus and friendly relations with the people residing on the other side of the Caucasus were the main priorities of Georgia for centuries. The royal court of the Bagrationi was well aware of it hence, they took special care of the relations with the North Caucasians. Frequent dynastic royal marriages, having mutual benefits, were inspired by the aforementioned fact [69, p.5-45].

The benevolence existing for centuries turned to be the basis for the formation of a united cultural area. During the integration process, it was evident that Georgia's influence was exceptionally great among the population of the North Caucasus. Thus, a united cultural area was formed and preserved for centuries. It was destroyed only by the end of the XIV century, from the period of the invasions of Timur Lang and the occupation of the North Caucasian passes. The loss of control over the Caucasian passes, along with other political processes, became one of the reasons to reduce the influence of Georgian politics both in the North Caucasus and in East Asia.

The analysis of these historical processes was not difficult for the royal court of Bagrationi, therefore, special attention was paid to this issue while developing the state doctrine. The return of the peoples of the North Caucasus to the cultural and political space of Georgia was determined as the most significant strategic task of Teimuraz II and Erekle II. The significance of this issue became especially vivid since the 50s of the XVIII century when the issue of Caucasian unity became relevant for the royal court of Bagrationi.

The issue of security prevention faced the Kingdoms of Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti with equal severity. Hence, relations with the North Caucasus, based on mutual interests, were especially important not only for the security of the Georgian kingdoms, but also for the security of the Caucasus region as well.

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### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the current study is to find out effective measures taken by the Georgian kings to strengthen relations with Kabardians, who had the greatest influence in the western part of the North Caucasus and define to what extent the Unified Georgian political spectrum was involved in the events.

### **Tasks of the Study**

The task of the current study is to define:

1. Whether the project to resettle Kabardians to Georgia was on the one hand completely Georgian – belonging to the Kingdoms of Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti and on the other hand the coincidence of Georgian and Adyghe political interests.
2. The reasons the Russian Empire opposed the referred project and levers used by St. Petersburg to disrupt the project.

### **Novelty of the Study**

The current study is the first precedent in historiography reviewing the activities of the King of Imereti Solomon I in connection with the project of Kabardian resettlement to Georgia. It forms the grounds to assume that Solomon I is the initiator and co-author of this project together with Erekle the King of Kartli-Kakheti.

It is demonstrated for the first time in historiography that four years after the failed project of 1778, when trying to implement the project again in 1782, Erekle used not his own diplomatic resources for sending to Kabardino but the diplomatic resources of Imereti Royal Court.

The present study is a part of our scientific monograph, which is devoted to the Russian-Austrian plan for the transformation of Europe in the 70-90s of the century - the Greek project. Excerpts from our research have been published in various scientific publications in Oxford [50; 59; 63], Cambridge [47; 52; 56], Washington [62], Paris [51; 57]; Melbourne [49], Moscow [53], Tokyo [48], Rome [46], Vienna [45], Warsaw [36; 37], Boston [35], San Francisco [39], Sheffield [38], Las Palmas [44; 61], Porto [60] Tbilisi [40; 41; 54; 58; 64], Telavi [40; 43] Kutaisi [42; 55].

### **Research methods**

We rely on the methodological principles of objectivity, historicism, determinism, alternativeness, reconstruction, developed in the theoretical studies by the following scientists: Charles-Victor Langlois, Charles Seignobos [27]; Robin George Collingwood [11]; Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch [5]; Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield [28]; Abrams Lynn [1]; Brundage Anthony [4]; Gregory Ian, Ell Paul [17]; Hughes-Warrington [18]; Iggers George, Wang Qiang Edward [19]; Akira Iriye [20]; Kaldellis Anthony [22]; Koselleck Reinhart [23; 24]; Lukacs John [29]; Munro Doug, Reid John [34]; Quigley Carroll [67]; Raaflaub Kurt [68].

