

## POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS IN THE MYTH OF THE HOLY GARMENT'S JOURNEY TO MOSCOW

პოლიტიკური მოტივები ქრისტეს კვართის მოსკოვში გადატანის მითში

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### ABSTRACT

Myths often emerge from political interests, shaping narratives that influence communities and entire nations. Sometimes, specific information is accepted as fact without scrutiny and is never regarded as mythology. Such falsehoods can lead communities towards misguided understandings of their political, religious, and missionary destinies. Therefore, political motives often underlie myth creation.

In Georgian history, the Holy Garment, also known as Christ's Chiton, has served as a cornerstone of the Georgian kingdom's identity for many centuries. However, following the abolition of the Georgian state by Russia in 1801, the Georgian Apostolic Church was subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, regaining independent status from the Ecumenical Patriarchate only in 1989.

For over 21 centuries, the central symbol through which Georgians represented themselves to the civilized world has been the Holy Garment, believed to have been brought to Georgia by Jewish repatriates in the 1st century AD. According to Kartlis Tskhovreba (The Georgian Chronicles, 10th century), the Holy Garment was buried with a woman who embraced it and immediately died outside Mtskheta after meeting her brothers who had returned from Jerusalem. Since then, it has been believed that the Holy Garment lay buried beneath a tree that grew at that spot. In the 4th century, after Iberia (Kartli) officially converted to Christianity under St. Nino, the main temple, Svetitskhoveli, was built there. This temple became the place where the kings of Georgia were anointed and where Holy Myrrh has been produced since the 7th century, after the 6th Ecumenical Council recognized the autocephalous status of the Georgian Church.

In Sir Oliver Wardrop's Kingdom of Georgia – “Travel in a Land of Women, Song and Wine” (1888), he sought to draw British attention to Georgia, believing its importance equaled that of France and Germany. Wardrop highlighted the route to Russia, known as the Military Road, and the monuments of the Georgian kingdom. After visiting the capital, he traveled to Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia, where he observed Svetitskhoveli and described it briefly. He recounted the story of Georgia's conversion to Christianity, stating, “*The sacred garment was preserved in the cathedral until the seventeenth century, when Shah Abbas sent it as a present to the Tsar of Russia, Mikhail*”

*Fedorovich. It was solemnly deposited in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow, where I saw it last autumn" (p. 39).*

Wardrop's certainty about seeing the Holy Garment in Moscow intrigued me, and this led me to investigate the myth regarding its relocation to Moscow's Cathedral of the Assumption. My familiarity with the story of Christ's Chiton, combined with my admiration for Oliver and Marjory Wardrop, inspired this exploration into the myth's origins. This article seeks to uncover the basis of the narrative surrounding the garment's supposed relocation to Moscow and to analyze the political motivations that may have influenced the story's creation in the late 17th century and its revival in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Keywords:

Myth Creation; Political Motives in Mythology; Holy Garment; Christ's Chiton Georgian History; Romanovs; Svetitskhoveli Cathedral; Ecumenical Patriarchate; Georgian Apostolic Church; Russian Orthodox Church Oliver Wardrop; Georgia-Russia Relations; Assumption Cathedral Moscow; Cultural Identity; Religious Symbolism in Politics.

### ნინო ღამბაშიძე

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### აბსტრაქტი:

მითების შექმნას საფუძვლად პოლიტიკური ინტერესები უდევს. ეს ნარატივები გავლენას ახდენს ცალკეულ თემებსა თუ მთელ ერებზე. ზოგჯერ კონკრეტული ინფორმაცია ყოველგვარი კითხვების გარეშეფაქტად აღიქმება და სრულიადაც მითოლოგიად მიიჩნევა. ასეთ მცდარ წარმოდგენებს ხშირად არასწორ გაგებამდე მივყავართ ჩვენი პოლიტიკური, რელიგიური და მისიონერული მიზნების შესახებ.

ქართველების ისტორიაში წმინდა სამოსელი, ასევე ცნობილი როგორც ქრისტეს კვართი, მრავალი საუკუნის მანძილზე საქართველოს სამეფოს ერთ-ერთ მთავარ სიმბოლოდ ითვლებოდა. რუსეთმა 1801 წელს გააუქმა საქართველოს სახელმწიფო, ხოლო საქართველოს სამოციქულო ეკლესია რუსული მართლმადიდებელი ეკლესიის ქვეშ აღმოჩნდა. მხოლოდ 1989 წელს ცნო მისი დამოუკიდებლობა მსოფლიო საპატრიარქომ.

21 საუკუნეზე მეტი ხნის განმავლობაში, ის ცენტრალური სიმბოლო, რომლითაც ქართველები საკუთარ თავს წარმოადგენდნენ ცივილიზებულ სამყაროში, იყო ქრისტეს კვართი, რომელიც, საქართველოში მიიტანეს ებრაელმა რეპატრიანტებმა ქრისტეს ჯვარცმოდან მალევე.

„ქართლის ცხოვრების“ (მე-10 ს.) მიხედვით, უფლის კვართი დაკრძალული იქნა ქალთან ერთად, რომელმაც ის გულში ჩაიკრა და მაშინვე გარდაიცვალა მცხეთის კედლებთან, იერუსალიმიდან დაბრუნებულ ძმებთან შეხვედრის შემდეგ. მას შემდეგ ითვლება, რომ წმინდა სამოსელი მიწაში დარჩა და ამ ადგილზე აღმოცენდა ხე.

IV საუკუნეში, წმ. ნინოს მიერ ქართლის ქრისტიანობად გამოცხადების შემდეგ, ამ ადგილზე აშენდა მთავარი ტაძარი, სვეტიცხოველი. ამ ტაძარში აკურთხებდნენ საქართველოს მეფეებს და მე-7 საუკუნიდან მზადდებოდა წმინდა მირონი, მე-6 მსოფლიო კრების ნებართვით.

