

HISTORY OF GEORGIAN-IRANIAN RELATIONS

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Ancient Period

Between the Achaemenid era and the beginning of the 19th century, Persia played a significant and at times decisive role in the history of the Georgian people. The Persian presence helped to shape political institutions, modified social structure and land holding, and enriched literature and culture. Persians also acted as a counterweight to other powerful forces in the region, notably the Romans (and Byzantines), the Ottoman Turks, and the Russians. But the Persian-Georgian relationship was by no means one-sided, for the Georgians contributed substantially to Persia's military and administrative successes and even affected its social structure, especially under the Safavids.

Information about relations between the Achaemenids and the inhabitants of present-day Georgia is fragmentary. During the Achaemenid domination of eastern Anatolia and Transcaucasia (546-331 B.C.E.) proto-Georgian tribes were, according to Herodotus (3.94), included in the 18th and 19th satrapies (T. Kaukhchishvili, ed., pp. 10-11). Although the territory of present-day southern Georgia fell within the Achaemenid state, the Achaemenids apparently never brought those tribes living further to the north under their control. When they tried to do so, their aggressiveness led to the formation of large associations of northern proto-Georgian tribes (Melikishvili, pp. 235, 273). Xenophon was aware of the changed conditions in 401-400 B.C.E. when he noted in the *Anabasis* that these tribes, including those of Colchis, had ceased to be under Achaemenid rule (Mikeladze, ed., pp. 13-14). By this time proto-Georgians were moving into the Kura valley, where, merging with other tribes, they eventually formed the Georgian people (Lang, 1966, pp. 57, 75-76; on political formations in eastern Georgia, see Melikishvili, ed., pp. 422-44).

Alexander the Great's victory over Darius III in 331 B.C.E. gave impetus to the formation and consolidation of an independent Georgian monarchy in the following two centuries (on political and ethnic questions between the 3rd and 1st centuries B.C.E., see Melikishvili, ed., pp. 445-67). The first king of Iberia, the ancient name for the territory of present-day Kartli and Kakheti, or eastern Georgia, was the half-legendary Parnavaz (S. Kaukhchishvili, ed.,

I, pp. 4-10, 26), who took Persian institutions as models in organizing his realm. The example set by the Persian state system in eastern Georgia was undoubtedly a consequence of the earlier influence exercised by tribal formations in southern Georgia. Long controlled by the Achaemenids, they extended Persian influence northward, as their aristocracies expanded their own power base.

Between the 3rd and 7th centuries C.E. Iberia maintained a precarious existence between the two great rivals for control of the Caucasus, namely Persia and Rome (later Byzantium). Georgian kings successfully played one off against the other and thereby preserved their freedom of action. But as they came to rely on Rome to uphold strong monarchical institutions, they became estranged from the great nobles, who sought support from Persia to thwart the centralizing ambitions of their kings.

Decisive for the evolution of the Georgian state was the foundation of the Sasanian Empire in 224. By replacing the weak Parthian realm with a strong, centralized state, it changed the political orientation of Iberia away from Rome. Iberia apparently became a part of the Sasanian state during the reign of Shapur I (240-70), who listed Iberia as one of the lands that paid him tribute (Melikishvili, pp. 391-92). Relations between the two countries seem to have been friendly at first, as Iberia cooperated in Persian campaigns against Rome, and the Iberian ruler was a high dignitary of the Sasanian realm, not a vassal who had been subdued by force of arms (S. Kaukhchishvili, ed., I, p. 57). But the aggressive tendencies of the Sasanians were evident in their propagation of Zoroastrianism, which was probably established in Iberia between the 260s and 290s (Lukonin, p. 32).

In the contest for supremacy in the Caucasus, the advantage lay with Rome, whose armies defeated the Persians in a series of battles toward the end of the 3rd century. The Treaty of Nisibis in 298 assured Byzantine control of eastern Georgia (Kartli) for the next sixty years (Frye, pp. 130-31). Byzantine predominance proved crucial, since the Georgian king and leading nobles converted to Christianity around 327. By making Christianity the state religion, they erected what became an insurmountable barrier to Persian influence in the region.

In the 4th century the position of Iberia worsened, as its powerful neighbors became increasingly aggressive. Iberian kings chose Byzantium as the least dangerous to their independence, but Persia became predominant after the defeat of the Byzantine armies before Ctesiphon in 363 (Frye, pp. 137-38). Byzantium ceded control of Kartli to Persia, and the king of Kartli, Varaz-Bakur II (363-65), became a Persian vassal, an outcome confirmed by the Peace of Acilisene in 387. Although a later ruler of Kartli, Pharsman IV (406-9), preserved his country's autonomy and ceased to pay tribute to Persia (S. Kaukhchishvili, ed., I, p. 133), Persia prevailed, and Sasanian kings began to

appoint a viceroy (*pitiaxæ/bidaxæ*) to keep watch on their vassal. They eventually made the office hereditary in the ruling house of Lower Kartli, thus inaugurating the Kartli *pitiaxæat*, which brought an extensive territory under its control. Although it remained a part of the kingdom of Kartli, its viceroys turned their domain into a center of Persian influence (Berdzenishvili et al, I, p. 109).

