

**THE ROLE OF GEORGIAN MONASTERY OF ISTANBUL IN GEORGIAN-
EUROPEAN RELATIONSHIP**

**РОЛЬ СТАМБУЛЬСКОЙ ОБИТЕЛИ ГРУЗИН В ГРУЗИНО-ЕВРОПЕЙСКИХ
ОТНОШЕНИЯХ**

**İSTANBUL GÜRCÜ MANASTIRI'NIN GÜRCİSTAN VE AVRUPA İLİŞKİLERİNDEKİ
ROLÜ**

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ABSTRACT

The centers of Georgian culture outside of Georgia played an important role in development of Georgian culture. It was through them that Georgia was introduced to the cultural development of the educated countries of that time.

Many cultural and educational centers of Georgia were established abroad, though majority of them has been already disappeared. The only preserved Georgian cultural center is the Georgian Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady of Istanbul. Georgian scientific community refers it as Istanbul Georgian Monastery being one of the most distinguished religious, cultural and education centers, the center of Kartvelology. Monastery acted as a bridge for Georgian and European relationship during certain period.

The monastery was built in 1861 by Father Petre Kharischirashvili, in Ferikoy (the Village of Angels), in one of the most beautiful districts of Istanbul.

During the hundred years (1861-1961) of its existence, Georgian Catholic Monastery of Istanbul acted as a spiritual, cultural, educational and scientific center where many national, educational or scientific activities were performed. Establishment of religious educational institution, Georgian-French schools, printing-houses, the literacy dissemination society among Georgians living in Turkey, library called after Akaki Tsereteli are good examples of cultural and educational activities of the Monastery. The Monastery was the educational center which provided Georgian young people an opportunity to get education first in Istanbul and then to Europe. In the schools, students had the opportunity to study literature, history, religion, theology and philosophy. Most of the fathers of the monastery were

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polyglots, fluent in French, Italian, German and Latin, so they helped students to learn languages. It supported many Georgian scientists and public figures, like Ivane Gvaramadze, Mikheil Tamarashvili, Shalva Vardidze, Michael Tarkhnishvili etc.

The mentioned treasure of Georgian cultural heritage has survived with support of the fathers serving in the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, which has not lost its importance and continues its educational and scientific activities with the efforts of the Zazadze family living in Istanbul. The scientists interested in the documents preserved in the Monastery archive have the opportunity to conduct interesting and important research based on the unique material.

Goal of the Article: This article aims to highlight the role of the Georgian Monastery in Istanbul in fostering Georgian-European relations, based on documents from the monastery's archives that have rarely been explored in academic research. While the historical significance of the monastery has been the subject of many studies, this research specifically examines the activities of the Georgian Monastery in Istanbul during the 1930s and 1940s. During this period, the so-called "Iron Curtain" severely restricted the monastery's connections with Georgia, which eventually ceased altogether. Tragically, most of the monastery's priests passed away, and by the early 1960s, only the leader Petre Tatalashvili and church servant Pavle Akobashvili remained alive in monastery.

This study is intended for readers interested in the history of the Georgian Monastery in Istanbul and in the efforts of its abbots to promote Georgian culture and history across Europe. The monastery in Istanbul served as both a pillar and a sanctuary for Georgian émigrés during this turbulent period.

Research methodology: The research is mainly based on the historical research method: description, comparative-historical method, empirical, causal-historical analysis using the epistolary and memoir materials preserved in the archive fund of the Georgian Catholic Monastery in Istanbul.

Key words: Georgian Monastery in Istanbul, Georgian Catholics, Petre Kharischirashvili, Mikheil Tamarashvili, Petre Tatalashvili.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Центры грузинской культуры за пределами Грузии сыграли важную роль в развитии грузинской культуры. Именно благодаря им Грузия получила еще больше возможностей следить за культурным развитием образованных стран того времени.