ოლივერ უორდროპის წიგნში „საქართველოს სამეფო – მოგზაურობა ქალების, სიმღერისა და ღვინის ქვეყანაში“ (1888), ავტორი ცდილობდა ბრიტანეთის მთავრობის ყურადღების მიპყრობას საქართველოსკენ, თვლიდა რა, რომ მისი მნიშვნელობა არანაკლები იყო საფრანგეთსა და გერმანიაზე. უორდროპმა, ე.წ. „სამხედრო გზით“ იმოგზაურა საქართველოდან რუსეთში და აღწერა საქართველოს სამეფოს ძეგლები. დედაქალაქის ნახვის შემდეგ, იგი მცხეთაში გაემგზავრა, საქართველოს ძველ დედაქალაქში, სადაც სვეტიცხოველი ნახა და მოკლედ აღწერა. წიგნში იგი მკითხველს უამბობს საქართველოს გაქრისტიანებაზე და ახსენებს, რომ „*უფლის კვართი ინახებოდა სვეტიცხოველში მეჩვიდმეტე საუკუნემდე, ვიდრე შაჰმა აბასმა ის რუსეთის მეფეს, მიხეილ ფედოროვიჩს გადასცა საჩუქრად. სამოსელი ამჟამად იმყოფება მოსკოვის მიძინების კათედრალში, სადაც ის წინა შემოდგომაზე ვნახე*“ (გვ. 39). უორდროპის დარწმუნებულობამ, რომ მან წმინდა სამოსელი მოსკოვში ნახა, გამიჩინა ინტერესი და მიმიყვანა იმ მითის კვლევამდე, რომელიც სამოსელის მოსკოვში, მიძინების კათედრალში გადაბრძანებას ეხება.

ქრისტეს კვართის ამბისადმი ჩემმა ინტერესმა და, აგრეთვე, ოლივერ და მარჯორი უორდროპებისადმი პატივისცემამ, ამ საკითხის კვლევის სტიმული მომცა. ამ კვლევაში ვეცადე გამომერკვია სამოსელის მოსკოვში გადატანის შესახებ მითის საფუძველი და გავიაზრე ის პოლიტიკური მოტივები, რომლებმაც შესაძლოა გავლენა მოახდინეს მის შექმნაზე მე-17 საუკუნის მიწურულს და მის განახლებაზე მე-19 საუკუნის დასასრულს.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** მითების შექმნა; პოლიტიკური მოტივები მითოლოგიაში; წმინდა სამოსელი; ქრისტეს კვართი; საქართველოს ისტორია; რომანოვები; სვეტიცხოველის ტაძარი; მსოფლიო პატრიარქატი; საქართველოს სამოციქულო ეკლესია; რუსული მართლმადიდებლური ეკლესია; ოლივერ უორდროპი; საქართველო-რუსეთის ურთიერთობები; მოსკოვის მიძინების ტაძარი; კულტურული იდენტობა; რელიგიური სიმბოლიკა პოლიტიკაში.

## Introduction

### MYTH OR REALITY: LOCATION OF LORD'S ROBE

Sir Oliver Wardrop, in the preface of his book "*Kingdom of Georgia – Travel in a Land of Women, Song, and Wine*", (Wardrop, 1888), says that he wanted to tell the truth to the Western World about Georgia: "*In publishing these notes, I have had but one object—to excite the curiosity of my fellow-countrymen... Georgia is practically unknown to the British public; well-educated people*

*know that the country is famous for its beautiful women, but they are not very sure whether those charming creatures live under Persian, Turkish, or Russian rule, while not one person in a thousand knows that the Georgians and Circassians are distinct peoples." (p.7) Thus he attempted to bring to the attention of Her Majesty (as he recalls British governance) that the "Brits should have an equal interest in Georgia, if not more than the French and German governments have." As the reason for such importance, he later describes the route towards Russia, the so-called Military Road, and the spots worth his attention become the monuments of the Georgian kingdom. His first sight after the capital is the city of Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia, and its central temple, Svetitskhoveli. Sir Wardrop describes the temple very scrupulously and tells the story of the conversion of Georgia into Christianity: "It was then revealed to St. Nina that the tunic, the object of her search, lay buried under a cedar in the middle of the town; the tree was cut down, and the robe was found in the hands of the dead girl. On the spot where the cedar stood, King Marian built, in 328, the Cathedral of the Twelve Apostles. The cedar was replaced by a column, and this column is said to drip myrrh occasionally, even in these degenerate days of ours. The sacred garment was preserved in the cathedral until the 17th century, when Shah Abbas I sent it as a present to the Tsar of Russia, Mikhail Feodorovich. It was solemnly deposited in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow, where I saw it last autumn" (ibid., p. 39). Obviously, Sir Wardrop is sure that he saw the item in Moscow the previous year.*

As the official site of the Russian Orthodox Church, [Patriarchia.ru](http://Patriarchia.ru), indicates, the Holy Garment was presented to the Russian Tsar, Mikhail Feodorovich, by Shah Abbas I in 1625: *"Mtskhethian Jews annually sent their envoys to Jerusalem to participate in the celebration of the Old Testament Passover. One of them, named Elioz, was an eyewitness to the suffering of Jesus Christ and believed in the Savior. He managed to acquire the Robe of the Lord from the warrior who got it by lot and returned with it to Mtskheta. The Chiton of the Lord remained in Georgia until the beginning of the 17th century. The further fate of the Lord's Robe is closely connected with the history of relations between the three states: Georgia, Persia, and Russia. In 1616–1617, Georgia was conquered by the Persian Shah Abbas I, and the Russian Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov, in response to the request of the Georgian king Teimuraz for help, and took him under protection. In 1622, during negotiations on the future fate of Georgia and King Teimuraz, the Shah told Russian envoys that he had the Chiton of the Lord, which he allegedly took in Georgia, and intended to send Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich and Patriarch Filaret Nikitich to Moscow." (Патриархата, 30).*

Several questions arose when reading the source:

If Georgian king Teimuraz asked the Russian tsar for help and he "took him under protection", it means that both countries were supposed to confront the Persian Shah. Then why did Shah Abbas I decide to send the chiton to the Russian court?

