

**ქართული  
წყაროთმცოდნეობა  
XIX/XX**

**2017/2018**

# **Georgian Source-Studies**

**XIX/XX**

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## **S. BURNASHEV'S COMPOSITIONS AS THE SOURCE FOR THE HISTORY OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION**

**David Merkviladze  
Gohar Mkhitarian**

Colonel of the Russian army Stephan Burnashev was appointed as the Special Envoy (commissioner) of the empress Catherine II at the court of the king of Kartl-Kakheti kingdom Erekle II and the king of Imereti Solomon I by the royal court of the Russian empire in spring of 1783. At this time the decision to sign the treaty with Erekle II of taking him "under the protection of Her Highest Imperial Majesty" had already been received in St. Peterburg (Burnashev 1901:1-2). It is evidenced by the order of Grigory Potemkin-Tavrichesky preserved in Burnashev's archive dated to 1783, April, 3. Besides, S. Burnashev also was ordered to lead two Russian battalions, which entered Georgia on November 2, of the same year under the conditions of the Treaty of Georgievsk.

Thus, during his stay in Georgia S. Burnashev combined military and political activities. He participated in several battles, but his battalions were not enough at all to deal with the problems caused by entering Russian troops in the Kartl-Kakheti Kingdom.

Russian colonel was in Georgia four and a half year. Burnashev, who was encamped at Ganja with his battalions and Georgian army leaded by Erekle II in 1787, September 13 received an order of Gregory Potemkin-Tavrichesky dated to August 29 to leave Georgia together with Russian army and return back to Russia.

S. Burnashev had personal relations with Georgian kings: Erekle II and Solomon I. He also constantly corresponded with the military commander of the Caucasian line, Lieutenant-General Pavel Potemkin. From P. Potemkin Burnashev constantly received detailed instructions. From his side P. Potemkin had been carrying on policy of imperial Russia in the Caucasus by the guidance of the most influential person of those days Russia, Field-Marshal Grigory Potemkin. With the recommendation of A. Tsagareli most of the letters sent to S. Burnashev had been published by his descendent in 1901 (Burnashev 1901). These letters obviously show Russian-Georgian relations of those days, political interests of Russia in Georgia and in the South Caucasus generally, as well as significant deterioration of political situation of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti after it became under the protection of Russia.

S. Burnashev published his work "Picture of Georgia or the Description of the Political Situation of the Kingdoms of Kartl-Kakheti" after his returned back to Russia, in 1793 in Kursk, where he was appointed as governor after retirement from military service (Burnashev 1793 a).

The work consists of two parts: "The Political Situation of Georgia" and "The Political Situation of Imereti". Of course "Georgia" means Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti and "Imereti" the whole West Georgia. The first part of the book is much larger than the other one, because Burnashev while being in Georgia was mainly in eastern Georgia and that's why he knew the situation in this region better. Besides, the attention of the imperial court of the Russia had been focused on the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti. This can be proved by signing protectional agreement with King Erekle II, while Solomon I, the king of Imereti was refused to sign the same kind of agreement by Russian imperial court.

S. Burnashev wrote his work "The Picture of Georgia or the Description of the Political Situation of the Kingdoms of Kartl-Kakheti" being in Georgia. According to publication it had been written in Tbilisi, in 1786. Supposedly, S. Burnashev started writing this work in the second half of 1784, because King Solomon I (he died in 1784, April 23), according to the text, seems to be dead already. The invasion of Omar-Khan in Kakheti in 1785, September is described from the standpoint of the eyewitness as well. There is also the story about the defeating of the loyal men of David, son of Archil (who claimed the throne of Imereti) in 1786, January by David II King of Imereti. However, S. Burnashev could add some additional material and changes to his work next year as well before he left Georgia (Merkviladze 2016: 146).

The mentioned work by Burnashev might be a kind of summarizing special report written by order for the imperial court. In 1783, June 16 G. Potemkin sent a secret order to S. Burnashev where he was writing:

From the place of your present stay, it is much more convenient to give us better information than we had before about the borders of Georgia, their state, relations of Georgia with its neighboring peoples and about its internal and foreign situations. I recommend you to arm yourself with this knowledge and report it to me (Burnashev 1901: 3).

The active military and political interference in the affairs of the South Caucasus had already been decided at the imperial court. In this direction Russian government already had far-reaching plans and aims and that's why it was decided, as much as it was possible, to have an entire picture of the political, economic, military situation of those days Caucasus.