За рубежом было создано много грузинских культурных и образовательных центров, хотя большинство из них в настоящее время утеряны. Единственный очаг грузинской культуры в Стамбуле сохранился до наших дней – грузинская католическая церковь Непорочного Зачатия Пресвятой Богородицы в Стамбуле. В грузинском научном пространстве его называют Стамбульской обителью грузин - одним из выдающихся религиозных и культурно-образовательных центров, катвелологическим очагом. Обитель («Саване»), который в определенный период был своего рода связующим мостом для грузино-европейских отношений.

Храм был построен в 1861 году отцом Петре Харисчирашвили в одном из красивейших районов Стамбула, в Ферикойи (деревне Ангелов).

За сто лет своего существования (1861-1961 гг.) обитель была как религиозным, также культурно-образовательным и научным центром, где проводился ряд национальных, образовательных и научных мероприятий. Создание богословской школы, грузино-французских школ, типографии,

Общества распространения грамотности среди османских грузин, библиотеки имени Акакия Церетели является доказательством культурной и образовательной деятельности монастыря.

Именно обитель стала в то время центром образования для грузинских католиков, что открыло путь грузинской молодежи к получению образования сначала в Стамбуле, а затем и в Европе.

Упомянутое сокровище грузинского культурного наследия дошло до нас благодаря службе отцов, работавших в Стамбульской обители грузин, и которое не утратило своего значения и продолжает свою просветительскую и научную деятельность усилиями семьи Зазадзе, проживающей в Стамбуле. Учёные, интересующиеся документами, хранящимися в монастырском архиве, имеют возможность провести интересные и важные исследования на основе уникальных материалов.

Цель статьи: представить роль Стамбульской обители грузин в контексте грузино-европейских отношений. Усилия руководителей обители по продвижению грузинской культуры и истории в разных странах Европы. Стамбульская обитель, как один из столпов и надежных убежищ грузинской эмиграции.

Методология исследования: исследование основано на методе исторического исследования: описание, сравнительно-исторический метод, эмпирический, причинно-исторический анализ с использованием эпистолярных и мемуарных материалов, хранящихся в архивном фонде грузинского католического монастыря в Стамбуле.

Ключевые слова: Стамбульская обитель грузин, грузинские католики, Петре Харисчирашвили, Михаил Тамарашвили, Петре Таталашвили.

ÖZ

Gürcü kültürünün Gürcistan dışındaki merkezleri Gürcü kültürünün gelişmesinde önemli rol oynamış ve onlar sayesinde Gürcistano zamanın eğitim açısından gelişmiş ülkelerin kültürel gelişimini takip etmek için daha fazla fırsat elde etmiştir.

Çoğu kaybolmuş olsa da Gürcistan dışında birçok Gürcü kültür ve eğitim merkezi kurulmuştur. İstanbul'daki Gürcü kültürünün bugüne kadar ayakta kalan tek merkezi - İstanbul'daki Lekesiz Meryem Ana'ya adanan Gürcü Katolik Kilisesidir. Gürcü bilim camiası tarafından burası seçkin, dini, kültürel ve eğitim merkezlerinden biri olarak Gürcülerin İstanbul Evi ve Kartvelolojik Merkezi olarak adlandırılmıştır. Bu manastır belli bir dönem Gürcistan ve Avrupa ilişkilerinde bir nevi bağlantı köprüsü olarak görev yapmıştır.

Kilise 1861 yılında Peder Petre Kharisichirashvili tarafından İstanbul'un en güzel semtlerinden biri olan Feriköy'de (Melekler Köyü) inşa ettirilmiştir. Manastır, varlığının yüz yılı boyunca (1861-1961), bir dizi ulusal, eğitim ve bilimsel etkinliğin düzenlendiği bir merkez olarak hizmet vermiştir. Bir ilahiyat okulu, Gürcü-Fransız okulları, matbaa, Osmanlı Gürcüleri arasında Okuma-Yazma Teşviki Derneğine Akaki Tsereteli'nin adını taşıyan bir kütüphanenin oluşturulması, manastırın kültürel ve eğitimsel faaliyetlerinin bazıları olarak dikkatleri çeker. O zamanlar Gürcü Katoliklerinin eğitim merkezi haline gelen manastır Gürcü gençlerinin önce İstanbul'da, sonra da Avrupa'da eğitim almalarını önünü açmıştır.