### **Sources**

Our research is based on the following primary sources:

1. Two volumes of archival documents published by Bukalova - Kabardino-Russian relations in the XVI-XVIII centuries [26]
  2. Archival documents published by Avtandil Ioseliani - Chronicles of Georgian history of the XVII-XIX centuries [12].
  3. Archival document - Decree of Catherine II dated July 1779 to the Governor-General of Astrakhan Grigory Potemkin on the use of army at his discretion in order to suppress the "impudence" of the Kabardians [13, p. 177].
  4. Three volumes of Peter Butkov - Materials for the new history of the Caucasus, from 1722 to 1803. Compiling documentary primary sources of the Georgia-Kabardino relationship [8;9;10]
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## Research Results

Teimuraz II and Erekle II followed the basic formula of success of the Golden Age scrupulously. According to the preferred formula, the North Caucasus and its multi-ethnic population should have been an integral part of the United Caucasian State. This was the only way for the country to have a buffer zone from the north - a reliable guard of security.

The fact that it was not an illusion and was actually possible to implement can be confirmed by the national composition of the Georgian army of Erekle II, where the contours of the United Caucasus can be clearly observed. As the Georgian researcher Niko Javakhishvili notes, "*Erekle II used almost all people residing in the North Caucasus as a mercenary army... Adygeans, as well as Chechens, Ingush, Ossetians, Kalmyks, Nogais often joined the Georgian army of that period...*" [21, p.148]. As Professor Valerian Macharadze points, Erekle was also able to support Armenians, Kurds, Assyrians and the Turkish-speaking population, granting additional positive impulses to the doctrine of Caucasian Security developed at the royal court of Kartli-Kakheti [33, p. 32-33].

Accordingly, the question is – which one out of the multinational population of the North Caucasus shall be the major target and considered as the dominant force in this region? Moreover, which one has the ability to facilitate relations with the rest of the population?

The response is evident - Kabardians. The dominant role of Kabardians in the North Caucasus is outlined obviously - most of the North Caucasian peoples, in particular Ossetians, Abazins, Ingush, part of the Balkars, as well as Karachis, were subordinate to them... [2, p. 224]. This meant that according to the unwritten law characteristic of the feudal world, if the relations with Kabardino were settled, the people subordinated to the latter obeyed the decision of the suzerain — in this case, Kabardino.

Erekle pays attention to Kabardians as well. Activity of the King of Kartli-Kakheti in relation to the North Caucasus can be considered reasonable. Kabardino is an outstanding segment for him due to certain political and subjective reasons. Herein, coincidence of interests of Kartli-Kakheti and Kabardino can be observed. Hence, three basic points are outlined:

1. Two dominant groups are observed among multinational population residing in the North Caucasus: on the one hand, Kabardians and on the other hand, Dagestanis. Their rivalry for the first place was pretty serious. Erekle needs Kabardians to balance relations with Russia, as Russia's imperial aggressive policy is clearly outlined in Kabardino, accompanied by proper responses from the North Caucasians.

2. Within the existing political situation, the Georgian-Kabardian political, military and economic union is not only beneficial for both sides, but also a guarantee of independence and security. Moreover, it increases the chances of Kabardians to overcome the ambitions of Dagestanis and obtain superiority in the Caucasus.

3. The aforementioned outcome of the conflict between Kabardino-Dagestan is pretty favorable for Erekle II, whose main and unresolved problem is the raids of Lezghins and the latter is the single motivation to establish relations with Russia.

Receiving Georgian estates from King Erekle was particularly attractive to Kabardian feudal lords. As the Georgian researcher, Niko Javakhishvili states: "*The resettlement of Adyghe feudal lords, especially of low-rank nobility, to Georgia and obtaining serfs and estates there was undoubtedly beneficial, as they lacked everything in Kabardino*" [21, p. 150].

Russian researcher Butkov writes: "*The Georgian King Erekle wanted to take advantage of the disagreement between Russia and Kabardino in December 1778. He notified the owners of both Kabardas by means of a courier and offered them to resettle to Georgia. He promised to give them good places near the borders of Imereti and Akhaltsikhe, but his ambassadors Ivan Bochelov, Prince Tarkhan and the Armenian Zuraba were arrested in Mozdok, so the mission task failed*" [9, p. 52].