Why did this issue become so interesting in the second half of the 19th century, since many monographs and scientific research were devoted to the issue in the 1880s and 1990s?

Who and when decided to choose the boyar Mikhail Romanov as the tsar of the Russian state?

## Results and Discussion

### THE REASONS OF ORIGIN OF THE MYTH

In February 1611, the Polish troops moved toward Moscow. It was headed by the "Council of the Whole Earth". The Cossacks, under the leadership of Ataman I. Zarutsky and Prince D.T. Trubetskoy, and the nobles, led by P. Lyapunov, played the main roles. The revolted army managed to capture the White City (the territory inside the current Boulevard Ring), but the Poles kept Kitai-Gorod and the Kremlin. In 1613, the Zemsky Sobor elected a new tsar, Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov. Formally, the Romanovs had the right to the throne as relatives of the former dynasty: Mikhail's grandfather, Nikita Romanovich Yuryev, was the brother of Ivan Grozny's first wife, Anastasia Romanovna. The election suited everyone. N. R. Yuryev was close to Ivan Grozny, but he did not enter the Oprichnina; he was even considered an intercessor for the innocent. Therefore, both the former Oprichniki and the former Zemskie saw their aliens in the Romanovs. Mikhail's father, Fyodor Nikitich (after tonsure, Patriarch Filaret), was a prisoner in Tushino, but in fact, he was there in the position of an honored guest. The people of Tushino even called him Patriarch. The election of M.F. Romanov to the kingdom was not accompanied by the signing of a document such as a "cross-kissing note". Royal power again became unlimited (библиотека, 2013).

Russia and Iran have had official relations since 1521, the year in which the first sovereign of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail (r. 1501–24), "*dispatched an otherwise unknown envoy to Tsar Vasilyi, the ruler of the expanding state of Muscovy (1503–33)*" (Matthee, 2013). The relationship between the two states, as it evolved in the following two centuries, was complex and multifaceted, and marked by episodes of intense diplomatic traffic alternating with periods of low mutual interest and interaction. Topics of conversation and conflict ranged from influence and control in the Caucasus, the rugged and intractable borderlands where both powers were involved in a triangular relationship with the Ottoman Empire, to a shared interest in exploring the idea of a coalition against the Ottomans, to trade agreements and disputes. Relations were most intense during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1587–1629), whose energetic foreign policy concerning isolating the Ottomans matched a Russian eagerness to explore the formation of an anti-Ottoman coalition with the Safavids.

In 2001, the exhibition of treasuries from the Kremlin was arranged in New York, and the catalog was issued (Shifman & Walton, 2001). Later, Lindsey Hughes reviewed the catalog (Hughes, 2003). "*The Book on the Election to the Highest Throne of the Great Tsar, Ereign, Tsar, and Great Prince Mikhail Feodorovich' of 1672–1673 In conjunction with James Billington's opening essay on the projection and celebration of autocratic power, which dwells somewhat excessively on Muscovite megalomania, paranoia, and xenophobia, these and other images evoke Oriental otherness, thereby probably confirming the preconceptions of visitors to the exhibition. From the visual evidence presented here, it is easy to understand why participants at Muscovite receptions were dazzled. Even quite modest items drip with gems—for example, an icon cover adorned with turquoise, sapphires (highly prized, apparently), pearls, and other precious stones, with blue and green enameling (no. 5).*" (Hughes, 2003, p. 134). Thus, the artifacts presented to the exhibition viewers impressed everybody with their luxurious and expensive looks. The author even uses epithets like "megalomania, paranoia, and xenophobia". Certainly, this impression can be understood as the biased attitude of an American expert towards the Russian treasury.

**The myth's creation is a subject of political interest, as is its interpretation and evaluation. The myth of the overwhelming richness of the Russian kingdom was born in connection with the Romanovs' coming to power. They needed justification for their right to be acknowledged as a dynasty**

worthy of unlimited power. From a historical perspective, it is dubious how powerful the Romanovs were in the beginning.

### CHRIST'S CHITON, BRIEF HISTORY:

Christ's chiton has been a representation of the Georgian kingdom since the early Middle Ages. Kirill Tumanov erects the Georgian Bagrationis, as well as the extinct in the middle century Armenian royal dynasty of Bagratuni, to the Orontides, one of the seven largest feudal families ("great houses") of Ancient Persia, first satraps (governors), and then the kings of Armenia (from 331 BC) (С.В.Думин, 1996, p. 28).

This version, however, is disputed by many Georgian authors. The traditional genealogy of the Bagrationi dynasty goes back to the biblical king-prophet David. According to a legend already recorded in antiquity, the founder of the Georgian lineage was a distant descendant of King David Guram (Guaram), along with three brothers (Sahak, Asam, and Varzavard). They were all Christians and arrived in Georgia under King Mirdate (Mithridate), son of Vakhtang Gorgasali. His three other brothers, Bagrat, Abgavar, and Mobal, according to the same genealogical legend, intermarried with the Armenian kings. In Christian Georgia and Armenia, the tradition of belonging to the family of the great king David of Israel, from whom descended Jesus Christ himself, exalted the dynasty, surrounding its name with a mythical light. It is curious that another ancient Christian dynasty also maintained a similar tradition, until recently ruling in Ethiopia; the Abyssinian kings of kings, Negus-Negeshti, erected themselves to the sons of David, King Solomon, and Queen of Sheba. The Georgian king David IV the Builder was considered a descendant of the king-prophet David in the 78th generation (ზაგრატიონი, 1979, p. 193).

Catholicos Nicholas Gulaberisdze in his essay about the Holy Garment in XI c. says that: "*God ordained in this way that He became a man for our eternal life. Because he prepared our nation (the Georgians) in advance to be worthy of being with the higher nations. And since the chiton was woven by the Mother of God, the cedar that grew in the place of his burial performed great miracles. It is for this reason that God sent a garment bearing His grace in advance so that, from the beginning, the whole nation would share in the divine grace with this garment. By His grace, the devils are defeated. From the beginning, he sent the robe, which with its light and eightfold fire, buried under the ground, according to the prophet Samuel, would completely burn the death of the devil. Your purpose is truly kingly, Lord and God of all!*" (Gulaberisdze, 1832).

