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### Features of diplomatic games in Georgia during the second half of the XVIII century

Natsvaladze Mamuka<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Doctorate;  
Sokhumi State University; Republic of Georgia

**Abstract.** The current study refers to one of the less-known events in the history of Georgia for 60-80s of the XVIII century - the issue of confrontation between Solomon I, the King of Imereti and Erekle II, the King of Kartli-Kakheti. The article reviews the structure of the rivalry existing between the Georgian Kings in detail. As a result, it is confirmed that the rivalry had neither subjective nor objective grounds. The results of the research presented in the article confirm that the Imperial Court of Russia had an idea fixa to confront the Georgian kings that would provide Russia with the levers to interfere in the internal affairs of Georgia. Solomon and Erekle, who accepted Russia's desire, played the scenes as if they were opposed to each other and used the idea fixa of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg in favor of their national interests. These unique diplomatic games helped the Georgian Kings establish contact with Europe in 1779. The situation that Imereti unlike Kartli-Kakheti was less controlled by Russia, provided Erekle with the opportunity to send ambassadors to the Emperor of Austria by means of Solomon. Erekle the Second and Solomon the First attempted to solve the most important task of increasing Georgia's defense capability jointly. In particular, the issue of the resettlement of Kabardins to Georgia in 1782. This most significant project was disrupted by Russia. A number of primary sources and evidence presented in the article strongly confirm that the confrontation between Erekle and Solomon I was only a diplomatic disguise. Excellent relations existed between the kingdoms of Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti. They had common external and internal strategic goals that could be realized through the aforementioned diplomatic manipulations.

**Keywords:** *Erekle the Second, Solomon the First; The Russian Empire; The Kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti; The Kingdom of Imereti.*

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#### Introduction

The 50-90s of the XVIII century are distinguished by the abundance of various crucial processes in the history of Georgia. It was the time of preparation grounds for the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti implemented through a manifesto of September 12, 1801 by the Imperial Court of Russia. A qualitatively new political circumstances needed an appropriate legend in order to create an illusion that the annexation was beneficial to the Georgian nation and was implemented by taking into account their interests.

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Among the legends, introduced by the Russian imperial policy and ideology, there is a statement that the unification of Georgia is the result of a Russian initiative. Accordingly, taking into account the referred imperial ideology, it was supposed that the kingdoms of Georgia were opposed to each other. Relations between Solomon I, the King of Imereti and Erekle II, the King of Kartli-Kakheti were also reviewed within this format. The Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet historiography established and maintained the opinion about the confrontation of these two great kings.

### **Task of the study**

The task of the present study is to define the purpose of the confrontation between Erekle and Solomon the First, demonstrate the structure of this confrontation and conclude whether there was an objective ground for disagreement between the Kings of Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti.

### **Goal of the study**

The goal of this study is to demonstrate the manner Georgian diplomacy used the idea fixa of the Imperial Court of Russia to confront the kings of Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti against each other and interfere in the internal Georgian political processes as a judge conciliatory.

### **Novelty of the study**

Current study is the first precedent in historiography that raises doubts regarding the conflict between the Georgian kings Erekle II and Solomon I and clearly indicates it was just a diplomatic game used by the kings of Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti in favor of Georgian national interests.

The specific way used by Erekle II to contact Europe in 1779 with the help of diplomatic resources of Imereti Kingdom is presented in historiography for the first time in the shape of the current research.

Current article is also the first precedent in historiography when the King of Imereti, Solomon I, together with Erekle II, is considered to be the initiator of this most important event in relation to the resettlement of Kabardians in Georgia.

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 XVIII century – the Greek project. Excerpts from our research have been published in various scientific publications in Oxford [59], Cambridge [56; 61; 65], Paris [60; 66]; Melbourne [58], Moscow [62], Tokyo [57], Rome [55], Vienna [54], Warsaw [45; 46],

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Boston [44], San Francisco [48], Sheffield [47], Las Palmas [53], Porto [68] Tbilisi [49; 50; 63; 67], Telavi [49; 52] Kutaisi [51; 64].

### 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 [37]; Robin George Collingwood [15]; Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch [6]; Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield [38]; Abrams Lynn [1]; Brundage Anthony [5]; Gregory Ian, Ell Paul [22]; Hughes-Warrington [23]; Iggers George, Wang Qiang Edward [24]; Akira Iriye [25]; Kaldellis Anthony [30]; Koselleck Reinhart [31; 32]; Lukacs John [39]; Munro Doug, Reid John [42]; Quigley Carroll [70]; Raaflaub Kurt [71].