The idyll of the political activities of Erekle II and Solomon I, productive and mutually beneficial cooperation, are clearly visible while analyzing the project of resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia. According to historiography Erekle II is considered to be the only initiator of the referred process.

In 1778, the visit of the representative of Erekle II to Kabardino became the subject of particular attention of Russian intelligence. In this regard, specific information is provided by documents characterizing relations between Russia and Kabardino, published in two volumes in the 50s of the last century. The material we are interested in is published in the second volume, compiled by the Russian researcher V. Bukalova.

The document of Russian special services preserved the record that Erekle II intended to resettle the Kabardians in Georgia. It was the most important state project - the continuation of the project of the army on duty aimed at increasing the military potential and defense capability of the state.

Following persons refer to the aforementioned issue during scientific research: Teimuraz Botsvadze [6, pp. 114-117; 7, pp. 220-226] Niko Javakhishvili [21, pp. 148-151], Mamia Dumbadze [14, pp. 683-684], Geronti Kikodze [25, pp. 11-143]. However, none of the abovementioned scientists paid attention to the issue that not only Erekle II King of Kartli-Kakheti but Solomon I King of Imereti was also involved in the resettlement of Circassians to Georgia.

We can specify the place Erekle intended to settle the Circassians - the king of Kartli-Kakheti notifies the Adygs through ambassadors that a place has been allocated for them between Akhaltsikhe and Imereti. "*Move to Georgia with your slaves and you will be settled between Imereti and Akhaltsikhe*" [9, pp. 143; 12, p. 52].

Based on the above-stated data, we can unequivocally conclude that the project of resettlement of Kabardians is not a priority only for the Royal Court of Kartli-Kakheti. We believe that the settlement of North Caucasians between Imereti and Akhaltsikhe could not be carried out without the consent of King Solomon of Imereti. Therefore, we assume that the resettlement of Circassians should not be only a project of Erekle, it is a joint decision of the kings of Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti. Herein, it should not be ruled out that Solomon himself would use Kabardian warriors to regulate the foreign policy processes of Imereti Kingdom - against the Ottomans. The political situation of that time clearly indicates the real possibility of such a development.

Our version is unequivocally confirmed by the analysis of the vicissitudes of the Georgian Ambassade in 1782 in Kabardino. No one has paid attention to the fact that Solomon the First is also among the specific persons in the sources confirming the Ambassade of 1782.

First of all, we have perceived that participants' names of the Ambassade of 1778 - Ivane Shukiashvili, Aznauri Tarkhani, and Armenian Zuraba - were also indicated [12, p. 143; 9, p. 52].<sup>1</sup> However, such specifics regarding the Ambassade

<sup>1</sup> Butkov names Ivan Bochelov instead of Ivane Shukiashvili [9, p. 52], he might be one and the same person.

of 1782 is not available. Only the following data is recorded regarding the Ambassade of 1782: Erekle's proposal is actively reviewed by the Circassians, majority of them agree to accept the proposal of the king of Kartli-Kakheti and move to Georgia, but unlike 1778, the ways of proposing Kabardians to resume the project failed four years before are still unknown.

We believe that the activation of the project of resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia in 1782 should be directly related to another Georgian Ambassade. Otherwise, this question would not be so relevant. But it still remains to be studied - who are the ambassadors? No specific information regarding their identities is available until the present moment.

It is logically simple - since the project of the resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia belonged to Erekle, accordingly the Ambassade should have been sent to Erekle himself. But we faced another reality due to a document published by V. Bukalova and kept in the Central State Archive of Old Acts in Moscow. This is a report by Colonel Karl Mufel to the commander of the Caucasian Corps Pavel Potemkin about the expected transfer of Kabardians from places belonging to Tatar Khanov and Tusoltanov to Georgia. The document is dated October 7, 1782.