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch, on his way to Moscow, stopped in Georgia for several months in 1664-1666 (about 2 years), where he learned about the conversion of Georgia. As it is thought, he learned the history of Georgia from an oral translation of St. Ephraim the Minor's treatise (Walbiner Carsten-Michael & Nanobashvili Mariam, 2008. p. 446). It might be possible, that the Russian officials – the newly elected king Mikhail Fyodoovich Romanov, and his father, patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Russia, have had learned about the chiton and about its importance from the words of Patriarch Macarius of Antioch<sup>1</sup>. (Walbiner, 1996).

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<sup>1</sup> On the reflection of this interest, found in Macarius' works see C.-M. Walbiner, *Accounts on Georgia in the works of Makāriūs ibn al-Zaīm*, in S. Kh. Samir (ed.), *Actes du I<sup>um</sup> Symposium Syro-Arabicum (Kaslik, septembre 1995)*, II: *Études arabes chrétiennes* (1) = *Parole de l'orient*, 21 (1996), p. 245-255.

After the abolition of Georgia by the Russian Empire in 1801, the Georgian Apostolic Church was subordinated to the Russian Orthodox Church, and only in 1989 did the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognize its independent status. There were three arguments that the representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church presented to the council:

1. Christ's chiton—the Holy Garment—was brought to Georgia by the Jewish expatriates, who traveled to Jerusalem and participated in the division of Christ's belongings. Their share was the whole garment. " 23. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened so that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." (Psalm 22.18) So this is what the soldiers did." (John 19.23-24).
2. St. Andria and St. Matatha, Christ's apostles, preached Christianity in Georgia in the second half of the 1st century A.D.
3. Georgia was baptized into Christianity in 337 A.D. by St. Nino, and since then, until Russia abolished Georgian independence, the Ecumenical Council has always acknowledged the merits of Georgian Christians.

Thus, the central symbol of the Georgian state, by which Georgians represented themselves to the civilized world during the last 21 centuries, is the Gown of Christ, which was brought to Georgia by Jewish repatriates in the 1st century A.D.

### RUSSIAN-PERSIAN RELATIONS IN THE 17TH c. ACCORDING TO THE PERSIAN AND EUROPEAN ENVOYS

The original center of Safavid power was northwestern Iran, and the early capital was Tabriz. By 1503, the Safavid family had conquered much of present-day western Iran and Iraq as well, creating in the process an empire based mainly on loyalty to the Shi'ite version of Islam. Then, in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, the Safavid lost many of the original western conquests, but Shah Abbas the Great (ruled 1587–1629) restored the size of the empire through new gains in the east. *"More important, he created an efficient centralized bureaucracy, largely staffed by non-Persians, mainly Georgians and Armenians who had converted to Islam. As a symbol of his new power, Shah Abbas I built a new capital at Isfahan, which was to become, for the next century, one of the great centers of Muslim art and architecture."* (Curtin, 1984, p. 187).

Russia and Iran continued to maintain diplomatic relations following the reign of Shah Abbas I. The intensity of the exchange leveled off under his successors, to be sure, as Iranian and Russian interests began to diverge. The final decade of Shah Abbas' reign had already seen a Safavid orientation away from confrontation with the Ottomans and an attendant loss of interest in participating in anti-Ottoman coalition-building (Baibourtian, 2004). This reorientation continued under his successor, Shah Safi, culminating in the Peace of Zohab in 1639. Russia, meanwhile, preoccupied with internal matters and finding itself embroiled in a war with Poland and Lithuania, temporarily drew closer to the Ottomans and therefore gave up trying to find allies against Istanbul. Yet many political issues

concerning control and influence in the Caucasus remained unresolved and periodically necessitated the further exchange of envoys.

Nevertheless, the near silence about Russia in the Persian-language court chronicles, as well as the fact that none of the names of the recorded envoys are linked to well-known officials, suggest that the Iranians accorded relatively little importance to relations with Russia. The resulting dearth of specific information in the extant sources makes it difficult to connect individual missions to the issues that are known to have preoccupied both parties.

One mission for which we have more than a cursory remark in the sources is the one that visited Iran in 1664 and that, in all likelihood, was headed by Miloslavski and Narbeki. Only foreign observers, the French travelers Thévenot, Tavernier, and Chardin, and the agent in Bandar Abbas, Van Wijck, report on this mission.

The fate of this embassy as reported by the various outside observers appears to confirm the observation of Pietro Della Valle, who, commenting on Russo-Iranian relations, in 1619 insisted that, while the Russians professed friendship with Iran and exchanged ambassadors regularly, the outwardly amicable relations between the two states were feigned rather than real, since in reality there was little love lost between the two states. (Valle, 2010, p. 613).

The representation of the events in the various sources certainly fits the notion of the contempt that the Iranians are said to have felt for the Russians as primitive and backward, leading to the occasional rudeness with which they treated their envoys (Burrow, 2013). Iranians appear to have been no less prone than contemporary English commentators to consider Russians backward and barbarous. (Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, 1968). "*Whereupon the Russians received the faith and profession of Christ, which though it is somewhat more ancient than the time noted before out of the Russian report*" (The Russian Primary Chronicle tells the same story but assigns it to the year 988 (Д.С. Лихачев, О.В. Творогов, 2012. pp. 76–77). Authors Berry and Crumey question even how deeply true and sincere the Russians were when they received the first stamp of religion, for as much as the Greek Church at that time was in many ways infected with error and superstition (Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, 1968, p. 207).

As Giles Fletcher reports: "*At my being there, in the year 1588, came unto Moscow the patriarch of Constantinople, or Scio, called Jeremiah, being banished (as some said) by the Turk, as some others reported, by the Greek clergy deprived. The emperor, being given altogether too many superstitious devotions, gave him great entertainment. Before he came to Moscow, he had been in Italy with the Pope, as was reported there by some of his company*". (ibid., p. 207) When he visited Moscow, Jeremiah was the patriarch. There is no evidence that he had previously been in Italy. His appearance in Moscow had no connection with the attempts of the Hapsburgs to draw Russia into an anti-Turkish alliance.