### Sources

Following primary sources have been used during the research: materials of Pavel Butkov: For the new history of the Caucasus - three volumes [11; 12; 13]; Acts of the Caucasus Archeographic Commission [2]; memories of Papuna Orbeliani [41; 69], Oman Kherkheulidze [34], Iese Baratashvili [26], De Gray de Foix [18].

Correspondence of Solomon the First with Russian Empress Catherine the Second and Count Nikolai Panin [21, pp.12, 55] as well as with Pope Pius VI [73, pp. 395].

Correspondence of Erekle the Second with Russian Empress Catherine the Second [21, pp. 82] and Count Nikolai Panin [21, pp. 63-64].

Documents reflecting the relations between Russia and Kabardino in the second half of the XVIII century were published in two volumes in the 50s of the previous century by the Russian researcher V. Bukalova [35].

### Research Results

An opinion has been established in Georgian historiography that disagreement between Erekle II and Solomon I started in 1775. If such a fact really exists, it should be a distinct obstacle in terms of unification or bringing the Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti kingdoms into a single political space. While discussing the events of 1775, Mikheil Rekhviashvili, researcher of Imereti history writes: *"King Erekle continues to raid the borders of Turkiye. Sultan asked Karim Khan to stop him. He, in turn, applied to Erekle... King Erekle decided to take into account Kerim Khan's request... Erekle's diplomatic step was considered as hostile*

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*by King Solomon... King Solomon I decided to conclude an alliance with Persia in response to the alliance of King Erekle with the Turkish Empire" [72, pp. 258-259]. The researcher does not indicate the name of Solomon's Persian ally. The situation is rather chaotic after the death of Nadir Shah. However, based on the primary sources and historical documents [11; 12; 13; 2; 69] we can confirm that Persia was ruled by Kerim Khan during the aforementioned period. Therefore, Solomon I might have established relations with Kerim Khan himself.*

The situation is rather strange - issues described by Mikheil Rekhviashvili can be neither a logical basis nor even a simple cause of the conflict between Erekle and Solomon. Detailed consideration of the situation supposed to be the root of this conflict shows that Sultan applies to Kerim Khan, the actual ruler of Persia in order to stop raids against the Ottomans. Erekle takes into account the advice of Kerim Khan. Solomon, on his side, establishes a relation with Kerim Khan. This is the so-called actual political context of conflict dramaturgy.

A kind of doubt arises to this extent - why this situation should be perceived as a disagreement between Erekle and Solomon? What can be considered as the conflict itself? If the rulers of the Ottoman Empire and Persia found a common language with Erekle and Solomon, on his side contacted the ruler of Persia, who approved this common position, what makes us consider the step of the king of Imereti as an action directed against Erekle? This step is neither an action against Erekle nor a confrontation with him. It is a completely idyllic picture, as the interests of all four subjects are in complete harmony. Therefore, it seems rather illogical to evaluate Solomon the First's relation with the ruler of Persia as a step taken against Erekle, since the latter honors the aforementioned ruler and has a fairly moderate and constructive relationship with him.

However, it is impossible to disregard the fact that both Georgian society and the international political spectrum are aware of the conflict between Erekle and Solomon I. This conflict is confirmed by Solomon I himself in a letter sent to Catherine II (dated September 1, 1781). Solomon writes to the Russian Empress: "*Erekle transferred himself and his realm to the Turks. He asks them for assistance and hopes only for the Turks. He tries to inflict damage to us in this manner*" [21, pp. 12].

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A comprehensive analysis of the history of Georgia in the 80s of the XVIII century clearly shows that the situation in this letter is clearly exaggerated and far from reality. We suppose the king of Imereti knows it best, but he tries to dramatize the problem. The desire to dramatize the issue is unusual in itself. It seems that Solomon needs to demonstrate such a negative attitude towards Erekle for certain political purposes.

If we analyze the situation in depth, it becomes obvious that Solomon's actions against Erekle are very artificial. The thing is that the regulation of relations with the Ottomans occupies the most significant place within the diplomatic issues of Erekle II, but without ignoring the interests of the Imereti Kingdom. No essential fact, phrase or action can be perceived in the activities of Erekle directed to the detriment of west Georgia, in particular to the Imereti Kingdom, while attempting to regulate the foreign policy of Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom. The main focus is on Dagestani Lezghins, backed by the Ottoman Empire. Erekle's main concern is to break the chain between the Ottoman Empire and Dagestan, which is the most difficult task. Taking into account the existing situation measures saving the population from physical destruction have been considered to be optimal.