Sasanian rulers put the Christianity of the Georgians to a severe test. They promoted the teachings of Zoroaster, and by the middle of the 5th century Mazdaism had become a second official religion in eastern Georgia alongside Christianity. Yazdegerd II (438-57), convinced that a single religion would enhance the unity of his realm, issued a decree formally admonishing the peoples of the Caucasus to renounce Christianity and embrace Mazdaism and dispatched Zoroastrian magi to Kartli to take charge of conversion (Trever, pp. 203-5). The majority of Georgian nobles submitted, but their commitment to the new faith proved shallow. Efforts to convert the common people were even less successful, since Christianity appears to have struck deep roots among them.

In seeking to weaken Christianity, Persian rulers involved themselves in the internal affairs of the Christian churches in the Caucasus. They tried to take advantage of disputes among Christians by offering protection to the Monophysites, who were opposed to the Chalcedonian doctrines patronized by the Byzantine emperors, and they promoted unity among the Armenian, Albanian, and Georgian churches in order to extend their control more easily over them. Under Persian pressure the three churches adopted the Monophysite doctrines at Dvin in 506 (Berdzenishvili et al., I, p. 136), but when Persian vigilance slackened, the Chalcedonians rose again, and by the end of the 6th century Monophysitism in Georgia had all but disappeared.

Religious controversy was intertwined with political struggle in the 5th century. The leading champion of Georgian independence was King Vakhtang I (447-522; Toumanoff, 1990, p. 378), who was called Gorgasar "wolf-headed" (Gorgasali in Georgian) by the Persians, because of the shape of the helmet he wore. Married to a Persian princess, he guarded the northern passes through Kartli and participated in Persian campaigns against Byzantium between 455 and 458 and in India, probably in wars against the Hephthalites in 474-76 (Dzhuansheriani, pp. 84-89). But loyalty had its limits. Vakhtang resented Persian encroachments on his independence and reinforced his position by supporting autocephalous status for the Georgian Church and by uniting western Georgia with Kartli (Muskhelishvili, p. 211). In 482 he led a general uprising against his suzerain and declared war on "Persian Christianity," that is, Monophysitism. But he was defeated, and his country was ravaged by Persian punitive expeditions in 483 and 484 (Toumanoff, 1963, p. 365). After a short exile he made peace with Persia and returned to Kartli, but when Kavazd I (488-96, 498-531)

summoned him as a vassal to join in a new campaign against Byzantium, he refused and engaged the Persian forces, appealing for support to Byzantium.

Byzantium and Persia continued their contest for supremacy in the Caucasus. War broke out in 526 and ended with the cession of Iberia to Persia in 532. But Khosrow I (532-79) was eager to reach the Black Sea and in 542 he moved through Iberia at the head of a large army toward Lazika and Colchis (Berdzenishvili et al., I, p. 120). The Byzantines countered by invading Persia and forcing Khosrow to make peace in 546. Once again it was merely a truce.

The Byzantine-Persian rivalry had baleful consequences for Iberia. In 580 Hormozd IV (579-90) abolished the monarchy after the death of King Bakur (Dzhuansheriani, p. 97), and Iberia became a Persian province. Hormozd at first had the support of the great nobles, but rather than receiving the enhanced privileges promised them, they were subjected to heavy taxation and a restrictive administration headed by a Persian-appointed governor. When, therefore, the Byzantine emperor Maurice attacked Persia in 582, many Georgian nobles urged him to revive the kingdom of Iberia, but in 591 Maurice and Khusrau II Parvez (590, 591-628) agreed to divide Iberia between them, with Tbilisi to be in Persian hands and Mtskheta, the old capital, to be under Byzantine control (Dzhuansheriani, pp. 98-99).

At the beginning of the 7th century the truce between Byzantium and Persia collapsed. Stepanoz I, *eristavi* of Kartli (ca. 590-627), decided in 607 to join forces with Persia in order to reunite all the territories of Iberia, a goal he seems to have accomplished. But Emperor Heraclius's offensive between 622 and 628 brought victory over the Georgians and Persians and ensured Byzantine predominance in western and eastern Georgia until the invasion of the Caucasus by the Arabs.