The Muscovite government allied with the Caucasian principality of Kakhetia in 1587. The Georgians sent envoys to the emperor of Russia to join the league together for the invasion of the Turks on all sides of his dominions.

In 1578, a war between Turkey and Persia broke out and lasted until 1590. In reaction to Turkish conquests in Transcaucasia, both the shah of Persia, Muhammad Khudibandih, and Alexander, ruler of the Georgian principality of Kakhetia, tried to win Muscovite support for an anti-Turkish alliance.

In 1587, a Persian ambassador came to Moscow and proposed a treaty of alliance by which the Moscowite government would provide detachments of cavalry and artillery and would receive in



return the districts of Baku and Derbent, should these be recaptured from the Turks. Negotiations continued with the embassy of Grigoryi Vasil'chikov to Persia in 1588–89 and a second Persian embassy to Moscow in 1589–90. Before the negotiations were completed, however, the new shah, Abbas, made peace with The Turks gave up plans for an alliance with Moscow (ზაგრატიონი, 1979).

### GEORGIAN ROYAL COURT'S POLITICAL GAMES TOWARDS RUSSIA AND PERSIA

Prince Alexander I of Kakhetia, who had previously recognized Persian suzerainty over his domains, transferred his allegiance to Moscow in 1587 in hopes of gaining protection against the Turks. At about the same time, the Muscovite government rebuilt its military outpost in the delta of the Terek River (Кушева, 1963, pp. 268–69, 273–75). The Muscovite government soon discovered that it could not muster strong enough forces to extend its control over the northern Caucasus; the Shamkhal of Tarki defeated Russian expeditions against him in 1594 and 1604–5. After these setbacks, the Muscovite commanders pulled back to their base on the Terek, and the government abandoned its commitment to support Kakhetia. (Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, 1968, pp. 367–368).

As Sir Jerome Horsey reports: "*The emperor, I may say the prince protector, being now possessed of so infinite a treasure and daily increasing it, knew not well how to employ, dispose of, or make use of it to illustrate his fame. The king of Persia being greatly oppressed by the mighty armies and yearly inroads of the Turk who having won from him all Media, Derbent, Shemakha, Bilbill, Ardebil/ and other his most richest, best, and fruitful provinces, driving him to the Alps, as it were, or high countries of Persia, Kashan, Tabriz, Persepolis, Kazvin, etc., and also invading and annoying that maiden and unconquered kingdom of the Georgians by reason of their situation, Christians environed in the midst of all those Mohammedan and heathen countries; they both issuing and sending unto the emperor and prince protector their several ambassadors for aid and succor, who, not being so well able to transport an army so remote over the Mare Caspian Sea, was contented to lend and transfer unto the king of Persia, upon good hostages, two hundred thousand rubles marks sterling for five years gratis, and to the king of the Georgians one hundred thousand marks sterling more upon the pawn and resignation of the title of his kingdom, by an authentically instrumental manner agreed upon, paid, and perfected by commissioners on both sides. But hereupon grew a quarrel between the Turk and the emperor.*" (Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, 1968, pp. 326–327).

Only in the eighteenth century, faced with the modernizing of Peter I and, even more so, the expansionist policies of the formidable Catherine II, did the Iranians find reasons to adjust their view of Russians. Yet they never seem to have lost their basic view of their northern neighbors as rather dull and primitive.

Iranian suspicions about Russian motives were indeed longstanding, ran deep, and were real enough. They ranged in their targets from the habit of presenting commercial missions in the guise of embassies to profit from toll-free trade to the (covert) encouragement of predatory Cossacks to the perennial bone of contention between the two states—the construction of fortresses in the Caucasus. "*The latter issue, involving the presumed desire to subjugate the Caucasus—part of which the Safavid themselves had invaded and colonized—was the most serious one. Concerns about Russian intentions on this level went back to the mid-sixteenth century, would become acute again with Tsar Peter's aggression against Iran, and would prove prescient in light of the ultimate Russian annexation of the territory.*" (Matthee, 2013, p. 87).

The flourishing trade relations between Astrakhan and the Caspian provinces depended on peace with Persia. Apart from this, the Polish War of 1632–34, the great riots of 1648–50, the Ukrainian problem, the Nikonian schism in the Russian church, and the war with Sweden of 1656–58 gave the Russian government constant cause for anxiety. A Caucasian war would have been an unwelcome and unnecessary burden.

This did not mean that, at this time, Russia showed no interest in Georgian or Caucasian affairs generally. Between 1630 and 1660, peaceful penetration was especially intense. The Dadiani, or prince regnant of Megrelia and the king of Imereti, both in Western Georgia, were taken under nominal Russian suzerainty, and several embassies were exchanged with the valiant King Teimuraz of Kakhetia. *”Great emphasis was laid on the community of religion between the Russians and the Georgians, and every advantage was taken of the Georgians' hostility to the Mohammedan powers”*. (Lang, 1957, p. 15).

Thus, the Russian Empire needed legitimation. On the one hand, the change of the royal dynasty and international recognition of a strong empire became crucial issues for Russians. The Georgian kingdom was suppressed and in great poverty, and searching for international support gave an excellent background to the ambitions of the Grand Princes Ivan the Great and Basil, who were swallowing up the independent duchies and free cities of Moscow and laying the foundations of modern Russia (Lang, 1957, p. 20).

#### ISSUE OF LEGITIMATION OF ROMANOVS IN THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY

Here comes a question: Why did the Romanovs and the Royal Court, led by the Patriarch Filaret (the monarch's father), get so interested in the authenticity of the robe?

The Russian public had to choose candidates for the throne among Russian clans. After the Oprichnina, only two noble boyar families (clans) managed to preserve their power (taking into account family ties with the former ruling dynasty). The Shuiskys and the Romanovs. By that time, the Shuiskys, representatives of the Suzdal branch of the Rurikovich, managed to visit the throne, and the Romanovs were seriously battered by the government of Boris Godunov (1598–1606), but they retained their power and strength to a sufficient extent, which played a certain role for them as possible applicants to the throne (Сухаренников, 2017).