Dagestanians actually destroy East Georgian statehood, and not only it, with targeted constant invasions. A great importance of solving the aforementioned problem of East Georgian statehood is confirmed by the construction of the largest wall in Europe, four kilometers in length, associated with the foundation of the city of Signaghi and supposed to solve the acute problem of protecting the population of the nearest villages of Kiziki from Lezghins. The purpose of this colossal work was only to save people and maintain the physical existence of the population.

The most important point is that Dagestani Lezghins, implementing deadly targeted attacks against the statehood of Kartli-Kakheti, are backed by the Ottoman Empire. The latter, on its side, considers the whole Western Georgia, including Imereti Kingdom as its own part in accordance with the international system of Amasya.

Accordingly, both kingdoms of Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti have one obvious enemy - the Ottoman Empire, the neutralization of which meets the interests of both political forces. This is an unambiguous reality and the inclusion of Persia, as an active subject within the political triangle

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does not actually change anything, apart from raising doubts within political dramaturgy.

Let's return to the so-called conflict between Solomon and Erekle. Solomon's attempt to use the opposing Persia against the Ottomans is not an unusual step and therefore cannot be considered as a foreign policy activity conducted against Erekle. Professor Valerian Macharadze writes: "*In the summer of 1778, the Turkish government started to gather troops in Anatolia; There was a threat of their invasion of Imereti in order to punish the disobedient Vassal (King of Imereti) and restore Turkish ruling over the Kingdom of Imereti... In order to avoid the impending danger and save the country, the King of Imereti,, sent an extraordinary ambassador to Iran to take advantage of confrontation between Iran and Turkiye and avoid a attack on Imereti*" [43, pp. 45-46].

It is significant that historiography [10, pp. 9; 40, pp. 431] associated the topic of bringing Vakhtang VI's grandson Alexander son of Bakar to Imereti with the Ambassade sent to Kerim Khan Zend in Persia. Actually, Kerim Khan died on March 22, 1799, before Besik arrived in Persia, so the Imeretian Ambassade lost its significance due to local riots and Besik returned without any result. Georgian historiography tried to find out whether the main purpose of Besik's Ambassade was to bring Alexander son of Bakar. It is noteworthy, that Besik does not mention any specific purpose of the Ambassade, however, he confirms that King Solomon sent him to Shiraz, Iran, to Kerim Zend [7, pp. 1932: 104].

As Professor Valerian Macharadze points out, Marie Brosset associated the arrival issue of Alexander son of Bakar to Georgia with the Ambassade of Besik, whereas the primary source for Marie Brosset was David Batonishvili. Mr. Valerian specifically points out that David Batonishvili was 10-12 years old at that time, so he should not be considered a contemporary of the reported story, since Batonishvili's source might be an oral story [43, pp. 33]. Therefore, the reliability of an oral story as a source and its preciseness can be doubted.

If the idea of bringing Alexander son of Bakar in response to Kartli-Kakheti's relations with the Ottomans within the Erekle-Solomon conflict is taken into account seriously, we believe it should be a clearly provocative step from the side of Solomon or a childish obstinacy. It resembles to a revenge rather than a serious act. Hence, the doubt arises - does

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Solomon complicate relations with Erekle artificially? Is this conflict artificially intensified and, moreover, agreed with Erekle himself?

Otherwise, it is impossible to explain the goal Solomon would like to achieve with the provocation, the final result of his action and his intention as well.

Giving an adequate, specific response to these questions is rather impossible. Following conclusion can be made based on the review of several scenarios of possible developments: in case any harm is inflicted to the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom it will also cause damage to the Imereti Kingdom. It is difficult to find an argument to what extent Solomon will benefit from the removal of Erekle from power and bringing the descendants of Vakhtang VI to power that will strengthen Russia's position in the Caucasus. This option seems ideal from the viewpoint of Soviet historiography, a threat to Erekle, who according to Soviet historiography, signed the Treaty of Georgievsk in order to avoid danger.