The Arabs reached Iberia about 645 and forced its *eristavi*, Stepanoz II (637-c. 650) to abandon his allegiance to Byzantium and recognize the caliph as his suzerain. Iberia thus became a tributary state, and an Arab amir was installed in Tbilisi about 653. Between the Arabs' consolidation of their position in eastern Georgia in the 730s and the emergence of the Safavid dynasty in Persia at the beginning of the 16th century, the Georgian kingdom was revived, experienced a period of glory, and then declined in the face of powerful new enemies. At the beginning of the 9th century, Ashot I (813-30) of the new Bagratid dynasty, from his base in southwestern Georgia, took advantage of the weakness of the Byzantine emperor and the Arab caliph to establish himself as hereditary prince of Iberia. A successor, Bagrat III (975-1014), brought the various principalities together to form a united Georgian state, and David II Aghmashenebeli (1089-1125), laid the foundations for Georgia's golden age during the reign of Queen Tamara (1184-1213). Georgia's decline began with the Mongol invasions of the 1220s, and, despite

brief revivals, it proved inexorable. The rise of the Ottoman Turks and their capture of Constantinople in 1453 raised up a powerful new military threat to Georgia at a time when, at the end of the 15th century, the country had been fragmented into three kingdoms (Kartli, Kakheti, and Imereti) and the duchy of Samtskhe-Saatbago.

Georgia and Persia in 16-18 Centuries

At the beginning of the 16th century Georgia once again lay in the precarious middle ground between two powerful enemies, the Ottoman Turks to the west and the Persian Safavids to the east. The two powers were themselves constantly at war (1514-55, 1578-90, 1602-18, 1623-39), with control of Georgia one of their objectives. Mainly under the leadership of the kings of Kartli the Georgians carried on a valiant, but unequal struggle to maintain their independence. At first, the initiative lay with the Safavids. Shah Ismail I (907-30/1501-24), the founder of the dynasty, sent raiding expeditions into Georgia, notably in 1518, but he was too preoccupied with consolidating his hold on power at home to pursue more ambitious undertakings in the Caucasus. Shah Tahmasp I (930-84/1524-76), who launched four campaigns against Georgia between 1540 and 1554, inaugurated the systematic extension of his dynasty's control over Georgia. All four expeditions were costly for the Georgians. In the first, 947/1540-41, Persians captured Tbilisi and plundered it and the surrounding region. They repeated these practices during subsequent expeditions in 953/1546-47, 958/1551, and 961/1553-54. Much booty was taken, especially from Georgian churches, and Tahmasp claimed as his rightful share the wives, daughters, and sons of the nobility, instead of the usual one-fifth of the treasure (Eskandar Beg, I, pp. 84-90, tr. Savory, I, pp. 140-44, 146; Brosset, II/1, pp. 445-53).

During these campaigns Tahmasp brought to Persia large numbers of Georgians, whose subsequent role in the army and civil administration led to significant changes in the character of Safavid society. The new ethnic element became a "third force" which interposed itself between the two "founding elements," the Persians and the Turkmen. Indeed, by the end of the 16th century the Georgians were threatening to replace the latter, the *qezelbash*, as the military aristocracy of the realm.

The competition between the Ottomans and the Safavids for control of the Caucasus was temporarily interrupted by the Treaty of Amasya (962/1555, q.v.). In Georgia, it established a rough balance between the two rivals, as Kartli, Kakheti, and eastern Samtskhe fell into the Persian sphere of influence, and Imereti and western Samtskhe into the Ottoman.

Shah Tahmasp used the opportunity to tighten Persian predominance in eastern Georgia by imposing Persian social and political institutions and by placing converts to Islam on the thrones of Kartli and Kakheti. One of these

was David/Dawud Khan II (1569-78), whose reign marked the beginning of almost two and a half centuries of Persian political dominance over eastern Georgia, with only occasional interruptions, until the advent of the Russians at the end of the 18th century. To hasten the integration of eastern Georgia into his realm Tahmasp used bilingual Georgian-Persian firmans to make Persian the official administrative language of the country (Tabatadze, pp. 262-63).

The Ottomans, eager to extend their control over Kartli and Kakheti, attacked Persian positions in eastern Georgia in 1578. Despite spirited resistance led by King Simon of Kartli (1557-69, 1578-99), the Ottomans prevailed, and in 1590 the Persians recognized all of Georgia as an Ottoman possession.

Shah Abbas I (996-1038/1587-1629) was determined to restore Persian predominance in the Caucasus. Although he inflicted enormous devastation on the Georgian kingdoms and appointed and dismissed their rulers almost at will, he never succeeded fully in stamping out resistance to his rule. When he resumed war with the Ottoman Empire in 1602, he forced Giorgi X of Kartli (1599-1605) and Alexander of Kakheti (1574-1605) to join the campaign. However, Persian supporters later assassinated King Alexander. Resistance to Abbas was fierce among the nobles. In 1605 they revolted and placed Teimuraz I (1605-63) on the throne, who for sixty years served as a rallying point for opposition to the Safavids. Abbas acquiesced and confirmed Teimuraz as king in 1606. He also recognized Luarsab II (1605-14) as King of Kartli, but when Luarsab refused to become a Muslim and encouraged the nobles to reject a Muslim replacement for him, Abbas had him captured and imprisoned; in 1622, he had him strangled (Dumbadze, IV, p. 276).