In the election of Mikhail Romanov, an important (if not paramount) role was played by the Cossacks, who generally supported the Romanovs, possessed real military power, and, with their presence in Moscow, put moral pressure on the wavering boyars, nobles, and clergy. But the official reason for the election of the Romanovs was announced to be family ties with the Rurikovichs. Mikhail Romanov's father, Fyodor (Patriarch Filaret), was a cousin of the last tsar from the bygone dynasty, Fyodor Ivanovich. Mikhail, in turn, was the great-nephew of Anastasia Romanovna, the first wife of Ivan Grozny. These connections are doubtful, as they were more familiar than related. But for the people of that time, they were of great importance in terms of justifying the right to the throne. Taking into account the fact that Mikhail Romanov did not show himself in any way during the Time of Troubles, that is, he did not stain himself, and the Zemsky Sobor of 1613 chose his candidacy.

The myth of Shah Abbas I presenting the Holy Garment to the first monarch of the Romanov dynasty became the foundation for the legitimation of the dynasty, thus ending the tensions of the last century among the Boyars and merchants of Russia and choosing the Romanovs as the legitimate

kings of Russia. The political and diplomatic interests of Russia suited the myth of a good relationship with a prominent Persian governor in the first half of the 17th century.

This can be explained by the careful enthusiasm of the Patriarch Filaret of Moscow (who, in his turn, appears to be the father of the newly assigned monarch, Mikhail Feodorovich) in presenting the "gift of the Persian Shah" to the massive pilgrimage. Shah Abbas I kept his word: in March 1625, the Persian ambassador Urusambek brought a sacred robe to Moscow as a gift from Shah Abbas to His Holiness Patriarch Filaret. The shrine was placed in a golden ark adorned with precious stones. Together with him, the ambassador handed the Patriarch a letter in which the shah announced that, having conquered Georgia, he found this shrine in the sacristy of the metropolitan, hidden in the cross. On the same day, Patriarch Filaret, with the entire synod, examined the ark: *"And after inspection, in that ark a part of some kind of linen, slightly reddish, looked like shallows, or would be from ancient years, changed its face, and the fabric is in the wave and length and across the span. Since the Chiton was sent by a non-believing king and 'the word of the unfaithful without testing is not accepted as evidence,' they began to look for evidence of the authenticity of the shrine. The Greek and Jerusalem bishops and archimandrites, who were in Moscow at that time, unanimously confirmed that their churches preserved the tradition that the robe of the Savior is kept in Georgia, where it was transferred by a soldier who was at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ."* (Патриархата, 30).

So, this lie has found a place in the liturgy of the Russian Church, where even the feast of the ordering of the Lord's robe is established. Regarding this erroneous information about the Russian church calendar, we offer the material prepared according to the work of the Georgian historian Eldar Mamistvalashvili, "Christ's robe in the diplomatic relations between Russia-Iran and Georgia-Russia" (მამისტვალაშვილი, 2003):

*"In the first quarter of the 17th century, the issue of Georgia was one of the important subjects of diplomatic relations between Russia and Iran. Shah-Abbas was worried about Russia's appearance as a protector of a united Georgia. The Iranian government was well aware that Russia could not actively protect Georgia, but Russia's bringing up its issue in the diplomatic arena would, in a certain sense, hinder the trade and economic relations of these two countries and their joint action against the common enemy, the Ottoman state. King Teimuraz I of Kakheti tried to activate Russia on the issue of Georgia. Shah-Abbas saw Russia's firm position (so far only verbal) in the defense of Teimuraz and his kingdom, so to influence the Christian emperor and his ambassadors, he pretended, among other things, to say that he had in his hands the robe of Christ in the country of Ivarta, which he wanted to send to the emperor and patriarch of Russia. The Shah added that many Christian rulers wanted to possess this sanctity, and they even asked him, but he did not give it to anyone."* (p. 42).

Shah Abbas I was aware of the interest of the Russian Church and the royal court in Christian relics. The goal of the religiopolitical theory ("Moscow is the third Rome") formed in Russia at the beginning of the 15th century was to raise national self-awareness in Russia and establish Russian influence in Orthodox countries. The Russian authorities wanted to gather the most precious relics for Christians in the "Third Rome"—in Moscow. The Russian ambassadors, well aware of the disposition of their king and church, advised Shah Abbas I to inform the sovereign and the patriarch that he was sending such a gift to please them. Georgian Urusan Beg was assigned to take Christ's robe to Moscow. Russian officials doubted the authenticity of this gift. Russian ambassadors from Iran began to collect information about the robe. They asked Urusan Beg how Christ's robe ended up in Georgia, how long it had been there, where it was kept, and how Shah found it. Urusan Beg only knew that the robe was hidden in the Metropolitan's cross. According to the materials of the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs of Russia, the ambassador of the king of Georgia, Teimuraz, to Russia was Theodore, the archbishop of the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Golgotha in Jerusalem. After receiving the report of the Russian ambassadors from Iran in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moscow, it was decided to talk to the Georgian ambassador about the robe.

Iv. Gramotin told Theodore that the Great Emperor of All Russia and His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Filaret are the true custodians of the Christian faith. They are worried about the fate of the Christian sacred remnants and are trying with every effort to save those artifacts from the hands of Muslims and see them in their state. Iv. Grammotin asked Theodore: "Does he knew where Christ's holy garment was? In the royal treasury or the church treasury, what it was like if he had seen it and where it is now kept, what size the robe is, what it is made of, and where is the treasure taken by the Shah from the country of Iveria? Are there any other sacramental remnants that were obtained by the Shah? etc. (Олеарий, 1870).