In fact, Solomon the First, like Erekle II, is well aware of St. Petersburg's plans for the imperial conquest. Russian-Turkish war of 1768-1774 passed over his head and Solomon himself witnessed the betrayal of the Russians. It is not arguable that even the Ambassadors he sends to Russia do not make the King of Imereti on an idyllic mood, as evidenced by the memoirs of De Grey de Foix [18, pp. 22-78].

Based on the above, we suppose that the confrontation seriously considered by historiography until now, is a play staged by Erekle and Solomon to deceive the Russian Empire.

This diplomatic play needs dramaturgy; therefore, the referred dramaturgy was created in a simple and convincing manner for Russia. In 1779, Solomon King of Imereti sheltered Alexander son of Bakar, who had fled from Iran. In response, Alexander, the only son of Solomon and confronted with him was accepted by the court of Erekle II.

Let us analyze the threats directed to the Kingdoms of Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti based on the aforementioned facts.

Alexander is the only son of Solomon and the heir to the throne. The conflict between father and son cannot be ruled out, but not to the extent to inflict the damage to the state. Historical annals revealed the reason of Alexander's confrontation with Solomon. Iese Baratashvili reviews the topic thoroughly in his "Life Testament". It is obvious that Alexander did not confront Solomon, he was angry with his stepmother and avoided her, as Iese Baratashvili writes

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Alexander stated repeatedly that he would never betray his father [26, pp. 87].

If we get acquainted with the personal portrait of Erekle II, it becomes evident that he was supposed to play the role of a mediator and not use this conflict for specific purposes.

Therefore, we think this play was staged to distract Russia. Solomon's most reliable ally, of course, should be his son Alexander. It is noteworthy that this confrontation reached a dead lock in advance, with no development scheme and the next stage of dramaturgy. According to our version, traces of artificial escalation of this situation can be observed.

As for the fact that Solomon sheltered Alexander son of Bakar, it is evident the grandson of Vakhtang VI claims to the throne of Kartli, he is the heir to the throne of Kartli [27, pp. 71] in accordance with the treaties Rashed 1732 [76, pp. 194-201] and Ganja 1735 [76, pp. 202-207], Russia and Persia and tries to use this legitimacy [29, pp. 100-102]. However, a situation was completely different by the 80s of the XVIII century, Erekle had already occupied a place not only in the Georgian, but also in the international political spectrum by his activities, thereby returning to the throne descendants of Vakhtang VI, turned from a legal step to a reactionary step as the Georgian researcher Lovard Tukhashvili points out [74, pp. 34-88]. The referred situation enabled Erekle to prevent the expected threats easily - the Georgian noblemen did not dare to resist, Alexander son of Bakar was not accepted by the Pasha of Akhaltsikhe, Vakhtang's grandson was not a welcome partner for Russia itself as he could not be governed. Presumably, it was the reason Catherine got rid of Alexander [36, pp. 140-143; 75, pp. 103-105]. Though, according to the official version, the Imperial Court of Russia punished him for excessive devotion to Peter III [3, pp. 77-88; 20, pp. 263].

Alexander son of Bakar was accompanied by Alexander Amilakhvari, severely punished by Erekle, who participated in the uprising of Paata Batonishvili in 1765 and hated the king of Kartli-Kakheti and the Royal court of Bagratians. His sentiments were adequately reflected in the "Georgian History", published in St. Petersburg in the same year, 1779, clearly aimed at discrediting Bagratians and in particular Erekle II [4]. Analysis of political events of that period makes clear that the unofficial attitude of Alexander Amilakhvari and the Imperial Court of Russia towards Erekle

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II completely coincides. However, it should be also noted that not even Alexander Amilakhvari seems to be a desirable and completely reliable partner for the Imperial Court of Russia. Therefore, St. Petersburg had to arrest the noble who denounced Erekle for a long time in order to disguise its treacherous plans [14, pp. 211: 222; 75, pp. 119-136].

Actually, main opponents of Erekle sheltered at the court of Solomon are somehow unacceptable to northern co-religionists. Hence, it is possible that these two persons, doomed to failure, were deliberately selected by Erekle and Solomon as actors of the political dramaturgy. After revealing that uprising of nobles against Erekle was hopeless, in early 1782 Alexander Amilakhvari and Alexander son of Bakar moved to Daruband and set specific plans together with Fat-Ali Khan. However, the Russian government presented an ultimatum to the owner of Daruband and demanded to hand over Amilakhvari and Alexander son of Bakar [12, pp. 113:117]. It seems that at that moment St. Petersburg was not planning a physical confrontation with Erekle, but was only trying to implement its plans through intrigues and spies appointed at the court of Bagrations.