Abbas undertook another campaign in 1614 against Kartli and Kakheti, replacing their kings with Muslims. When nobles of Kakheti rose in revolt in 1615, his troops ravaged the country, a punishment from which it never fully recovered. Perhaps as many as 70,000 people were killed and some 200,00 deported to Persia. Abbas appointed a loyalist, Simon Khan (1619-29), as *wali*, or viceroy, but he kept a tight grip on Kakheti, administering it through an appointed governor. Abbas regarded these arrangements as temporary and apparently planned to deal a drastic blow to the rebellious Georgians: the Kakhetians were to be wiped out or deported and their country settled by *qezelbash* and other Turkmen tribes, while the nobles of Kartli were to be resettled in Persia (Berdzenishvili et al., I, p. 358).

In subduing the two Georgian kingdoms, Abbas had counted on a leading noble, Giorgi Saakadze (known to the Persians as Mourav Beg). Of petty noble origins, Saakadze first distinguished himself in 1609 and later led struggle to curb power of grand nobles. However, he was persecuted and fled

to Persia. A Muslim convert, he was admired in Persia for his military exploits and was regularly consulted on Georgian affairs (Eskandar Beg, pp. 1020-21, tr. Savory, pp. 1242-43). Abbas had appointed him advisor to Simon II of Kartli and in 1620 entrusted both with the suppression of anti-Persian opposition. However, Saakadze turned against Abbas and led a rebellion of nobles in 1623. He invited the exiled Teimuraz to return home and proclaimed him king of Kartli and Kakheti. But in 1624, Abbas won a decisive victory against the rebels on Marabda Field near Tbilisi (Eskandar Beg, pp. 1024-28, tr. Savory, pp. 1245-49; Dumbadze, IV, pp. 255-87). He also used the rivalry between Saakadze and Teimuraz to divide the Georgians and drive the former into exile in Istanbul, where in 1629 he was executed (Dumbadze, IV, pp. 1284-85).

Abbas's measures in Kartli and Kakheti represented a continuation of his predecessors' efforts to integrate eastern Georgia fully into the Safavid empire. Besides war, he institutionalized the practice begun by Tahmasp of employing Georgians in the Persian army (*ghulams*) and civil administration. They were obliged to become Muslims, but the majority of such conversions were entered into without conviction. After a period of training they were assigned either to the special regiments of the army or to a branch of the royal household administration. Estimates vary as to the size of the military forces composed of Georgian "slaves." One source indicates that in 1588 Abbas had formed his bodyguard from 12,000 of them taken into his service. Another source in 1608 puts the number of Georgian cavalry guards at 25,000 (Lang, 1952, p. 525). In any case, the Georgians were renowned throughout Persia as fierce warriors. Both Tahmasb and Abbas were pursuing a policy to strengthen the "third force" in Safavid society and thus diminish the power of the *qezelbash*, whose loyalty had become suspect.

The contributions which the *ghulams* made to the Safavids were substantial. Many of Abbas's *ghulams* were the descendants of those Georgians who had been brought to Persia by Tahmasb. Still other Georgians, nobles and princes among them, entered Persian service voluntarily, and a significant number achieved high office. Two outstanding examples were Allahverdi Khan (d. 1022/1613), who rose to be governor of Fars province and commander-in-chief of all Persian forces, and his son, Emamqoli Khan. Other Georgians became prefects (*daruga*) of Isfahan. But the majority of the Georgians were settled in widely scattered parts of Persia and became cultivators of the soil. The most important of these Georgian colonies was in Fereydan in Isfahan province, where their descendants still speak Georgian and retain their Christian faith.

During the remaining century of Safavid predominance in Georgia after the death of Abbas in 1629 Persian influence was unprecedented. The kingdom of Kartli was transformed into a province of Persia and regularly paid tribute and sent gifts to the shah in the form of boys and girls, horses, and

wines (Berdzenishvili, ed., 1973, pp. 252-54). The Georgian economy was also closely linked to that of Persia, and Georgian literature was enriched by translations of Persian classics and adaptations of Persian genres.

Nonetheless, in contrast to the calamities of Shah Abbas's reign, eastern Georgia experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity under an enlightened and able viceroy, Kosrow Mirza, the son of Dawud Khan and a Muslim. As a reward for aiding Shah Safi (1038-52/1629-42) the shah granted him the title Rostam Khan and in 1632 appointed him *wali* of Kartli, a post he held until 1658 (Bagrationi, pp. 63-68). His willingness to cooperate with his suzerains won for Kartli a large measure of autonomy, but Kakheti, the center of unyielding resistance to the Safavids, was brought directly under Persian rule.