Certainly, Theodore knew perfectly well the history of Svetitskhovli Cathedral and the Holy Garment, but he deliberately distorted the well-known facts. He offered a completely new version of bringing the coat to Georgia and its subsequent fate to the Russian authorities. He said it as if Christ's robe, cloak, and other holy items were in a coffin on Golgotha, in the Congregational Church of Christ's Resurrection. King Teimuraz's father, David, built a stone church in Georgia, near the country of Kumukhs, and placed Christ's robe, cloak, and many other sacramental items there after returning them from Jerusalem. After the conquest of Georgia by Shah Abbas I, Teimuraz I purchased a chest full of the sacred artifacts for a large sum of money from one of his nobles. In that chest was the Christ's robe and part of the cloak, the icon of the Savior, which the Lord Jesus Christ sent to King Avgaroz. Also the iron tridents of the cross of Christ and other holy things. All this belongs to Teimuraz I, and Shah Abbas has no sanctities (მამისტვალისვილი, 2003, p. 57).

Theodore's interpretation of the story of the Holy Garment and rejection of the existing historical tradition should be explained by the fact that he witnessed the uproar that followed Shah Abbas' gift to Moscow. But the Russians realized that the Georgian ambassador was lying (they doubted that Theodore was a Georgian Catholic). Theodore's response raised more questions. A certain nun, Anikei, knew one of the Georgian legends about bringing the robe to this country. (Олеарий, 1870, p. 46–47).

Archbishop Nektarios of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that he visited Svetitskhoveli during his stay in Georgia. On the right side of the temple, under the first column, Christ's robe is placed. It was brought by a warrior who was present at the crucifixion of Christ. He received all the clothes of the Savior by lot and took them to Georgia. Many miracles were performed with the robe (მამისტვალისვილი, 2003, p. 60).

Despite the investigation, the Russian authorities could not establish anything important. They met Shah's ambassadors and his gift unprepared.

On February 25, 1625, the son of King Mikhail Feodorovich received the ambassadors of Shah Abbas I, and on March 11, the second week of Great Lent, the ruler and the patriarch organized a special reception for the ambassadors in the chamber of the Kremlin, which was attended by representatives of the highest authorities of the Moscow state and the patriarchate.

Urusan Beg, the ambassador of Shah Abbas I, presented the patriarch with a chest decorated with gold, rubies, and turquoise gems. It was a piece of reddish woolen cloth, probably discolored by age. The patriarch and other pilgrims doubted the authenticity of the robe. The patriarch reported to the king that there was an icon of the crucifixion with a Latin inscription under the canvas. The Latins

are heretics; the sacred artifact considered to be Christ's robe was sent by the infidel Shah Abbas I; therefore, it is dangerous to recognize the robe without a true witness.

On March 26, 1625, in the royal chamber, at a meeting of the highest persons, it was announced that the Lord had expressed his will by performing miracles by the Holy Garment. It was decided to place the sacred artifact in the temple of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, in the golden ark. A holiday was established in its honor on March 27 every year. After the changes in the calendar, July 10 was announced as the day of "displaying the robe of the Lord".

Thus fulfilled the political and religious purposes of Shah Abbas I. By sending the royal gifts to the Russian king, Shah aimed to:

1. convince Russia of its inalienable right over Georgia;
2. After the removal of Christ's robe from Georgia, it was questionable whether this country would remain Christian;
3. Russia would no longer have a reason to use the pretext of defending Christian Georgia, which caused some discomfort to the Iranian authorities.

According to the Russian authorities, the transfer of Christ's robe from Georgia to Russia symbolically meant that Georgia came under the power of Russia. Since this action took place on the initiative of Iran's Shah, it meant that Iran would no longer be able to dominate Georgia. It is difficult to imagine, if Shah Abbas had lived long, how the diplomatic relations between Russia and Iran and the issue of the robe would have gone. His successors did not like to remember this.

The subsequent events related to the robe reveal to us that despite Shah's gift passing the "examination" successfully in Moscow, doubts remained about whether it was really what Christ wore at the crucifixion. Two Georgians from opposing camps played a big role in the origin of suspicion: Teimuraz I's ambassador, Archbishop Theodore, and Shah Abbas's ambassador, Urusan Beg. The Russian Church has been trying for a long time to determine what the fabric sent by Shah Abbas represented and what kind of fabric Christ's robe rested on in Svetitskhoveli.

When Georgian politicians of the 17th century became aware of Russia's interest in Christ's robe, they tried in every way to convince them that the robe was in Georgia and that if Russia wanted to possess it, it should carry out serious military and political actions to help Christian Georgia.

### RENAISSANCE OF THE MYTH IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> c.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brailovsky obtained one of the legends, which was considered to be translated from Greek or of "Origin of Holy Russia."

According to Brailovski's new version, one Georgian was in Jerusalem during the crucifixion of the Lord. The Jews voted to divide Christ's clothes. The robe was a Georgian warrior's share; he brought this robe to Georgia and gave it to his sister. This virgin kept this robe in a safe place for sixty years and asked to be placed in a coffin wrapped in the robe when she died. On her tomb grew a beautiful olive tree, from which Myrrh began to flow. Myrrh heals people. But the Georgians became greedy and sold myrrh for a large income. God punished them and made the tree sing. Myrrh flow and healing stopped. Georgians gathered, asked the advice of the elderly, and decided to dig the grave of that woman. They dug it up and found that the intact body of the woman was like wax. The Georgians cut off a quarter of the sacred garment. Then they built a beautiful ark, buried the robe in it, and built a temple over the body of the virgin. The ruler Mikheil Theodorovich sent ambassadors

to the ruler of Persia, who had great enmity with the Georgian king. The king of Persia went to war in Georgia and swore, "If God helps me, I will send everything to my brother, the ruler of Moscow." God helped him conquer Georgia, and he got the Holy Garment. He sent the Lord's robe to Moscow." (ჩხატარაიანი, 2008).

The creators of this purposefully changed story were not well-disposed towards the Georgians. The greed of Georgians is emphasized here, which is why the tree withered and the flow of myrrh stopped. It is also remarkable the reason for the Muslim Shah's invasion of Christian Georgia as an expression of God's will.