Elizbar, son of rebellious Ksani Feudal together with Zakaria Gabashvili, who could no longer stay in East Georgia after the restoration of Anton Catholicos, turned out to be supporters of Solomon II in order to spread this illusory format of the conflict beyond the royal court games.

Herein, It should be noted that after the suppression of Paata Batonishvili's uprising in 1765, an unambiguous change took place in favor of Erekle II. The Feudals, despite their critical attitude towards the King, no longer dared to confront Erekle in an open manner. The referred process was irreversible and, of course, neither Elizbar, son of rebellious Ksani Feudal nor Zakaria Gabashvili could manage to alter the situation.

Thus, according to our version, Alexander Amilakhvari and Alexander son of Bakar shelled by Solomon did not pose an insurmountable threat to the Royal Court of Kartli-Kakheti. Moreover, neither Zakaria Gabashvili nor Elizbar, the heir of the Feudal of Ksani, possessed the leverage to inflict any harm to the king of Kartli-Kakheti. Therefore, according to our version, their ambitions and purposeful psychological attitude against Erekle were used to prevent the Imperial Court of Russia from suspecting the so-called disagreement existing between Erekle II and Solomon I.

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Russia tries to effectively implement a traditional Roman formula - Divide and Rule and simultaneously, rise discord between the Georgian Kings. It uses a number of methods to achieve he referred goal. Tottleben's adventure during the Russian-Turkish War of 1768-1774 was based on this strategy. It was a completely targeted strategy with a certain result. The Imperial Court of St. Petersburg wanted to define how obedient and complaisant Erekle II could be. He needed a test to clarify the issue and the starting point should be a disagreement between Erekle and Solomon. The dramaturgy of this strategy is pretty simple - all three powers should be weakened with the tripartite resistance of the Ottoman Empire, Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti granting Russia a guaranteed chance to overcome the North Caucasian barrier in the near future, move the border to the south, minimize the distance between Russia and Georgia and get closer to the centuries-old dream of conquering Constantinople.

That is why during the Russian-Turkish War of 1768-1774, the main focus of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg was shifted not directly to the defeat of the Ottomans, but to the intrigues, the confrontation between Solomon the First and Erekle the Second, including the artificial incitement of disagreements between them. Obviously, the desired outcome of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg on the Caucasian Front should be the confrontation of the kings of Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti. All the rest was of secondary importance. Poti could not be taken by such a premeditated strategy of the Russians. Actual chances of returning Samtskhe-Saatabago were not used despite the brilliant victory in the Battle of Aspinza.

Russian intrigues are openly discussed by the King of Imereti Solomon I, in a letter sent to Nikolai Panin on September 19, 1770. He openly reveals Tottleben's evil intentions and writes that the Russian commander separated King Erekle and Solomon by his inappropriate behavior and spread a lot of malicious information and rumors about them [21, pp. 55].

King Erekle expresses regret in a letter sent to Count Nikolai Panin on October 9, 1770, that due to Tottleben's decision, the unification of the Kartli-Kakheti and Imereti troops and a joint battle, that might have been a prelude to success were not allowed. Erekle writes: "*As His Imperial Majesty commanded, Christians living in this region should fight against the enemy... We did everything to unite so that*

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*they would come and join our army, or we would join them in this good affair, but they would not have any desire and I am very sorry that it did not happen, though His Majesty the Emperor would have achieved great success through this matter...*" [21, pp. 63-64].

A fighting spirit of Erekle II is perceived obviously in a letter sent to Count Nikolai Panin on October 10, 1770. The Georgian King writes: *"If the Russian army and Yanaral make fight in Akhaltsikhe and Kars this winter, then I have great pleasure to announce that I would like them to be accompanied by myself or by my army; And if he does not want me to accompany or join them, I will give the army to Yanaral..."* [21, pp. 66].

In a letter sent to Empress Catherine II in 1771 (without exact date) King Erekle notifies the Russian Empress: *"I tried very hard to join them based on the advice of King Solomon of Imereti and other owners, through sending Ambassadors, but my advice and peaceful words were not accepted by the general of the Russian army and as I did not have your majesty's order, I could no longer use force"* [21, pp. 82].