Kakheti knew little of peace and prosperity during this period, as nobles and the populace rallied around the exiled Teimuraz in the hope of ending their subjection to Muslims. Teimuraz himself was intent upon uniting all of eastern Georgia under his rule and sought help from the Ottomans and the Russians. But when he contested Rostam Khan's administration in Kartli in 1634, neither of his presumed allies moved to support him. At the behest of Shah Abbas II (1642-66) Rostam invaded Kakheti in 1648 and, driving Teimuraz into exile again, was named ruler of Kakheti (1648-56; Berdzenishvili et al., I, pp. 368-69). In order to end resistance in Kakheti once and for all, the shah revived Abbas I's plan to populate the country with Turkmen nomads, a measure that incited a general uprising of nobles in 1659. Although they halted the settlement of Turkmens, Kakhetians failed to shake Persian control of their country (Berdzenishvili et al., I, pp. 369-72).

The Persian-appointed kings of Kartli never completely abandoned the idea of independence. Vakhtang V (1659-75), Shahnavaz II to the Persians, tried to reestablish a united kingdom in eastern Georgia by placing his son, Archil II, on the throne of Kakheti (Brosset, II/1, pp. 74-78; Asatiani, pp. 115-26). Although Archil converted to Islam, factions at the Persian court thwarted Vakhtang's master plan (Bagrationi, p. 159).

King Giorgi XI (1678-88) tried to achieve the unity his father, Vakhtang, had sought, but the shah discovered his plans and forced him into exile (for Georgian-Iranian relations between 1675 and 1725, see Tabagua, pp. 12-41). But Giorgi/Gorgin Khan, too, eventually reconciled himself to Persian suzerainty and in 1696 agreed to terms with the new shah. It was the beginning of an illustrious but, ultimately, tragic career in the service of the Safavids. The shah entrusted him with restoring order along the eastern frontiers of the empire. As *beglarbeg* of Kerman, Giorgi, aided by his brother Levan, by 1700 had reestablished the shah's control in the region. As a reward the shah made Levan *divanbeg* of Persia and his son, Kaikhosro/Kosrow Khan, *daruga* of Isfahan. The shah appointed Giorgi

commander-in-chief (*sepahsalar*) of his armies and dispatched him to the east once again, this time to relieve the garrison at Qandahar, which was under siege by Afghan rebels. The shah also designated him *wali* of Kartli, but, while he was in the field, he entrusted the administration of the country to a nephew Vakhtang VI. Giorgi was victorious at Qandahar in 1704, but he was ultimately assassinated in 1709. A punitive expedition to the Afghan border led by Kaikhosro in 1711 ended disastrously with his death and the destruction of nearly his entire force of 30,000 (Lang, 1952, pp. 530-34; for a contemporary account of the Georgian-led campaigns between 1700 and 1711, see the chronicle of Sekhnia Chkheidze in Brosset, II/2, pp. 16-31).

For much of the 18th century Persia generally maintained its position in Georgian affairs, but the viceroys asserted their independence whenever the opportunity arose. They looked for support to Russia, which now supplanted the Ottomans as Persia's chief rival in the Caucasus.

Vakhtang VI, *wali* of Kartli (1711-14, 1719-23), at first opposed Persian predominance and was forced to give up his throne. But in 1716, convinced that no foreign aid would be forthcoming, he accepted Islam. After serving the shah as *sepahsalar* of Persia and *beglarbeg* of Azerbaijan, he became *wali* of Kartli again in 1719. But his true allegiance was to Georgia, and he made no secret of his pro-Russian and pro-Christian sentiments to Russian envoys in Persia (Butkov, pp. 16, 51). When Persia was attacked by the Afghans in 1722 and the Ottomans in 1723, he sided with the Russians (Paichadze, 1970, pp. 35-59). He hoped that Peter the Great would not only seek gains for Russia, but would also protect Georgia from both Persians and Turks (Paichadze, 1965, pp. 26-35). But the tsar cut short his Caucasus campaign, and Vakhtang had to flee to Russia, where he died in 1737.

Under the vigorous Nadir Shah (1148-60/1736-47), Persia reasserted itself in the Caucasus. In 1734 and 1735 he drove the Ottomans out of eastern Georgia, confirmed Teimuraz II (1729-44) as *wali* of Kakheti, and appointed a Persian as governor of Kartli. His forces pillaged the country and deported thousands of villagers to Persia (Brossert, II/2, pp. 49-50). When the Georgian nobles revolted, Teimuraz and his son Erekle, who had fought with Nadir Shah's armies in India in 1737-40, aided the Persians in defeating the rebels. For services rendered, Nadir Shah awarded Kartli to Teimuraz (1744-62) and Kakheti to his son, Erekle II (1744-62; Bagrationi, pp. 177-82). Yet, Nadir Shah continued his despotic ways, relentlessly draining both countries of their resources (Brosset, II/2, pp. 114-19).

Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747 promised a measure of relief. The new ruler, who had married one of Teimuraz's daughters, sought Georgian help in consolidating his rule over all of Persia (Brosset, pp. 118-25). Both Teimuraz and Erekle used the opportunity to assert their independence.