Though S. Burnashev's data do not always reflect precisely those days reality, but his "Picture of Georgia" undoubtedly is a historical source of much significance for the social, political and economic history of the 1780's Georgia (in some cases of its neighbors as well). This historical source is significant also because it is written by well-educated Russian officer and observant eyewitness of the ongoing events. S. Burnashev narrates events taking place in those days Georgia from different sides.

The data of social character about the Kartl-Kakheti Kingdom population (religious and ethnic structure of the population, social and class conditions, peculiarities of people living in this kingdom) is worth to be mentioned. According to S. Burnashev the main inhabitants of Kartl-Kakheti were Georgians of the "Greek faith" it means Orthodox Christians and belonged to three classes: clergy, nobility and peasants. Armenians "followed the Gregorian tradition" and consisted of the following classes: noblemen, merchants, craftsmen and peasants. Greeks were only merchants, craftsmen and mostly ore-miners. Local Muslims had three mosques and all social classes. The author specially notes that they were not prohibited to confess their faith and openly observe their religious right. Mountaineers "predisposed to war" were all peasants. There were also Kurds, some of them pagans and "almost without faith" and some Muslims. They were nomads. Nearly 30 Catholic families lived in Tbilisi. Divine service for them was conducted by Catholic priests sent from Rome who also had been engaged in medical activities as well.

In the mentioned work the data of economic character is also given. In the Kartl-Kakheti Kingdom metallurgy was developed. With the help of the Greeks, resettled from the Ottoman Empire, the kingdom mined and produced gold, silver, copper and small amount of iron. From agricultural crops they grew: bread, rice, barley, maize and cotton. Attacks of Dagestanis hindered development of cattle breeding. The silk was produced in a big amount. Merchants were intermediary traders between Russia and Oriental countries (Persia, India). Trade relations with the neighboring peoples and countries mostly carried out with the help of Tbilisi merchants (ethnic Armenians).

As for the government, king ruled the country autocratically. But he had his council consisted of king's sons, bishops and aristocracy ("regional nobility"). Usually king was receiving important decisions after consulting with this council.

S. Burnashev also describes the sources of the government income. The sources of the government income were: monetary taxes and agricultural goods from subordinates, from the mines of the non-ferrous metals, from customs fee and irrigation system. Substantial revenues in the kingdom were coming from the subordinated khanates (Ganja and Erevan) and also in the form of gifts sent by other khans.

S. Burnashev's information about the royal family is significant. He portrays Erekle II as an experienced king who everyday busily and permanently is involved in the state affairs. S. Burnashev particularly focuses his attention on the character of Erekle's son, his heir Giorgi. According to S. Burnashev prince Giorgi was honorable, especially pious and a man of peace, but less educated and was not good at warfare either. S. Burnashev characterizes the elder son of George, Prince David, unlike his father, as energetic, smart, brave young man and passionate warrior, who also was eager to study European martial arts. Burnashev did not miss one more circumstance: after numerous children of queen Darejan grew up and married members of the noble families of the kingdom, she formed the family clan and became its head. Thus, she became so influential that not a single governmental issue was solved without her assent and because she disliked her step-son, Prince Giorgi, heir of the throne was isolated from the governmental affairs.

Great attention is also paid to the military affairs of the kingdom: armament of the army and military capability of the kingdom, combat capability and local diversities of the art of battle. While writing about military matters, Burnashev, as a professional, discusses the subject mostly according to his personal observation. Of course, an officer of an army formed in a European way disliked feudal army of not so well disciplined troops of the Caucasian states and criticizes them. While writing about other matters, it seems that he rely on other sources as well. The author does not mention his sources. It is because of the specificity of the work and its aim. The aim of the Russian officer and diplomat is to send collected and checked materials to above ranking recipient.

S. Burnashev shortly writes about Erekle's relations with neighboring rulers and peoples. The great majority of Azerbaijani khans honored the Georgian king because of his success and as a token of friendship often sent him gifts. Among them was Karabakh khan who was the main political ally of the king. Some of them (khans of Erevan and Ganja) were directly subordinated to Erekle II and paid him homage. S. Burnashev emphasizes that the Azerbaijani khans even united (the probability of this could not even be imagined by the Russian officer-diplomat) cannot do much harm king Erekle, which proves the strength of Kartl-Kakheti kingdom. As the Russian author notes, even the enemy forces of the Dagestanians were not in themselves dangerous for the country, if the Ottomans did not stand behind them. Although, according to him, Erekle had friendly neighboring relations with pasha of Akhaltsikhe as well. After defeating khan of Avaria the Georgian king had already settled his relationship with most of Dagestan communities and even summoned some of them in his army against his enemies. Although, the second part of Dagestanians robbed and continued sneaky attacks against the inhabitants of the kingdom which caused serious damages to the state. S. Burnashev notes that if King Erekle had enough money it won't be difficult for him to solve the problem of the attacks of Dagestanians and

furthermore, he could use their military force for his own interests. Opposite to Dagestanians Ossetians and Kabardians were known with their loyalty to the Georgian king and fought in his army as hired warriors.