The mentioned letter clearly shows that King Erekle had an idea to oppose Russia's arbitrariness, although he deliberately did not choose a violent way for solving the issue. It is evident again that such patience is worth in order to achieve a greater goal, according to our version, it is definitely related to the Greek Project.

According to the aforementioned primary sources, it is evident that Russia has no desire to cede the multinational and multi-confessional Caucasus ready for conquest. Therefore, it attempts to intensify existing confrontation even during the absence of any contradictions or disagreements.

Russian policy of this kind can be easily deciphered by the Georgian Kings, we believe that Solomon and Erekle had the idea of using manipulations of the Russian Empire for the national interests of Georgia. It is clearly seen that St. Petersburg pursues the same policy in the Caucasus as in Europe as a whole.

The idea of the Russian Empire is to adopt the role and status of a conciliator judge everywhere and to everyone, thus managing to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign countries and, accordingly, manipulate them. This attempt appears in the diplomacy of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg in the early 70s of the XVIII century. After

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several unsuccessful attempts, it ended with the achievement of the cherished goal in 1779 by the Treaty of Teschen and Russia acquires the international status of a conciliatory judge between Austria and Prussia. During a large-scale European conflict, the confrontation between Austria and Prussia, Russia acts as a defender of the Austrian Empire, while France protects the interests of Prussia. It seems an unprecedented success of Russia in the international diplomatic arena if we take into account that the entire European diplomacy of the XVIII century was based on the confrontation between Austria and Prussia. The status of a conciliatory judge pushes Russia towards other ambitions.

Russia wants to obtain a similar status within the Georgian political space - the necessity of a conciliator judge requires opposing sides, we suppose that the stated essential part of drama was well understood by the Georgian Kings and they followed Russia in the political game. Hence, the so-called confrontation between Erekle and Solomon was confirmed publicly.

Surely, the question arises - why do the Georgian Kings take such a step? What is the practical necessity of this diplomatic struggle and benefit for Erekle II and Solomon from this staged play?

The political situation in which all three parties found themselves after the Russian-Turkish War of 1768-1774 provides a comprehensive answer to these questions. As Professor Valerian Macharadze writes: "*Russia avoided receiving the Ambassador of Imereti since 1775... The Astrakhan governor had an order not to send the Ambassador of Imereti to St. Petersburg*" [43, pp. 36]. The Georgian Kings had to use this situation to find a channel that would connect them to Europe without problems, secretly from Russia as the latter refrained from active cooperation with the Imereti Kingdom and the Royal Court of Imereti (unlike the Royal Court of Kartli-Kakheti) since it was not fully controlled by St. Petersburg and due to the fact that the road leading to Europe both through Constantinople and through Russia was actually blocked for Kartli-Kakheti. The only weak link between Imereti, Kartli-Kakheti, and Russia was the Imeretian Kingdom, not strongly controlled by Russia; therefore, it was the only space allowing Erekle II to have a connection with Europe through ambassadors sent by the King of Imereti. Moreover, adding to this reality the fact that Erekle the second and Solomon the first are opposed to each other based

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on the official version, then we get a situation that is an idyllic version for a complete conspiratorial action. Erekle II took advantage of it when he sent Ambassadors to Europe in 1779 with the support of the King of Imereti.

Naturally, information regarding the referred Ambassade is stored in Georgian historiography, although no one has observed any traces of Erekle II's diplomacy apart from us.

In August 1779, Solomon I, King of Imereti, sent a letter to Pope Pius VI in Rome with a rather unusual and at the same time extremely social content: *"I will report to Your Holiness that we and our country are oppressed unjustly from the side of infidels, so please take care. In addition, we ask you to send us two doctors of hernia, who know their job well... One more request, please - provide us a good watch, sir"* [73, pp. 395].

With a small letter containing only several paragraphs, Solomon informs the Pope that his *"country is always oppressed by the infidels through battles"*, asking to send two doctors of hernia and a watch as a gift" [73, pp. 395].

We consider it is so frivolous and somewhat curious for diplomacy to combine these three issues in one letter that we think Solomon, an outstanding King in the history of Georgia, should not have sent a letter with such content, and if he had, it might have been only an enticement for Russia. The main message to the addressee might have been delivered by the Ambassador orally.

Another question arises – whether the letter is addressed only to the Pope of Rome? whether it is disguised and should be sent to other European monarchs, including the Austrian Emperor Joseph II as well.