When Teimuraz died in 1762, Erekle succeeded him, thus uniting eastern Georgia as a single state for the first time in nearly two centuries.

Under Erekle II (1762-98) the independence of Kartli-Kakheti remained precarious, and he reluctantly decided to seek Russian protection. His policy coincided with Catherine II's renewed interest in Georgia, and in 1783 the two monarchs signed the Treaty of Georgievsk, which made Kartli-Kakheti a Russian protectorate (Tzagareli, pp. iii-x, 32-36; Paichadze, 1983, pp. 91-137). It also marked the beginning of the end of Persia's pretensions to political dominance over Georgia.

The founder of the Qajar dynasty, Agha Mohammad Khan (1193-1212/1779-97) was determined to recover those provinces that had once formed part of the Safavid empire. Georgia was the special object of his ambitions. Erekle refused to become a mere *wali* of Kartli-Kakheti and reaffirmed his attachment to Russia. Agha Mohammad responded by attacking the country, capturing Tbilisi in September 1795 and deporting some 15,000 of its inhabitants to Persia as slaves. His assassination in 1797 ended plans for a second expedition into Georgia.

Fath Ali Shah (1212-50/1797-1834) pursued a similar policy toward Georgia. In 1798 he demanded the unconditional submission of Erekle's son and successor, Giorgi XII (1798-1800; Tzagareli, II/2, pp. 181-82). Giorgi refused, and Russia's firm support caused Persian armies to remain in place (Dubrovina, pp. 116-21).

The end of Georgian independence, nonetheless, was at hand. When Giorgi died in December 1800, Emperor Paul took advantage of the interregnum to proclaim the incorporation of Kartli and Kakheti into the Russian Empire in January 1801. War with Persia, which broke out in 1804, ended in 1813 with the Treaty of Gulistan. Under its terms Persia gave up all claims to Kartli and Kakheti in favor of Russia, thereby effectively ending her centuries-long involvement in Georgian political affairs.

Although Russia and Persia were at peace, Fath Ali Shah had not given up hope of reclaiming Georgia. War between the two countries broke out again in 1826, and Russia's success on the battlefield and a new peace treaty in 1828 confirmed her control of Georgia. The treaty also set the tone of Russo-Iranian relations down to World War I and made manifest Persia's inability to challenge Russia's supremacy in Georgia and the Caucasus.

Georgians in Safavid Administration

Safavid interaction with Georgia and its inhabitants dates from the inception of the state in the early 16th century, when Georgians fought alongside the Qezelbashe in Shah Ismail I's army, Georgians, taken captive during the

shah's four expeditions into Georgia, began to be imported into Safavid territory. Tahmasp's campaign in 961/1554 is said to have brought thirty thousand people from the Caucasus to Persia (Shah Tahmasp, p. 72; Hasan Rumlu, ed. Nava, p. 492; Eskandar Beg, p. 88). For the most part women and children, these were taken to the harems of the shah and the elite.

Shah Abbas I further enlarged the pool of Georgians in Persia. Thousands were captured and taken south during his various campaigns in the Caucasus between 1023/1614 and 1025/1616. Fifteen thousand families, Muslims, Jews, and Armenians, are said to have been deported from the Georgian capital of Zagam, Shirvan, and Qarabagh and resettled in Faraháabad in Mazandaran, where they were put to work to develop the area (Eskandar Beg, p. 881, tr. Savory, II, p. 1096; Della Valle, 1843, I, p. 598; Brosset, 1874-76, I, p. 488). According to the Georgian historian Parsadan Gorgidzhanidze and the Frenchman Jean Chardin, eighty thousand families, Georgians, Armenians, and Jews, were deported to Mazandaran and other areas (Gorgidzhanidze, p. 73; Chardin, II, p. 62). Eskandar Beg speaks of 130,000 as the number of Georgians taken to Persia during the campaign of 1025/1616, and Malekæah Hosayn Sistan even claims the huge number of 200,000 captives (Eskandar Beg, pp. 900-901, tr. Savory, II, p. 1116; Malekæah Hosayn, p. 509). Into the 19th century, concentrations of transplanted Georgians were still visible throughout Persia.

The influence and power acquired by the Georgians in this period began in the royal harem, where women from the Caucasus, many of them of Georgian origin, became prominent. No less than four of Shah Tahmasp's surviving sons were born to him by Georgian wives (Eskandar Beg, p. 133; tr. Savory I, pp. 215-17), and one of his daughters by a Georgian wife, the powerful Zaynab Begom, played an important role at the court of her nephew, Shah Abbas I. According to John Fryer (II, pp. 290-91), the queen mother in the 17th century was always a Georgian. Georgian women played an important role in the court's marriage politics, and by the end of the Safavid reign a whole web of relations had been established (Krusinski, I, p. 122). Krusinski (I, pp. 128-29), inter alia insists that the influence of the Georgian harem women accounted for the Safavid tolerance for the country's Christian population. Writing in the early 17th century, Pietro Della Valle (1663, p. 8; q.v.) claimed that there was not a household in Persia that did not have its Georgian slaves.