An important issue - three documents sent to the addressee Pavel Potemkin were indicated in relation to the report of Colonel Karl Muffel [26, p. 340]: 1. A report sent to Colonel Mufeli by the commandant Mozdok Platz-Major Kochnev; 2. A letter of King Solomon; 3. Results of the intelligence of Esaul Ilini.

The original of the letter of Solomon the First has not been found yet, however, according to the report sent to Pavel Potemkin by Muffle, you can understand the basic content of this letter - commandant of Mozdok indicates that according to Solomon's letter two Circassians came to Akhaltsikhe Pasha and asked to allocate them a place for settlement [26, p. 340].

The situation that it is impossible to establish the identity of ambassadors sent by Erekle on the one hand and a confirmed fact of sending a letter to the commandant of Mozdok with specific information by King Solomon of Imereti on the other hand probably provides sufficient grounds to assume that Erekle tried the second approved diplomatic method of inspiration after the first unsuccessful attempt. In particular, he attempts to solve the most significant issues for the country through the Ambassade of the King of Imereti. According to our version, the King of Imereti, in agreement with Erekle, sends an Ambassade to Kabardino with the goal to solve vital processes for a unified Georgian statehood.

It is evident that we come across once again a proven traditional model for disguising the true goals of the joint Ambassade of Erekle and Solomon that were successfully used in 1779 for sending an Ambassade to Europe. Obviously, the visit of foreign ambassadors to Kabardino, in particular Georgian ones, would have attracted the attention of the Russian government. Therefore, Solomon had planned it from the very beginning and sent an official letter to Major Kochnev in order to deceive the Russian intelligence.

According to our version, Erekle took advantage of the situation once again that the Royal Court of Imereti was less controlled by the Imperial Court of Russia compared with the Royal Court of Kartli-Kakheti, therefore, the Ambassade of the king of Imereti had more freedom and was less observed by the Russian intelligence forces.

The primary sources indicating the actual results of the aforementioned Ambassade enable us to state that Solomon's Ambassadors had to negotiate with Kabardians in parallel with transferring the letter/letters to the addressees. The

negotiations seem to have finished successfully at the first stage. The Kabardians wanted to accept the offer of the Georgian Kings and move to Georgia. It is confirmed by a specific primary source – Plaz Major Kochnev sends Esauli Ilin to Kabardino and Mozdok for intelligence purposes. He found out that "*Jankhot Tatarkhanov and Tepsaruk Tusoltanov... together with the residents of several villages, have decided to move to Georgia and subordinate to the King of Georgians*" [26, p. 340].

The question is – whether the disagreement between Russia and Kabardino was the only precondition for Erekle II to offer Kabardians resettle to Georgia?

Normally, it is the easiest strategic move when the party attempts to use the existing political situation for its favour. Relations in Kabardino are actually tense. Anti-Russian sentiments are clearly observed. The Russian expansion and occupation affected Kabardino the most, as Russia occupied the valleys and foothill pastures of the North-Central Caucasus controlled by the Kabardian people. This was the most significant lever for the Kabardians, since the possession of these lands was a precondition to have most of other Caucasian people, in particular, the majority of the Karachi-Balkars, Abazins, Chechen-Ingush and North Ossetians in vassal relations with them. Due to the scarcity of arable and pastures in the North Caucasus, other people were forced to use the lands of the Kabardians and recognize their vassal relationship.

Russia attempted to neutralize the outlined superiority of the Kabardians systematically. Annexation of Kabardino under the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji of 1774, automatically implied that subordinates and vassals of Kabardino should also be part of Russia. However, the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg concluded separate agreements with the vassals of Kabardino, thus recognizing their equality with the latter. Actually, it was a precedent for the destruction of the systemic traditional mechanism ensuring the basis for the dominant role of Kabardians in the North Caucasus.