Our assumption is supported by the fact that Mikhail Tamarashvili found the letter in Paris that was sent to Rome. It was unusual and unexpected for the scientist himself. Mikhail Tamarashvili writes about this letter:

*"We searched this letter in the archives of Rome but found an Italian translation in the library of Paris. We were unable to find the reason for taking this letter from Rome to Paris. This is one significant proof of the opinion stated earlier: surviving documents about Georgia are not all in their places, but scattered here and there. That is why it takes a lot of time and work for a person to collect all the ones existing today"* [73, pp. 393].

If we take into account the fact that the style of state governance of King Solomon II of Imereti is associated with

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the creation of a systematic model for solving the problems (for example a ban on the purchase of prisoners), then we must categorically rule out that the reason for sending an Ambassade to Europe in August 1779, saturated with diplomatic events, was only to *request two doctors and a watch and notify the Europeans that the country is always oppressed by war from the infidels* [73, pp. 395]. It can be strongly assumed that the Ambassade should be related to the solution of a systemic problem. The year of 1779 is the proper period in terms of diplomatic and political events.

If we take into account that the “Greek Project” as an anti-Ottoman concept, was not less relevant for the Kingdom of Imereti than for the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, the above archival material is sufficient evidence to suggest that King Solomon II of Imereti was an associate of Erekle II in connection with the Greek Project and the Ambassade sent to Europe in 1779 should be connected with this event. Presumably, for that reason the chancellor of Pope considered it necessary to send Solomon’s letter to Paris. It should not be ruled out either that the letter might have been delivered to Paris by an ambassador of Solomon himself and the ambassador transferred oral message of Kings of Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti to Pope Pius VI and Joseph II Emperor of Austria, as well as Louis XVI. Otherwise, it is rather vague why the topic of sending two doctors of hernia to Imereti and gifting a watch to Solomon should have been interesting and relevant for Versailles.

Surely, Solomon's hernia could not have been so significant to European diplomacy to forward a letter to Paris (by the chancellery of the Pope) which was initially sent to Rome. Accordingly, there is reasonable doubt that the ambassador sent by King Solomon of Imereti, who delivered this letter to Rome, had other diplomatic tasks that he delivered to the addressees orally, including the main political message of Erekle – the discussion and implementation of the Persian Project within the context of the Greek Project. We suppose Erekle’s doctrine of a secure Caucasus should have been introduced to the great powers of Europe through the referred Ambassade.

Accordingly, the anatomy of the conflict between Erekle II and Solomon I, the subject of our discussion, clearly indicates that there is not a confrontation between the Georgian Kings regarding foreign policy, but a complete idyll.

This idyll and mutual trust of Erekle II and Solomon I

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are accompanied by strong and proven mental attitudes in a critical situation. After the young king of Imereti conquered an empire stretching over three continents in the Khresili War in 1757, obviously the Ottomans thought about revenge, began appropriate preparations for it, and took certain measures - a death penalty was used against Ahmed Pasha Jakeli, the governor of Akhaltsikhe and another representative of Jakeli, Hasan Pasha was appointed. He was ordered to subdue Imereti by using the Lezghin marauder squads [17, pp. 639-640]. Therefore, it was realized by the Court of Constantinople that the unification of Georgia could be hampered only through comprehensive measures and combined forces.

In 1758, King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti and King Solomon I of Imereti signed a treaty in Gori in response to the referred processes, which stipulated the obligation: *"We will help each other in case the enemy evades any of our countries"* [41, pp. 474]. This was the most important measure to ensure the security warranty of the Georgian kingdoms.

Papuna Orbeliani describes the vicissitudes of signing the Gori Treaty as follows: in 1758 ... *"The ruler of Khundzakhi went to Kartli again on a campaign with a great army, two kings came to Gori with the army of Kartli and Kakheti. The ruler of Khundzakhi passed through Kakheti and entered Kartli, the kings arrived in Tskhinvali, army of Lezghins also approached Tskhinvali and the war broke out. Soon they were reconciled. That night, an army of Lezghins settled in Nikoz, and the next day they approached the fortress of Alaya, took it, destroyed it, took prisoners and countless cattle..."* [41, pp. 473- 474]

It was obvious that raids of Lezghins might have been faced to systematic resistance from the Georgian side, since these unpredictable raids bothered both eastern and western Georgia. Therefore, as Papuna Orbeliani states: *"The Kings (Teimuraz and Erekle - M. N.) sent "Ksani Eristav" (Feudal) to Imereti. They asked for an army, a large army came, but they were late, the Georgian army was small and they could not fight. King Solomon came with a small army, saw the kings in Gori, met them kindly and sent them away with a firm condition: "we will help each other in case the enemy invades to any of our countries "* [41, pp. 474].