Georgians entered the ranks of the army and the bureaucracy in great numbers as well, turning into the mainstay of golams (ghulams), or slave soldiers. Allahverdi Khan, from Georgia, served as the army's commander-in-chief for more than fifteen years (1004-22/1595-1613). During the reign of Shah Abbas I, most of the soldiers equipped with firearms were Georgians, their integration into the army facilitated by the relative ease with which they apparently gave up their religion and converted to Islam (Della Valle, 1843,

I, p. 760; Kaempfer, p. 273). A total of thirty thousand Georgians are said to have served in Shah Abbas' army (Della Valle, 1663, p. 8). Georgians soon occupied administrative positions of the highest rank. Shah Abbas in 998/1590 created the qollar (slave) corps, consisting of Circassians, Georgians, and Armenians, and its leader, the qollar-aqas, became one of the principal state officials (Eskander Beg II, p. 1106, tr. I, p. 527; Jonabad, p. 716; Savory, p. 419; Tadòkerat al-moluk, tr. Minorsky, pp. 33, 46-47). Allahverdi Khan was one of the first to hold this post. In the 1630s its incumbent was the equally powerful Kosrow Mirza (Rostam Khan), who has resided at the Safavid court since the days of Sultan Koda-banda.

Many provinces also fell under Georgian control. The first Georgian to occupy the governorship of a major province was Allahverdi Khan, who in 1003-4/1595-96 received Fars (Kuhgiluya was added to his domain a year later). His son, Emamqoli Khan (q.v.), succeeded him as the governor (beglerbegi) of Fars and ruled that province until Shah Safi had him and his family executed in 1042/1632. Shirvan/Sharvan was another of the provinces to which Georgian governors were appointed. In 1013/1605 Shah Abbas sent Constantin Mirza, the son of the Georgian king Alexander, to head this region. Emamqoli Khan's brother, Dawud Beg, served as governor of Qarabagh between 1037/1627 and 1040/1630 (Moháammad-Masáum, p. 51; Eskander Beg and Wala, p. 81; Molla Jalal-al-Din, pp. 275-76; Gorgidzhanidze, p. 85; Alonso, pp. 56, 105, 107). Golams ruled Suætar from 1042/1632 until the last days of the Safavids (Suætari, pp. 46-47). Safiqoli Khan, the governor of Hamadan, was appointed beglerbegi of Baghdad following Shah Abbas' conquest of the city in 1033/1622-23 (Eskander Beg, p. 1004, tr. Savory II p. 1226-27). Georgia itself continued to be governed by a Georgian after the Safavid conquest, following an agreement between Shah Abbas and Taimuraz Khan, its last independent ruler, whereby the latter submitted to Safavid rule in exchange for being allowed to rule as the region's wali and for having his son serve as daruga (city prefect) of Isfahan in perpetuity (Chardin, X, p. 29; Kaempfer, pp. 110-11). The first Georgian to hold the position of daruga of the capital since 1620 was Kosrow Mirza (Della Valle 1843, II, p. 176). Kosrow Mirza held the position until his death in 1658, though he mostly let himself be represented by a deputy (naeb). Georgians continued to occupy this position until the last days of the Safavid rule.

The position of the Georgian golams was further strengthened under Shah Safi and Shah Abbas II. Eskandar Beg claims that at the time of Shah Abbas's death, golams (not all of them Georgian) held twenty-one of the ninety-two most powerful positions (Eskandar Beg, pp. 1084-89, tr. Savory II, pp. 1309-17). And of the thirty-seven great amirs appointed under Shah Abbas II, at least twenty-three were golams (Röhrborn, p. 33). Following the slaughter of a great many Qezelbaæ, the Georgians under Shah Safi consolidated their hold over key positions in the inner palace, the

bureaucracy, and the military. The shah's own chamberlain (mehtar) was a white eunuch of Georgian origin (Olearius, p. 571; Tadòkerat al-moluk, tr. Minorsky, pp. 127, 138). Aside from the positions of qollar-aqasi and daruga of Isfahan, they virtually monopolized the posts of divanbegi (q.v., chief justice) and sepahsalar (military commander). These and other positions tended to become hereditary, and one powerful functionary typically held more than one simultaneously. Thus Kosrow Mirza served as divanbegi and daruga of Isfahan under Shah Abbas, played a crucial role in the accession of Shah Safi in 1038/1629, and was made qollar-aqasi the following year, on which occasion he was renamed Rostam Khan. In 1632, following a rebellion in Kartli, he became wali of that part of Georgia (Eskander Beg and Wala Esáfahani, pp. 114, 136; Moháammad-Maǰsáum, p. 144). Having been appointed to all of Georgia in 1058/1648, he remained in power until his death in 1069/1658. He is not to be confused with another Rostam Beg, who was divanbegi in the last years of Shah Abbas I's reign, and served as tofangi-aqasi (rifleman commander), sepahsalar, and beglerbeg of Azerbaijan between 1040/1631 and his execution in 1053/1643. Rostam Beg's younger brother, Aliqoli Khan, had a remarkable career spanning fifty years, during which he served as divanbegi under Shah Safi, held the post of sepahsalar and the attendant position of beglerbegi of Azerbaijan between 1058/1648 and 1064/1654, fell out of favor, but was rehabilitated by Shah Solaymain, who reinstated him as sepahsalar. Chardin called him the effective ruler of the country at the time of his death in 1667 and took up the governorship of Maæhad in 1074/1664..