The construction of the Caucasian Line from Mozdok to Azov, stretching along the foothill valley was the most important action for the destruction of the above-stated mechanism. Various settlements emerged as a result of the Russian colonization process: Kizlyar, Mozdok, Novotroitsky, Kapyl, Stavropol, Alexandrovsky, Georgievsk, Mariinsk, Pavlovsk, Ekaterinograd... It clearly demonstrated to the Kabardian feudal lords that their hegemony was coming to an end. Therefore, they opposed these processes with armed resistance. The order of Catherine II of July 1779 to Grigory Potemkin, Governor-General of Astrakhan, was targeted to overcome the referred resistance. The latter was instructed to use the army at his discretion in order to control the "impudence" of the Kabardians [13, p. 177]. A punitive military expedition of General Yakov was sent to Kabardino in the autumn of 1779 based on the above-stated order [2, P. 221-223; 65, pp. 151-157].

In parallel with these processes, Kabardian feudal lords tried to establish active political relations with a reliable ally. Surely, mutual interests were crucial. Who could be such a reliable ally? The response to this question shall be obtained based on the analysis of the political processes of the 70s-80s of the XVIII century.

At the beginning of the 1870s, the activation of the Russian Empire in Kabardino was met with hope by the local population, since intensive relations in the north were considered as a prospect for the development of a closed region - relations with Russia were considered only in terms of expanding trade and economic cooperation, but soon the situation changed [66, p. 3-5]. It became obvious that the purpose of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg was the annexation of the region and the construction of fortresses and fortified points served to this goal as well. The new reality clearly showed the Kabardians the purpose of the Russian imperial policy and it radically

changed their attitude towards Russia - not only the transformation of the attitude of the population [Лопин, 2017: 196-200; Виноградов..., 2020: 10-15], but differentiation is also observed. As a result, certain groups arose evaluating the events differently. These internal processes greatly weakened Kabardino and resulted with the loss of independence [15, p. 7-10]. Grigory Potemkin and Pavel Tsitsianov made a particular contribution to the escalation and management of processes beneficial to Russia [65, p. 145-160; 32, p. 45-48].<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that relations with Kabardians within the Caucasian multinational space are clearly outlined and significant for the Russian policy [71, p. 18-27]. It is also interesting that at a certain stage, Russia considers the issue of Kabardino within the context of foreign policy, since the North Caucasus is actually linked to the Ottoman Empire [16, p. 29-41; 72, p. 10-16]. Accordingly, gaining influence in the North Caucasus is an obvious declaration of confrontation with the Ottomans.

Three-sided political interests of Russia, Kartli-Kakheti and the Ottoman Empire are observed here. In accordance with the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji of 1774, the position of the Ottoman Empire in the Caucasus was significantly weakened. As for Russia and Kartli-Kakheti, the situation was pretty tense – both Catherine the Second and Erekle the Second had one strategy towards Kabardino: if they solve the issue with Kabardino, they will solve the problems with most Caucasian people as well. If we evaluate the situation appropriately, the Georgian side has an advantage compared to Russia, since no one in Georgia considers Kabardians in a humiliating, conquered context, on the contrary - estates and suitable, decent work await them here. No one oppresses them in Georgia, the royal court of Bagrationi undertakes the obligation to protect their rights and inviolability.

The special trust of the Bagrationi to Kabardians requires some explanation. Erekle's efforts to resettle the Circassians to Georgia and his arguments for the referred decision are pretty interesting.

Two important factors can be highlighted in this regard:

1. The geopolitical situation played a decisive role in the Georgian-Kabardinian relations - the road from Georgia to Russia passed through Little Kabarda, therefore, control over this territory was of paramount importance for both Russia and Erekle and it should not be done by violence, as Russia did, but gained through the benevolence of population.

2. Kabardians were close relatives to Georgians. Erekle's grandmother Rusudan, his mother's mother, wife of Vakhtang VI, was a daughter of a Kabardian feudal lord [2, P. 224]. Moreover, Kabardians used to fight side by side to Georgians and Erekle witnessed their devotion and dedication as well.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that Erekle's project - the resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia is based on mutual interest and motivation. Therefore, it is pretty reasonable that the Kabardians' choice is unambiguous –accept the proposal of Erekle and Solomon. They accepted and agreed, but the actual implementation of the resolved case was not so simple. The Russian violent propaganda was involved in order to preserve the North Caucasian bridgehead for the expansion of future expansionist policy in the direction of the South. This was a vital task for the Russian foreign policy.