Bahsi geçen Gürcü kültür mirası, İstanbul manastırında görev yapan din adamlarının hizmetleri sayesinde bizlere kadar ulaşmış ve İstanbul'da yaşayan Zazadze ailesinin sayesinde önemini kaybetmemiş ve günümüzde eğitim ve bilim faaliyetlerine devam etmektedir.

Çalışmamızdaki amaç İstanbul Gürcü Manastırının Gürcü-Avrupa ilişkileri bağlamındaki rolünü ortaya koymak, Manastır liderlerinin farklı Avrupa ülkelerinde Gürcü

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kültürünü ve tarihini tanıtmaya çabalarını göstermek, Gürcü göçünün temel nedenlerinden ve güvenilir sığınaklarından biri olan İstanbul manastırının rolünü ortaya koymaktır.

Çalışmada İstanbul'daki Gürcü Katolik manastırının arşivlerinde muhafaza edilen mektup ve anılar incelemiş, karşılaştırmalı tarihsel yöntem, ampirik, neden/niçin/nasıl gibi tarihsel analiz yöntemleri kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Gürcülerin İstanbul manastırı, Gürcü Katolikleri, Petre Kharischirashvili, Mikhail Tamarashvili, Petre Tatalashvili.

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background: Georgian politics and culture have, to some extent, been shaped by Greek, Roman, and Byzantine influences. Georgian-European political and cultural relations date back to ancient times, with Georgian political institutions actively participating in significant political developments involving Greece, and later Rome and Byzantium. Notably, Colchis had political relations with the Greek world as early as the 6th century BCE. From the 60s BCE, the Kingdom of Kartli formed a "friendship and alliance" with the Roman Empire, while the Kingdom of Kolchheti was integrated into the Roman political system. After the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE, these relationships continued with the Byzantine Empire. Evidence of these sustained ties includes the conferment of Roman-Byzantine titles upon hundreds of Georgian political elites (Fazhava, 2022:116).

Georgian culture developed through its close interaction with Western culture, leading scholars to identify notable similarities and a sense of unity between these two cultural spheres. Georgian youth were educated in Greek, which connected them with both medieval Byzantine literature and classical ideas. Alongside Georgia's own educational institutions, Georgian intellectual centers also emerged abroad, such as at the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos, in Antioch on the Black Mountain, the Petritsani Monastery in Bulgaria, and the Monastery of the Cross in Palestine.

According to Toynbee, religion is the primary marker of civilization (Toynbee, 2002:86-88) and serves as a foundational force for its development (Huntington). The adoption of Christianity by the Georgian people was crucial to the country's evolution, marking a definitive cultural shift from the Asian world and solidifying its European identity. This transition was a pivotal moment in Georgian history, and despite occasional interruptions in relations with Europe, Georgia has maintained its distinct identity and statehood to the present day (Fazhava, 2022:108).

Between the 13th and 18th centuries, Georgian-European relations were further reflected in the missionary efforts of various European orders. During this period, Georgia hosted missions from the Franciscans, Dominicans, and later the Theatines and Capuchins. The Vatican sought to expand its influence, emphasizing the unification of the Georgian Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1323, Pope John XXII relocated the Catholic episcopal see from Smyrna (in present-day Turkey) to Tbilisi.