The Russian officer and diplomat separately describes political situation within and around the Kartl-Kakheti Kingdom before signing protection treaty with Russia. His conclusion about signing treaty of protection with Russia, which in fact was the treaty of subordination, is worth of mention. Despite old Georgian kings, straitened from the side of the Muslim countries, for a long time were seeking support of Russia sharing the same religion, Burnashev does not think they would like to find themselves in the same relationship with Russia as Erekle II. Here he also gives his viewpoint what made Erekle had that “famous relationship” with Russia. The reason of it was the activeness of Prince Alexander (the grandson of king of Kartli Vakhtang VI) living in Russia to seize the throne of Kartli, which was a subject of the king Erekle’s great concern. Colonel S. Burnashev separately considers the political situation in the kingdom after signing the treaty. The author rightly considers that the treaty of Georgievsk was a kind of turning point for the eastern Georgian kingdom. This description obviously shows how political situation of the Kartl-Kakheti kingdom worsened after signing treaty of protection with Russia (Merkviladze 2012:79). The description by Burnashev is rather objective and remarkable and represents political analysis worthy to be taken into consideration

On the other hand “the picture of Georgia...” is the significant primary source for studying Russian-Georgian political relations of the 1780’s. The author is an eyewitness and contemporary of the main ongoing processes which are described in the work. Besides, at the same time, as specially authorized by empire, he is an executor of the instructions of the Russian imperial court.

S. Burnashev titled the description of the political situation of the Islamic khanates located in South Caucasus and even more south “Description of the regions of Azerbaijan in Persia and their political status”. The voluminous monograph with this headline was published in 1793 in Kursk. Paying tribute to his historical memory the author uses the name of Azerbaijan for the covered areas. Talking about it the author meant the administrative unit of Azerbaijan in the four administrative-political and financial system of Safavid state (16th-18th centuries), which are: Iraq, Fars, Azerbaijan and Khorasan (Tadkhirat al-Muluk 1943: 162). The administrative unit of Azerbaijan united the khanates of Atropatene (the center Tabriz), Chukhursaadi (the center Erivan), Karabakh and Shirvani (Tadkhirat al-Muluk 1943: 164-168).

Taking into account the following circumstance S. Burnashev called “khans of Azerbaijan” not only the governors of Maragha, Tabriz, Ardabil, but also the khans of Yerevan, Shaki, Shirvani, Baku, Nakhchivan, Ganja and Karabagh (Burnashev 1793). This circumstance causes misunderstanding in the Soviet historiography. Thus, in his study of “The historical review of the Azerbaijan in XVIII century”, V. Leviatov used this fact to justify the thesis of the Soviet historiography, according to which the historical-geographical term of Azerbaijan included also the territories (the political borders of the Soviet, but now the Republic of Azerbaijan) that stretched north from the Aras river by “ensuring” the existence of so-called Northern and Southern Azerbaijan and their historic right to reunite.

According to V. Leviatov, S. Burnashev’s composition was not based on the information of Arabic and Persian written sources, but on the reports of the contemporaries who knew Azerbaijan well. Consequently, his work seemed to be focused on the pragmatic composition. Then he concluded that when S. Burnashev wrote his composition the contemporaries perceived the “ethnic commonality” of the people of Northern and Southern Azerbaijan which made possible for the two territories to unite (Leviatov 1948: 144-145). The inaccuracy of the following thesis on the Soviet historiography is also affirmed by the fact that in the main map of Persia made by S. Burnashev in 1786 Azerbaijan was included in the Iranian state borders as an administrative and political inseparable part (Burnashev 1786).

Finally, being a Russian high-ranking military and statesman, in the political orientation authorities of the South Caucasus S. Burnashev also does not overlook the Turkish factor. He observes the interests of the Ottoman Empire in the territories of the former Iranian state in the Russian-Turkish relations in 1780-s. In fact, his works was written in the 1780-s, during the period between the two Russian-Turkish war, when the Turkey had to abide the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774).