<sup>1</sup> Russian researcher Boris Vinogradov discusses the politics of Russia's relations with the North Caucasus in detail in his dissertation [72]

<sup>2</sup> In 1752, after political situation of Kartli and Kakheti kingdoms became more complicated and Persia intensified the onslaught, Teimuraz II turned to the Kabardians, relatives of his wife, for help. 500 soldiers under the command of Kurgoko himself arrived from Great Kabarda, and 1,500 soldiers under the leadership of Kazi and Konchoko arrived from Little Kabarda. The Georgian kings won decisive battles with their help [2, p. 224-225].

A different development of events was not feasible for Russian foreign policy – if Erekle managed to resettle the Kabardians, it would have been an important statement to strengthen the positions of Georgians in the North Caucasus. A qualitatively different political situation can be observed based on the above-mentioned situation - in case political processes developed in an irreversible manner that was quite real, the kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti could give orders to the Imperial Court of Russia according to its interests and desired policy that would be not only the failure of St. Petersburg's foreign policy but also the failure of the eternal dream of conquering Constantinople. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Russian special services did everything to disrupt the actually resolved issue of the resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia.

The development of events clearly showed that migration processes were a consequence of the development of North Caucasian society. The Russian Empire took advantage of the referred situation while having its relations with the Kabardians - it changed the vector of direction, offered the Kuban steppes to the Kabardians instead of Georgia and used them for its political interests [3, p. 248-255; 70, p. 3-7]. Moreover, St. Petersburg accelerated these processes through violent means, an important part of which was the disruption of the Kabardian resettlement project to Georgia.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the project of Erekle and Solomon on the resettlement of Kabardians was opposed with particular fury from the Imperial Court of Russia. We can get acquainted with a number of episodes related to this issue in detail based on the primary sources that became available to us through Russian special services.

A message sent to Ivanov, Commandant of Mozdok by the owners of Little Kabarda and their relatives is preserved in the archives of the Russian Foreign Ministry. From the referred message, we learn about the arrival of Erekle's envoy to Great Kabarda with the invitation for them to resettle to Georgia. The document is dated November 10, 1778. Its copy was made by Ivan Koporsky.

Several details of Erekle's Ambassade are described in the primary source. According to the record of Ivan Koporski, the owner of Little Kabarda, Devletuka Akhlov, together with his brothers confirm following: *“When he was returning with his entourage from Great Kabarda to Little Kabarda, they learned that ambassadors of the Georgian king Erekle had arrived in Great Kabarda to his elder brother Kaituk and Clement, who brought a letter. The relatives did not know what was written in the letter, since their brothers did not reveal the contents of the letter to them. However, they heard that King Erekle called his older brothers to move to Georgia with their subjects and both of them - Kaituka and Kelemet, agreed. Devletuka himself explained to the commandant of Mozdok that although he is not against the aforesaid decision, he does not want to violate the oath of allegiance to Russia. The Nobles sent by Erekle moved from Great Kabarda to Little Kabarda to wait a few days for Giliastan Islamov (from the side of Kaituk) and Aidemir Akhlachov (from the side of Kelemet), who were supposed to see off Georgians and submit response letters to the King. However, the representative of Erekle were captured in Mozdok and Kaituk and Kelemet gave up their intention”* [26, p. 334].

As the source indicates, the attempt to resettle Kabardians in Georgia in 1778 had no results. No other source to confirm any activity regarding the referred issue has been discovered yet. However, it is clear that the implementation of the mentioned project was still on the agenda in 1782. The most important thing is that

the King of Imereti, Solomon II, was involved in this case, thus indicating that the resettlement of Kabardians served Georgian national interests.