The Georgian kings aimed to leverage papal authority to gain the support of Catholic Europe in their struggles against regional enemies. They recognized the Vatican as one of Western Europe's most powerful political centers, and while they permitted the spread of Catholicism in Georgia, they did not hastily respond to papal calls for conversion. For the Georgian kings, the primary aim was to secure military, political, and financial aid from Europe, so they allowed European missionaries to operate freely within the country.

In the XIX century and the end of the XX century, Catholicism had to exist in Georgia in very difficult conditions. The policy of Tsarist Russia aimed to expel missionaries from the East. Russia put an end to the seven-century work of European missionaries. In the

XIX century, the entry of Catholic missions into Georgia was stopped, because Tsarist Russia considered them „the Spies” of Europe.

Georgian Catholics and foreign missionaries made a great contribution to the history of the country, to the development of Georgian culture, science and medicine.

The work of Georgian Catholics is noteworthy both in Georgia and abroad. It was the Georgian Catholics who founded the „Immaculate Conception Congregation Brotherhood in Istanbul in 1861,“ Istanbul Georgian Catholic Monastery. During the Soviet period, until the 90s of the XX century only a small part of the Georgian society was informed about the existence of the Monastery (Surguladze... 122-123). However, in Meskheta, the descendants of Monastery founders knew well about it. Due to Soviet censorship, the residents of Meskheta avoided talking about this topic. Shota Lomsadze was the first scientist who brought up the topic of the Monastery during the Soviet period and covered it in his work, he described a certain period of the history of the Monastery in „The Chronicles of Akhaltsikhe“, (Lomsadze, 1979: 66-94).

After the 1990s, when Georgia became independent, many researchers became interested in the history of the Monastery and the material preserved there (Sharadze, 1991; Lomsadze, 1997; Papashvili, 1995; Putkaradze, 2012; Kruashvili, 2012).

The centers of Georgian culture outside of Georgia played an important role in development of Georgian culture. It was through them that Georgia was introduced to the cultural development of the educated countries of that time.

Many centers of Georgian culture and education have been established abroad, although most of them are currently lost. To this day, only the center of Georgian culture in Istanbul has survived. Georgian Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady of Istanbul, built by Father Petre Kharischirapashvili, which contributed to the European education of Georgians, spread of literacy among Ottoman Georgians, establishment of a Georgian printing house in Istanbul, and many others. Istanbul (Constantinople) was one of the important centers of human culture and education and attracted Georgians since ancient times.

For centuries, European civilization entered Georgia through this way, where Georgian philosophers, translators, prominent clergymen worked (Putkaradze, 2012:8). The goal and mission of the congregation founded by Petre Kharischirashvili was „...To turn into a bridge connecting the Vatican and Georgian Catholics.

DISCUSSION

The Georgian Monastery in Istanbul is one of the outstanding religious and cultural-educational centers, it is the center of Georgian studies for the Georgian monasteries outside Georgia, with its rich library, valuable archive and interesting museum exhibits. Existence of this Georgian Catholic monastery should be considered the merit of Georgian public figures. It is true that the Monastery was founded by Father Petre Kharischirapashvili, but its maintenance in such a form is connected with the Monastery leaders or the fathers working there, as well as with Pavle Zazadze and his family living in Istanbul.

Establishment of the Monastery was determined by a number of political reasons. Due to Russia's anti-Catholic policy in the second half of the XIX century, the situation of Georgian Catholics in Georgia, especially in Samtskhe-Javakheti, worsened. „The Russian government's ban on the entry of Catholic missionaries from Europe into Georgia made the situation the most difficult in Akhaltsikhe, where the Russian government supported establishment of the Armenian typicon and the Armenian language in the churches of Georgian Catholics which were following the Latin rule. The Armenian Catholic Church started large-scaled propaganda about the historical absence of Georgian Catholics. Though

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it did not mean that Meskhети, which had returned to its motherland, would easily accept its fate. At that time, Georgian Catholics were appointed as the leaders of this great deed (Papashvili, 1995:314-315).