Moreover, the Russian military-political forces were strengthened by the Treaty of Georgievsk (1783). However, the biggest political blow to the Ottoman Empire was the loss of Crimean Khanate. The supporters of the Caucasian policy of Turkey were the peoples of Dagestan (lezgins, avars and others) following the same religion and South Caucasian khanates. In this complicated geopolitical region, Ottomans were focused on the above-mentioned, using religious and confessional identity. In addition, they did not ignore the Kingdom of Imereti. After the death of king Solomon I, an agha from the Ottoman empire came to the Kutaisi for recognizing the Sublime Porte’s power. In 1784 without waiting for the answer from Imereti the general field marschall G. Potemkin ordered S. Burnashev to leave Tbilisi and visit Kutaisi for preserving the stability of the imperial power by all means (РГВИА: 56-57).

During the writing process S. Burnashev was focused both on the political views of the above mentioned khanates and authorities on the Kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti, and their trade-economic significance for the latter. He analyzes many issues of the political history of South Caucasia based on the interests of the Russian empire. Being the witness



and the active performer of the historical events, he did concise, often subjective, political analyzes. He strongly criticizes the “anti-Georgian” policy of the South Caucasian khans sometimes giving subjective qualifications. However, this does not mean that the author has misrepresented the historical events and facts.

S. Burnashev called khans and leaders “sovereign” or “dependent” indicating the political position and the status they had in the region. The orientation of the Russian and Ottoman empires and Iran to any khan depended on how they take into consideration the fact of the existence of that power and its political role. The author divides the South Caucasian “sovereign” rulers into “powerful” and “less powerful” conditioned by the circumstance how many fighters they could take to the battlefield and apply for the help of mercenaries including mountain dwellers (in the original lezgins). Speaking about Fath-Ali Khan of Quba and Derbent, S. Burnashev rightly mentioned that he was descended from the Dynasty of Ghaytaghs. This fact proves that author accurately presents the history of the region pursuing a thorough study of the political events. This is considered to be one of the most remarkable features of S. Burnashev’s work.

S. Burnashev’s language is precise and the speech is laconic. He wrote his thoughts in a laconic way with no allegory. From that perspective his work essentially differs from the writings of travelers, scientific expeditions, and trading agents of the time being free from the literary outpouring. However, in his brief composition he succeeded in presenting the political history of the region almost completely. It should be noted that being in Tbilisi, S. Burnashev has been able to give an accurate description of the political history of the region, the relationships between the khans, as well as details regarding their political orientation towards major countries in the region. Probably, the spy network reports were considered to be the informational base for S. Burnashev. According to one source, G. Potemkin wrote empress Catherine II (1762-1796) about a young Assyrian who arrived in Tbilisi from Urmia (РГВИА 52: 57). It seems that Russian representative in Tbilisi used king Erekle’s spy network to collect information about Azerbaijani khanates and Iranian governors. Nowadays the following information can be clarified with help of Iranian sources.

S. Burnashev’s composition mainly covers the political events and, as a military man, the author focuses his attention on the information about the armed forces of the South Caucasian khanates. In parallel with the brief presentation of the political situation of khanates, S. Burnashev gives a general idea of the number of the houses of Christians living in the South-Eastern Caucasus. As mentioned above, S. Burnashev’s composition differs from the works of other researchers and military men of the time with purely political description. Consequently, the basic information about Christians was conditioned by the importance of a reliable ethnic element in the region to the Russian Empire. Therefore, the presence of Christians in the South Caucasus in the second half of the 18th century was included in the context of the Russian military-political interests.

In addition, the composition was written on the assignment by empress Catherine II as an inseparable part of S. Burnashev’s political and diplomatic activities when being in the South Caucasus. So he has realized his “mission”.

S. Burnashev has also a number of unpublished works, including cartographic works (Burnashev 1901: 53-54). When being in Georgia, he makes six maps of the region. The geographical knowledge of regions conveyed strategic and political significance aimed at facilitating the movement of Russian troops across the region. So S. Burnashev has created the map (1783) of the road stretched across the Caucasus Mountains leading to Tbilisi from Mozdok. The accompanying maps of the important territories of Kakheti, Imereti as well as the roads leading to Tbilisi from Kutaisi and to Pambak from Tbilisi were important for quick orientation and movement in the region. Additionally, he has created the main map (1784) of the peoples living in Caucasus Mountains, Guria and Samegrelo, neighboring regions that belong to the Kingdom of Imereti and its authorities, as well as the map of Kartli and Kakheti Kingdom. In 1786 S. Burnashev also made the main map of Persian empire emphasizing all the territories of Azerbaijan and other nearby territories.

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## სტეფანე ბურნაშვილის შრომები როგორც საისტორიო წყარო სამხრეთ კავკასიის ისტორიისათვის

დავით მერკვილაძე  
გოპარ მხითარაიანი

პოლკ. ს. ბურნაშვილი 1783-1787 წლებში იყო ეკატერინე II-ის წარმომადგენელი ქართველი მეფეების, ერეკლე II-ისა და სოლომონ I-ის კარზე. აქ იგი ერთმანეთს უთავსებდა პოლიტიკურ და სამხედრო საქმიანობას.