Karl Mufel's report to the commander of the Caucasian Corps Pavel Potemkin about the expected transfer of Kabardians from places belonging to Tatarkhanov and Tusoltanov to Georgia has been preserved in the Central State Archive of Old Acts, located in Moscow. The document is dated October 7, 1782.

It seems that on the one hand, a disclosure of the true goals of the Georgian Ambassade and on the other hand, a positive attitude of the Kabardians to Erekle's proposal formed the basis to strengthen the surveillance of the Russian government over the Kabardians.

According to the report of Lieutenant Colonel of Great Kabarda Bailiff Taganov, Pavel Mufel notifies Pavel Potemkin that "*the owner of Great Kabarda, Bek-Murza Khamurzin, hides up to two hundred families from Kabardians and people under the influence of Kabarda, their number is growing. They intend to leave their homes*" [26, p. 340]. These hidden people might be the population who express readiness to accept Erekle and Solomon's offer and move to Georgia.

It is evident that the project of Georgians is pretty popular and desirable for the Kabardians themselves, although the Russian government does everything to disrupt the mass emigration of Caucasians to Georgia.

The document preserved in the Central State Archive of Old Acts, in particular the obligation of the owners of Little Kabarda to prevent the Murtazovs and others from fleeing to Georgia, is a direct proof of the aggressive policy of the Russian government towards Georgia. This document is dated October 19, 1782.

The owners of Little Kabarda Musa Kanshov and Amfok Tusultanov confirm following with their signature: "*We undertake the obligation to set strict control over Murtazov, Kogolkov, Anzorov, Tozorov, Eliukhov and other subjects of our region planning to leave for Georgia and will not let them escape*" [26, p. 342-343].

The second part of this document is very interesting: "*And if, despite our efforts, someone manages to escape and we cannot prevent, we will not notify Russia, although we are sure that the wrath of His Imperial Majesty will spread on us, that we confirm with our seals and guarantees*" [26, p. 342-343].

Attention shall be paid to another document preserved in the Central State Archive of Ancient Acts — the report of D. V. Toganov, a police officer appointed in Kabardino sent to Colonel Karl Ivan son of Mufeli, notifying the addressee adopted decision to go to Georgia together with the peasants of 8 villages of Little Kabarda, as well as the agreement of King Erekle concluded with the peasants of this village to reimburse all expenses. The document is dated October 20, 1782.

Tagonov writes to Colonel Karl Mufel: "*On the 11<sup>th</sup>, I sent people to Little Kabarda for the second time to Zhangot Tatarkhanov, Elmurzin's estate in Georgia for intelligence purposes and in order to learn other local circumstances. Those who returned that day... brought rumours. They (people sent by Tagonov) went to Murtazini, Musa Tausultanov the owner of Little Kabarda, Aslan-Giray Murtazin, who announced that the inhabitants of 8 villages - two Alkhovov, Tuzorov, Kogokin and two Anzorovs belonging to Great Kabarda, the estates of the Elmurzin and Barokins, agreed to go to Georgia under oath, also agreed to take with them their subordinates, who refuse, but will be forced, as it is preconditioned by the efforts of the Georgian King Erekle. Bridges across rivers were prepared by the residents of the places where they have to pass, in Tagaev, Teboev, on the lands of Lalov Akhmat and Konchok Mansurov. King Erekle accomplished all the requirements for this migration. And others were also given money not to prevent it and they stopped only now, because*

*of the spread rumour about their intention. As soon as the situation settles down, they want to carry out their intention at the first opportunity. Although other subjects from other estates want to stay here, King Erekle promises to reward them with money for everything... I modestly ask you if it would be relevant to appoint a military detachment for their supervision with a proper leader who would be obliged to disclose their evil intentions and prevent their escape...* [26, p. 343].

It is evident from the aforementioned document that the Kabardian delegation visited Georgia to get acquainted with the conditions they would have to live in the future. Taganov notifies Colonel Karl Mufel that he sent his men to obtain intelligence about the Kabardians returning from Georgia for the second time. *"On the 11th, I sent people to Little Kabarda, in order to learn local circumstances and obtain information about the people who had visited Georgia and were in the Elmurzin estate of Zhanhot Tatar khanov for the second time. Those who returned that day... brought rumours"* [26, p. 343].