Father Petre Kharischirashvili was one of the prominent figures, who was forced to leave Georgia for Europe. He spent some time in Venice, then moved from Venice to European countries and continued his propaganda about Georgia there. Then he came to the Vatican and presented an extensive report to the Pope about Georgia and the history of Georgian Catholics. He reported that Georgia was a country with an ancient history, that Georgians had the ancient alphabet. The literature had been created in Georgian language for fifteen century. Petre Kharischirashvili was given the opportunity to preach the history of Georgian Catholicism in European languages. He was allowed to pray and preach in churches everywhere., he attracted the attention of the highest clergy of the Catholic countries of European countries by his activities. In addition, he did a great job for Georgia. Z. Chichinadze noted: „he spread a lot of information about Georgia and Georgian Catholics through European church and secular newspapers (Chichinadze, 1895:51).

The Pope and his cardinals were so impressed by Peter's personality with these actions, that they allowed him to establish a school in which he would raise priests in Georgian language. In 1859, Petre Kharischirashvilimoved to Istanbul. Despite many difficulties, he began to move towards his goals with enthusiasm. With the financial help of the Pope and Georgians living in Istanbul, Petre bought several hectares of land in the suburb of Istanbul, Ferikoi and started construction of a monastery (Lomsadze, 1979:71-72).

On February 10, 1861, the Pope's delegate in Istanbul, Monsignor Brunon, granted the status of a legal entity to the Georgian Catholic Brotherhood established by Kharischirashvili (Letters from the Georgian Monastery, Istanbul, 2017:266).

From the press of the last quarter of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, it is known that the Ottoman government and the French embassy in Istanbul greatly helped Georgian Catholics. The French Embassy even donated 300 gold to build monastery schools (Putkaradze, 2007:21). The serving priests in the Monastery started large-scaled educational activities under the patronage of the French Embassy in Istanbul. In the 70-80s of the XIX century the brotherhood of Georgians in Istanbul had four schools in different districts, such as Pera, St. Joseph, Usku-Dari, Ferikoi and Dardaneli schools (Papashvili, 1995:319). The school of Andria Tsinamdvirshvili Monastermain remainedthe main one. Education atschools took place inGeorgian-French languages, Turkish-French and Greek-French languages. There was a nunnery in Ferikoi, and a women's school was functioning on its base (Lomsadze, 1984:89).

In the 70s the founder of the monastery, Petre Kharischirapashvili, shifted his focus to the retraining of clergymen who grew up in the European educational space, therefore, in the last quarter of the XIX century, he founded the monastery with a printing house, a library and a seminary in the city of Montoban in the southern France. According to Pascal Leroy, at that time the French government was interested in the existence of a French environment in Constantinople. This is confirmed by the letters sent by the French Embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1886 and 1896. France wanted to maintain its presence in the Ottoman Empire to balance German influence there, especially after the war of 1870 (Leroy, 2015).A small theological school was opened near the Montauban monastery similar to the Istanbul monastery (Grigalashvili, 2006:165). On November 5, 1880, the Georgian monastery was closed there (Nikoleishvili, 2015; Kutateladze, 2019: 676). On May 8, 1885, Kharischirashvili wrote a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Marquis de Noah, asking for permission to restore the Georgian congregation, but was refused (Papashvili, 1995:319). In 1896-1897 Georgians still had attempts to resume religious life in

Montauban for a short time, but in 1904 (Tabaghua dated it between 1903-1906) it was abolished forever (Nikoleishvili, 2012; Natsvlisvili, 2019:365). Pascal Leroy also connects the abolition of the Congregation of the Georgian Catholic Fathers of Montauban with the years 1903-1906 (Leroy, 2015). The closure of the Georgian Monastery of Montauban was a loss for the Georgian brotherhood of Ferikoi (Surguladze, 2022:144-145).