It was an official document that meticulously reflected moral obligations of eastern and western Georgia towards the united statehood. Accordingly, a number of facts have been

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recorded in historical sources and literature confirming examples of mutual agreement between Erekle II and Solomon the First. In particular: Metropolitan Maxim of Kutaisi wrote on March 14, 1769: "When the Ottomans came to Imereti, Erekle helped twice but secretly" [21, pp. 2]. As the Georgian researcher Mikhail Rekhviashvili writes, "*This story was so important that rumors spread in Turkiye Russian officers close to King Erekle were fighting as well*" [72, pp. 192].

Describing the events of 1759, Oman Kherkheulidze provides pretty significant information: "*In 1759, Kokhta, Chieftain of Dagestan and Chonchol-Musa came again with an army of about eight thousand men ... They split up – Chonchol-Musa came to Achabet... Chieftain Kohta came to the fortress of Atotsi. Kings Teimuraz and Erekle came to Cornis with the army of Kartli-Kakheti and King Solomon of Imert backed the kings and came with the army and these three kings discussed which of them should be supported – Avnev or Atotsi... They chose to help Atotsi*" [34, pp. 57–58].

Metropolitan Maxim of Kutaisi confirms that Solomon supported Erekle against the Lezghins in an open manner, without any disguise and inspiration. He participates in these battles himself and moreover, Solomon's brother Archil also supports Erekle and fights with him [21, pp. 2].

Another very interesting fact of military cooperation between Erekle and Solomon has been preserved in a form of a letter sent to Rome on August 18, 1760 by the Catholic Patrice Leonardo. Leonardo describes his meeting with Erekle in Tbilisi with great sympathy, rather tenderly responding and expressing regret that the King was forced to leave him suddenly. He states following reason: "*Unfortunately for me (King Erekle – M. N.) he had to go there to meet the king of Imereti, as he is coming with Dadiani and Eristavi with fifteen thousand soldiers. They should conquer Ganja...*" [73, pp. 378].

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 a particular attention of the Russian intelligence. In this regard, specific information is provided by documents characterizing relations between Russia

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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 [35].

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 [8, pp. 114-117; 9, pp. 220-226] Niko Javakhishvili [28, pp. 148-151], Mamia Dumbadze [19, pp. 683-684], Geronti Kikodze [33, 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*" [16, pp. 143; 12, pp. :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

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Tarkhani, and Armenian Zuraba - were also indicated [16, pp. 143; 12, pp. :52].<sup>1</sup> However, such specifics regarding the Ambassade 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 Kabadians 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 Tatarkhanov 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 [35, pp. 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 [35, pp. 340].

The situation that it is impossible to establish the identity of ambassadors sent by Erekle on the one hand and a

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<sup>1</sup> Butkov names Ivan Bochelov instead of Ivane Shukiashvili [Бутков, 1869b:52], he might be one and the same person.

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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"* [35, pp. 340].

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the results of the current study confirm following:

1. The factors considered in historiography as the reason for the confrontation between Erekle II, the King of Kartli-Kakheti and Solomon I, the King of Imereti are obviously an illusion of imperial ideology.

2. The structure of the rivalry of the Georgian kings

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clearly indicates that the idea of their rivalry is the desire of the Imperial Court of Russia and one of the strategies to establish itself in the Caucasus.

3. Erekle the Second and Solomon the First accepted the idea-fix of the political game of the Russian Empire - the idea of opposing the Georgian Kings and used the status of opponents in accordance with the interests of the Georgian state.

4. Erekle II used the diplomatic resources of Solomon I for sending an Ambassade to Europe in 1779 as the Kingdom of Imereti was less controlled by Russia.

5. Similar diplomatic games continued later, when Erekle used the diplomatic resources of Solomon I in 1782 once again in order to re-implement the failed Kabardian resettlement project in Georgia in 1778.

6. Thus, the joint political actions of the Georgian Kings and the Principality of Western Georgia, as well as common national interests, prove that the unified Georgian statehood (with a format of federalism) had clearly defined political, historical, ideological, and subjective principles. The culmination of this mental mood was concluding a Treaty on the Unification of the Iverians in 1790.

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