ს. ბურნაშვილის ნაშრომი: „საქართველოს სურათი ანუ ქართლისა და კახეთის სამეფოების პოლიტიკური მდგომარეობის აღწერა“ შედგება ორი ნაწილისაგან: „საქართველოს პოლიტიკური მდგომარეობა“ და „იმერეთის პოლიტიკური მდგომარეობა“. იგი უნდა იყოს საგანგებო დავალებით შედგენილი ერთგვარი შემაჯამებელი მოხსენება, როგორც ეს შეიძლება დავასკვნათ გ. პოტიომკინის ერთ-ერთი საიდუმლო ორდერის საფუძველზე.

„საქართველოს სურათი“ უდავოდ მეტად მნიშვნელოვანი წყაროა XVIII ს-ის 80-იანი წლების საქართველოს სოციალ-ეკონომიკური და პოლიტიკური ისტორიისათვის და რუსულ-ქართული პოლიტიკური ურთიერთობის შესწავლისათვის.

ს. ბურნაშვილის ნაშრომში ყურადღება გამახვილებულია შემდეგ საკითხებზე: მოსახლეობის ეთნიკურ-რელიგიური შემადგენლობა, სოციალური და წოდებრივი მდგომარეობა, სახელმწიფო შემოსავლები, მმართველობის ფორმა, ეკონომიკური ვითარება, შიდაპოლიტიკური მდგომარეობა, ურთიერთობა მეზობლებთან, სამხედრო შესაძლებლობები და ა. შ. მოცემულია მეფისა და სამეფო ოჯახის წევრთა პიროვნული დახასიათება.

გეორგიევსკის ტრაქტატი ს. ბურნაშვილის მიერ ერთგვარ გარდამტეხ მიჯნადაა აღქმული ქართლ-კახეთის სამეფოსათვის. მისი ობიექტური პოლიტიკური ანალიზიდან თვალსაჩინოდ ვლინდება, თუ როგორ დამძიმდა სამეფოს პოლიტიკური მდგომარეობა რუსეთთან მფარველობითი ხელშეკრულების გაფორმების შედეგად. აღსანიშნავია, რომ ერეკლე მეფის რუსეთთან „ცნობილ დამოკიდებულებაში“ (ს. ბურნაშვილის ტერმინი) შესვლის მიზეზად დასახელებულია ალექსანდრე ბაქარის ძის გააქტიურება ქართლის ტახტის დასაუფლებლად.

პოლკოვნიკ ბურნაშვილის მეორე ნაშრომი – „აზერბაიჯანული ქვეყნების აღწერა სპარსეთში და მათი პოლიტიკური მდგომარეობა“ ეხება სამხრეთ-კავკასიასა და მის სამხრეთით მდებარე ისლამურ სახანოებში არსებულ ვითარებას. თხრობა აქ ბევრად უფრო ლაკონურია. მასში ავტორი ყურადღებას ამახვილებს თითოეული ხანის პოლიტიკურ ორიენტაციაზე, მის დამოკიდებულებაზე ერეკლე II-ის მიმართ. ისლამური სამხრეთი კავკასიის საკითხები განხილულია რუსეთის საიმპერიო კარის ინტერესების შესაბამისად. მართალია, ს. ბურნაშვილი ამ დროს კავკასიაში მიმდინარე ბევრი ისტორიული მოვლენის უშუალო მოწმე და მონაწილეც იყო, მაგრამ მისი, როგორც რუსეთის იმპერიის წარმომადგენლის, სამხრეთ კავკასიის სახანოებთან დაკავშირებით მოცემული პოლიტიკური ანალიზი, გასაგები მიზეზების გამო, ცალკეულ შემთხვევებში აშკარად სუბიექტურია. ავტორისათვის მიუღებელია ცალკეული ხანის „ანტიქართული“ პოლიტიკა, ვინაიდან ერეკლე II, რეგიონში რუსეთის მთავარ საყრდენს წარმოადგენდა. მიუხედავად ამისა, იგი ცდილობს ცხადად გამოკვეთოს ყველა ის ისტორიული მოვლენა თუ ცალკეული საკითხი (ხანების ეკონომიკური და სამხედრო შესაძლებლობები, პოლიტიკური კავშირები, ქრისტიანთა რაოდენობა), რომელიც რუსეთის საიმპერიო კარის პირდაპირი ინტერესების საგანს წარმოადგენდა.