According to Shota Lomsadze, the centers of Georgian culture in Constantinople, Montobani, Venice represented a delayed and discolored echo of Sinai, Athos, Jvari and other cultural centers, the entire content of which was the rapprochement with European culture on the basis of national and economic consolidation of Georgia (Lomsadze, 1979:84).

The Georgian monastery in Istanbul opened the way for Georgian youth to receive European education. The schools of the monastery were focused on introduction and study of foreign languages, the history and cultural values of different countries, which played an important role in the development of patriotic and moral feelings of the youth of that time. It can be said that the Georgian Monastery was the best center of tolerance, mutual respect, education and upbringing.

Such famous Georgian public figures as Mikheil Tamarashvili, Mikheil Tarkhnishvili, Shalva Varidze and others were educated in the Georgian Catholic monastery of Istanbul. It was Mikheil

Tamarashvili who was able to find materials depicting Georgia-Europe relations in the archives of the Vatican, France, Italy and Turkey, as well as Moscow and London and then he published these materials as books in Europe such as „History of Catholicism among Georgians“ (1902, Tbilisi), „In response to Armenian writers who reject Georgian Catholicism“ (tb., 1904), „History of the Church of Georgia“ (1910, Rome) in French, Great response in European scientific circles.

Cultural activities. In the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, there was a tradition of celebrating several holidays, these were St. Nino's day in January and „the day of commemoration of the Virgin Mary“ on the last week of May. These holidays had a several purposes. On one hand, it had a religious character and on the other hand, it was the reason for the gathering of Georgians there.

In the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul, the month of May was declared as the month of commemoration of the Virgin Mary. It was one of the important traditions which united everyone, elderly people and youngsters. The services were performed every day, in the morning and in the evening. On the last day of the month, there was a holiday bringing many pilgrims together.

In the 20-30s of XX century, this tradition was even more pompous. Even the Istanbul press of that time covered this holiday. On the last week of May, a magnificent procession of the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes was organized in the Ferikoi district of Istanbul. At that time, it was a popular Christian holiday in Istanbul, which was attended by sultans accompanied by the Imperial Guard until the 20s of the XX century. This holiday was respected by the local Turks, various people in Turkey (France, Italy, etc.) Representatives of the embassies of the countries with their flags (Gürcü Katolik Arşivi, Tatalashvili, letter to the colonel of the 660th French infantry regiment, 22.05.1922) (Tatenashvili, 2023 (b):212) took part in the procession.

Monastery priests paid special attention to the organization of festive events. The letters of the secretary of the monastery, Father Petre Tatalashvili, whose addressees are Colonel of the 660th French Infantry Regiment, Commander-in-Chief of the French Navy Admiral Wonder, Admiral of the Pope's battleships, Gaetano, were found in the Monastery archive. Father Petre Tatalashvili invited him on behalf of the monastery to a pompous ceremony in the Ferikoi monastery of Our Lady of Lourdes on the last Sunday of May to

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attend the solemn service together with an orchestra. He also asked to use the flags of the Royal Navy of France and Italy at this event. It seems that the residents of Constantinople really liked such pompous ceremonies (Gürcü Katolik Arşivi, Petre Tatalashvili's letter to Admiral Vander, 18.05.1925) (Tatenashvili, 2023 (b):212), (Gürcü Katolik Arşivi, Petre Tatalashvili's letter to Admiral Gaetano, 28.05.1925) (Tatenashvili, 2023 (b):212).

Organizing of the grandous celebrations in the Ferikoi Monastery by its leaders was a kind of continuation of the Monastery traditions. This kind of attitude played a very important role for that period not only from a religious point of view, but also from a political perspective. Ferikoi Monastery was a kind of link not only for the Georgians living in the Ottoman Empire, but also for many compatriots who immigrated from Georgia. Moreover, the mood and attitude of the country towards Georgian cultural and religious values was changing. In fact, these holidays took on an international character and contributed not only to promotion of Georgian culture and Christian religion, but, in a way, it was a peaceful and national message to the rest of the world.