This is already an evidence clearly indicating both the relevance of this issue and the possibility of its practical, real solution. Although this is an unacceptable issue from the viewpoint of the Russian imperial policy, since the unity of Georgians and Kabardians is considered to be an outlined barrier for the Russian expansionist policy in the Caucasus.

This is evidenced by another document preserved in the Central State Archive of Old Acts, written by Colonel G. Arshenevsky to the commander of the Caucasian Corps Pavel Potemkin about the consent of some owners of Little Kabarda not to move to Georgia, this agreement was reached after negotiations with Urakov himself. The document is dated October 27, 1782.

As stated in the document: *"Several owners of Little Kabarda gathered by the efforts of Major Urakov... three of them undertook obligation that all concerns related to this issue (moving to Georgia — M.N.) will be stopped"* [26, p. 344].

In order to suppress the intention of the Kabardians to move to Georgia, several barriers were made to the population living in the mountains, owning bridges on the Terg River and connecting them with Ossetia - a sum of money, a kind of reward was paid to the Ossetian population, to hamper them while going to Georgia. As indicated in the first source, moving from Little Kabarda to Georgia was possible only if new bridges were built on the Terg River [26, p. 344].

Colonel G. Arshenevsky sent this message to St. Petersburg immediately to notify Pavel Potemkin about the changed circumstances. At the same time, he sent a special representative to Little Kabarda to find out the reason for the Circassians to leave their lands [26, p. 344].

As the Georgian scientist, Teimuraz Botsvadze writes: *"A change of Russia's attitude towards Georgia and the North Caucasus was clearly observed after the Russian-Turkish War of 1768-1774... if the interests of local political entities did not coincide with the interests of Russia, the latter did not pay much attention to this"* [7, p. 219].

An integral part of the strategic task of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg was the conquest of the North Caucasus, as it was the only way to preserve the chance of Russia's cherished dream - the conquest of Constantinople. Moreover, by conquering the North Caucasus, Russia became a neighbor of Georgia, thus starting a new stage in the foreign policy of St. Petersburg. Accordingly, St. Petersburg would neither allow nor tolerate strengthening the positions of the Georgian Kings in Kabardino. Documentary sources stated above, clearly indicate a high strategic significance of disrupting the project of Erekle II and Solomon I "Resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia" for St. Petersburg.

Several secret materials demonstrate that Russia did quite a lot of work regarding the issue in Kabardino - on the one hand, we see the facts of repression and the creation of a systemic barrier against those wishing to emigrate to Georgia and on the other hand, an attempt to foment internal conflict among Kabardians. A conflict of state interests between Russia and Georgia in the North Caucasus transforms into an intra-Kabardian conflict by means of the intrigues of St. Petersburg. Hence, it causes a failure of the project of the Georgian Kings and a loss of independence of Kabardino itself.

### Conclusion

Thus, the current study demonstrates that:

1. The exceptionally productive and mutually beneficial cooperation between King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti and King Solomon I of Imereti is clearly observed through the analysis of the Kabardian resettlement project to Georgia.
2. The analysis of the events of 1782 based on the primary sources shows that the initiator of the project of resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia is Solomon the First together with Erekle the Second.
3. After the first unsuccessful attempt at the Kabardian resettlement project in 1778, another attempt to implement the mentioned project was confirmed in 1782, when the diplomatic resources of Imereti Royal Court were actively used by the Royal Court of Kartli-Kakheti.
4. The identical attitude of the Georgian Kings to the project of resettlement of Kabardians to Georgia is another feature indicating that a Unified Georgian political spectrum had a unified foreign policy strategy as well.
5. The diplomatic cooperation of Erekle II and Solomon I within the framework of the Kabardian resettlement project to Georgia clearly indicates that the Unified Georgian State model had an extremely solid political background in the form of federalism.

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