But the subsequent events related to the robe assure us that there was still a doubt: was it Christ's robe? The Russian authorities tried for a long time to determine what the fabric sent to Moscow by Shah Abbas was.

In the second half of the 19th century, Russian officials started preparations for the celebration of 300 years of the Romanov dynasty in 1913. For this reason, the legend of the Gift of Shah Abbas I was an explanation of the right of the Russian Empire to possess the conquered countries. Georgian heritage: the Lord's Robe was one of the foundations of the legitimation of Romanov's dynasty, since there were memories of the doubt Romanov's deserved when they came to the head of the Russian empire. (Коммиссия, 1880).

### **BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION AND THE FAITH OF THE CHRIST'S GOWN**

On February 21 (March 6), 1913, was assigned the solemn public and state celebration of the 300th anniversary of the reign of the House of Romanov. According to the "Highest Manifesto" given by Emperor Nicholas II (published in February 21, 1913), timed to coincide with the date of the "unanimous election" to the kingdom in Moscow by the Great Zemsky Sobor: "On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of February 1613," boyar Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov, "closest in blood to the extinct royal family of Rurik and St. Vladimir" (the wedding to the kingdom took place on June 11, 1613, in the Assumption Cathedral in Moscow) (Романовых, 2023).

Royal family of Rurik and St. Vladimir" (the wedding to the kingdom took place on June 11, 1613, in the Assumption Cathedral in Moscow (Романовых, 2023). Signed on February 21, 1913, by the highest decree, to "deservedly commemorate the current solemn day and perpetuate it in the memory of the people," they were granted "mercy to the subjects" of the Russian emperor (Манифестъ, 1913).

In all cities of Russia, prayers of thanksgiving were served in churches, military parades of local military garrisons were held, solemn balls, dinners, and receptions by governors and mayors were given, and historical exhibitions and folk festivals were organized. The windows of many houses and shops were decorated with flags and portraits of Tsar Mikhail Romanov and the reigning Emperor Nicholas II. The program of anniversary celebrations was extensive; the celebrations began in February and continued until the autumn of 1913. The final celebrations took place in Moscow.

The celebration was shadowed by political tensions between revolutionary parties. The extremist party "Dashnaktsutyun" ("Union") is an Armenian nationalist party founded in 1890. The ultimate goal was proclaimed as "the formation of a free-ruling democratic republic" (Federation S. A., 1913), and "Narodnaya Volia" made numerous attempts to exploit the peaceful ceremonies (Federation H. D., 1913): *Report from the head of agents in Turkey to the head of the special department of the police department, A.M. Eremin, on the reaction of the revolutionary parties to the*

*Manifesto for the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty—Gracious Sovereign, Alexander Mikhailovich! All revolutionary organizations expected from the Supreme Manifesto, on the occasion of the tercentenary of the current Reigning House, the broadest amnesty for political figures. The promulgated manifesto not only did not satisfy the organizations but provoked bitterness among them, especially in the parties: the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the Dashnaktsutyun, and the Narodnaya Volya. The question of which will be dealt with in Paris. The representative of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in the Union of Black Sea Sailors, Amir, who went to Paris on March 5 at the call of the Central Committee, is especially in favor of the use of terror and intends to insist on the use of terror there. Please accept the assurance of my perfect respect and devotion. [Lenchevsky K.A.] Resolution A.M. Eremin on March 18: "Urgent. Submit this information to His Excellency Mr. Director, having previously telegraphed this information to the head of foreign agents and offering to find out the identity of Amir and accompany him with surveillance to the border for arrest (there is also a performance note)." (Federation S. A., 1913).*

Later, on April 28, 1913, the secret police reported about the prospective assault on the Emperor, in Kostroma: "The head of the Yekaterinoslav Provincial Gendarme Directorate reported to the Police Department on March 28 of this year under No. 1791 the following: "My assistant in the Aleksandrovsky and Pavlogradsky districts, Lieutenant Colonel Redin, informed me that he had received the following reliable intelligence information from his employee "Novago": recently, among military organizations, it was decided to carry out terrorist acts of exceptionally great importance, an example of which is the murder of the Greek King George in Thessaloniki (George I (1845-1913) - King of Greece since 1863, on March 5/18, 1913, mortally wounded by A. Schinas.) At the upcoming celebrations in the mountains. Kostroma (this refers to the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty) is supposed to carry out an assassination attempt on His Imperial Majesty the Sovereign Emperor. The terrorists will arrive from abroad and, according to the supposedly worked-out plan, will be among the persons who will make up the spiritual procession." (Виссарионов, 1913). In this document, it is interesting to note that the assault was planned with the involvement of the high hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the same document, it is said that the Jews refused to participate in the assault because they were afraid of punishment.

In 1914, World War I began, which foreshadowed the end of the Romanov Dynasty. In 1917, Nikolay II resigned from the royal throne, and soon the Bolsheviks assassinated the last representatives of the Romanov dynasty. But the legend of the Holy Garment is still alive in Russia. It still feeds the imperial instincts of Russian civic and church officials. Thus, it is not a surprise that in the 21st century, the official propaganda is founding the essence of the Russian empire on this legend, which, by their testimonies, remains in the temple of the Holy Assumption in Moscow. Which was witnessed by Sir Oliver Wardrop in the middle of the 1880s (presumably in 1885 or 86) at the temple of the Holy Assumption. He certainly did not get into further examination of the myth since he presented the myth as a real historical fact and was not interested in getting further. The Russian Empire, from its beginning until now, has legitimized its right to conquer neighboring and other independent countries through the Falce legend. The Romanovs owe their legitimation to the lies of the Persian and Georgian opportunists, who desired to get as much benefit from the Russians as they could.

**CONCLUSION:**

In response to the question posed at the beginning of this article, if the Romanovs had not been chosen to ascend to the throne, the course of world history may have taken a more just path had a more deserving dynasty been selected to rule over the country that still poses a threat to the modern world today. Therefore, I believe that political decisions and diplomacy should be based on facts rather than on assumptions and false myths perpetuated by those who have the power to shape the course of history.

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