Political Role. In the early 20th century, the movement for Georgia's independence from tsarist rule gained significant momentum, becoming popular among various segments of Georgian society. This vision encompassed both territorial independence for the country and autonomy for the Georgian Church. Some members of society saw Georgia's future aligned with Russia, while others looked to Europe as a potential ally (Surguladze, 2022: 157).

The outbreak of World War I (1914-1918) dramatically altered the plans of the Feriköy Georgian Congregation in Turkey. The brotherhood set asidemost of their initiatives to focus on a single mission: to play a direct role in the liberation of Georgia, an involvement that would later come at a high cost. The contribution of the Savani Brotherhood to Georgia's struggle for independence from the Russian Empire is significant (Surguladze, 2022:156). The European orientation of the Feriköy monastery fraternity is evident; Italian diplomat Daleggio D'Alessio described them with one phrase: "From the beginning to the present day, this society, based abroad, has been a symbol of living protest against Russia's conquest of Georgia" (D'Alessio, 1921:29).

The activities of the "Committee for the Independence of Georgia," founded in Geneva in 1914, extended beyond the Georgian Catholic monastery in Istanbul and reached other areas, including Trabzon and Vize, among others.

From 1917 to 1921, the Georgian Congregation in Istanbul devoted considerable effort to restoring the Georgian Catholic Diocese in Georgia. The political upheaval following the fall of the Russian autocracy, coupled with religious changes in the Caucasus—such as the restoration of autocephaly for the Georgian Orthodox Church—provided an ideal opportunity to re-establish the Catholic Diocese. The process of restoring Georgian statehood was underway, and members of the Savani Brotherhood actively participated. They correctly recognized that the first step was to introduce the Georgian typicon. Key figures in this endeavor included Shio Vardidze and Professor S. Gozalishvili, a Georgian Catholic representative in the Ottoman Empire (Kruashvili, 2018:180; Surguladze, 2022:160).

It is known that in March 1921, the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and a certain part of the deputies of the Founding Assembly took refuge in the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul. For several months, they lived in a hotel on the fourth floor of the monastery and waited to receive passports to go abroad.

Istanbul Monastery became one of the pillars and reliable shelters of the Georgian immigration at that time. The polyglotism of the fathers serving in the monastery is known, they were well versed in the French language, and it was through them that they contacted the French embassy and received passports to go to Europe. Apart of the Georgians who were

expelled from Georgia remained in Istanbul (The Letters from Istanbul Georgian Monastery, 2020:675). The Monastery became an intermediate link between immigration in France and Georgia (Surguladze, 2022:164)

In the 60s of the XX century was a difficult period for the Monastery. In 1961 Father Petre Tatalashvili, the last abbot of the monastery, died. Pavle Akobashvili-Andghuladze continued caring on the Monastery, who asked to his Georgian compatriots to find some such people, clergyman or

secular, who would protect the treasure of Georgian culture in Istanbul with all their national consciousness, who would be able to manage this national work. The end of one of the appeals sounded as time does not wait! It seems that it became more and more difficult to protect and own the treasures of Monastery (Gürcü Katolik Arşivi, Pavle Akobashvili's letter to Georgian immigrants, 3.02.1960).

Unfortunately, there was no one among the immigrants who could take care on the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul. After death of Pavle Akobashvili, the Georgian monastery of Ferikoi was practically closed. Like other cultural centers abroad, it was under the threat of abolishment. The limited number of Georgian Catholic community in Istanbul made the problem even more complicated, there was no priest being the citizen of Turkey who could conduct service in Georgian. In addition to everything, a significant part of the congregation consisted of Catholics of Armenian origin living in the Beaumont-Shishli district, which created the danger of the Ferikoi monastery passing into their hands. It was completely against the mission of the Monastery defined by Kharischirashvili. In such a situation, in 1966, Pavle Zazadze (1900-1989) and his family appeared as a strong defender of the Georgian Monastery. In 1966, under the leadership of Pavle Zazadze, the foundation of the Catholic community near the church was established, which took over the ownership of the Ferikoi monastery and its property (Putkaradze, 2007:55). Currently the Georgian Monastery of Istanbul is at the service of Georgians under the patronage of the Zazadze family. The name (GÜRCÜ KATOLİK KİLİSESİ VAKFI, KÜTÜPHANE VE ARŞİVİ – „Georgian Catholic Church Foundation, Library and Archive“ has been preserved.