Safiqoli Khan's son, Rostam Khan, was divanbegi under Shah Solayman and also served as tofangi-aqasi, and in 1692 was appointed sepahsalar and beglerbegi of Tabriz. The brother of Gorgin Khan (Giorgi XI, the former king of Kartli), Levan was appointed divanbegi of Isfahan in 1700 upon his victorious return from a campaign against the Baluch marauders in Kerman (Lockhart, p. 46; Lang, 1952, p. 527). Levan's son, Kay-kòosrow (Kosrow Khan) similarly briefly served as divanbegi in 1709 and was rewarded with the position of daruga of Isfahan for quelling a bread revolt, and in 1709 became sepahsalar and was also made wali of Georgia. He was killed during an expedition in Afghanistan against the Afghans. The sepahsalar (and beglarbegi of Azerbaijan and wali of Georgia) in 1716 was Hosaynqoli Khan (Wahtang VI), the brother of the qollar-aqasi, Rostam Mirza. In 1717 he succeeded his brother as qollar-aqasi.

As these examples show, the administrative and military power of Georgians continued right up to the end of the Safavid period. Fryer's claim (II, p. 291) that in 1677 Georgians contributed forty thousand soldiers to the Persian army, is surely exaggerated, but Engelbert Kaempfer (p. 204) may well have been right in his assertion that, by the 1680s, about twenty thousand Georgians (including Circassians and Daghestanis) were living in Isfahan. Shah Solayman, who seemed to have favored Georgians, asked Shahnavaz

Khan (Vakhtang V), the king of Kartli, to marry his daughter Anusa and made Shahnavaḡ's son, Alexander, the daruga of Isfahan (Brosset, 1856, II/2, p. 9). It is also said that Shah Solayman kept the Georgians content and forgetful of their origins by promoting them to high positions (Sanson, pp. 176-77). Their internal divisions, noted by Chardin (II, p. 42) and the fact that they never achieved full autonomy but had to compete with other groups, kept them from establishing supremacy in the administration. The Georgians, moreover, were not universally loved and their tremendous power gave rise to a great deal of friction and factionalism. Chardin tells the story of Aliqoli Khan, a Georgian, who was sent to Lorestan and caused a local revolt (Chardin, IX, p. 206). The same author (V, p. 228) further notes that older Persians loathed the Georgian newcomers, calling them qara oġlu, sons of blacks; he also remarks (II, pp. 42-43, 150) on the animosity that existed between Georgians and Armenians, another group that figured conspicuously in governmental circles. Others noted that the Georgians were feared in Persia (Carmelite Archives, O.C.D. 243 1 bis; Avril, p. 60). In late Safavid times an anti-Georgian faction consisting of the superintendent of the royal workshops (nazáer-e boyutat) and the grand vizier is reported (Lang, 1952, pp. 530-31). There surely was no love lost between the Qezelbasæ and the Georgians in late Safavid times; while the Qezelbasæ are said to have encouraged the Afghans to invade Persia to further their own cause against the Georgians, anti-Muslim sentiments seem to have prompted some of the latter to hope for a Russian invasion (Lang, 1957, p. 109; Lockhart, pp. 86, 89; Röhrborn, p. 38).

However that may be, the very demise of the Safavid state is entwined with Georgian military leadership. Giorgi XI or Gorgin Khan (Shahnavaḡ Khan III), was the ruler of Georgia who, having lost his throne, in 1699 was made governor of Kerman with the task of halting the Baluchi incursions that threatened the country's southeast. Four years later the need to repel invading Afghans prompted the shah to appoint him as sepahsalar, beglerbegi of Qandahar and, nominally, wali of Kartli. In 1716 it was the turn of Hosaynqoli Khan (Vakhtang VI), Giorgi XI's regent in Georgia, to be appointed sepahsalar and charged with fighting the Afghans. Georgian troops, led by Rostam Khan, fought valiantly against the Afghans at the battle of Golnabad in 1134/1722, but their number was too small to keep the enemy from laying siege to Isfahan. A refusal on the part of Vakhtang VI, now again residing in Georgia, to send relief troops to Persia, finally made it impossible for the Safavids to save the city and their realm.

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