„In 1961 Pavle and Simon Zazadze were awarded the prestigious title of the „Commandature de L'ordre de St. Sylvestre“ (Cuchuk, 2007:35). The Vatican took into account the great efforts of the Zazadze family to protect and support the Georgian monastery of Ferikoi. Pavle and Simon Zazadze helped the Georgian people through the foundation, similar to Shalva Vardidze, who helped Georgian immigrants“ (Zazadze, N, 2024).

Mr. Simon was a defender and supporter of Georgian culture not only in Istanbul, but he also helped in establishment of the cultural centers by immigrant Georgians in European and American countries. For years he financed „Bedi Kartlisa“ Georgian and French issues, also periodicals including „the Kavkasioni“, „the Prometheus“, „the Gushagi“, „The Sakatvelos Gushagi“, „The Tetri Giorgi“, „The Free Georgia“ and others. The journals published in Istanbul are "the Chveneburebi“, and „the Pirosmani“.

According to Tariel Putkaradze, the Zazadze family became the spiritual and material center of the European, American and Asian parts of the Georgian emigration of the 60s of the XX century (Putkaradze, 2007:59).

In honor of his father's memory, Paul Zazadze established a grant named after Simon Zazadze, which is related to academic in Georgia FARIG (Friends of Academic Research in Georgia). This organization helps young scientists in the field of humanities in Georgia. In this way, FARIG contributes to the preservation of the unique cultural heritage of Georgia and better familiarization of their activities to the international scientific community (Zazadze, N, 2024).

The Role of Georgian Monastery of Istanbul in Georgian-European Relationship

With the support of the Zazadze family, the group of the National Library of the Parliament of Georgia has been working for years on the digitization of archival materials in the fund and archive of the Georgian Catholic Church, which will also provide great assistance to Georgian scientists (Zazadze, N, 2024).

„The Georgian monastery of Istanbul was, is and will be a unique place for Georgians. The monastery has always helped Georgians in difficult times and we will continue this work. I am sure we will be able to do it“ – says Nathalie Zazadze (Zazadze, N, 2024).

RESULTS

Monastery has existed for a hundred years (1861-1961) and was a religious, cultural-educational and scientific center, where a number of national, educational and scientific events were held. The establishment of a theological as well as, Georgian-French schools, a printing house, a society for spreading literacy among Ottoman Georgians, a library named after Akaki Tsereteli is a proof of the cultural and educational activities of Monastery. It was the Monastery that became the center of education of Georgian Catholics at that time, which paved the way for Georgian youth to get an education first in Istanbul, and then in Europe.

The Georgian Catholic Monastery of Istanbul was a kind of bridge for Georgian-European relations. The existence of the monastery in Istanbul was an important factor, since Istanbul itself was one of the important centers of human culture and education and attracted Georgians since ancient times. For centuries it was the way how European civilization entered Georgia, where Georgian philosophers, translators, prominent clergymen worked (Putkaradze, 2012, p. 8). The mentioned treasure of Georgian cultural heritage has reached us through the fathers serving in the Georgian monastery of Istanbul, which has not lost its importance to this day and continues its educational and scientific activities with the efforts of the Zazadze family living in Istanbul. Scientists interested in the documents preserved in the Monastery archive have the opportunity to carry out interesting and important research based on unique material.

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