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CROWN PRINCE OF GEORGIA  
DAVID BAGRATIONI (1767–1819)  
AS A LEGISLATOR

(KSIĄŻĘ – NASTĘPCA TRONU DAVID BAGRATIONI  
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One of the worthiest representatives of centuries-old Bagrationi royal dynasty – Crown Prince David (1767–1819) was a prominent state and military figure, scientist, lawyer and writer.

David was born on July 1, 1767, in Tbilisi, in the royal family of East Georgia (Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti). His grandfather was King Erekle II (1720–1798), and his father – King George XII (1746–1800). Prince David was the elder son of George XII and therefore, the Heir Apparent to the royal throne of Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom. He grew up in the royal court and from young age was involved in various military campaigns, during which he gained a name of a brave man. In 1787, 20 year old David Bagrationi moved to Russia, where he studied and served in the army. In his 33 years, he was awarded a military rank of General-Lieutenant of the Russian Empire.

From 1798, Prince David lived in Tbilisi. In 1799, Russian Emperor Pavel I officially recognized David as heir to the royal throne of Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom. King George XII died in Tbilisi on December 28, 1800. From that moment up to June 1801, the Kingdom was ruled by Heir Apparent to the throne – Crown Prince David. Though, he ruled not as a King, but as a governor as he awaited confirmation from Russian Emperor according to the 1783 year Georgievsk Treaty terms<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> N. Javakhishvili, *Gregory I – the last Georgian king*, Tbilisi 2008, s.74.



It has to be mentioned here, that during the period of his rule, Prince David minted copper coins in Tbilisi mint, depicting peacock on obverse and Georgian 'Tiflis' (Tbilisi) and mint date on reverse. This unique coin is kept in Berlin Museum, from the Mikheil Baratashvili's ex-collection<sup>2</sup>.

On December 18, 1800, when king George XII was still alive, Russian Emperor Pavel I secretly signed manifesto of abolishing Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom and its incorporation into Russian Empire. Similar manifesto was declared by new Russian Emperor Alexander I on September 12, 1801. Thus, both Russian Emperors violated terms of treaty between Russia and The Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom about preservation of Georgian statehood. In 1803, the majority of the Kartli-Kakheti Royal Family members were forced by the Russian Imperial Government to immigrate to St. Petersburg. Prince David was among them<sup>3</sup>.

Because the heir to the throne – Prince David, did not have a son, Gregory (Grigol) Bagrationi (1789–1830), son of his younger brother Yoane (1768–1830), was considered as Heir Presumptive. It also should be mentioned here, that during the East Georgian uprising of 1812, 23 year old Gregory was declared by Georgians as the King of the Kartli-Kakheti. In Georgian churches and monasteries clergies prayed for him as the King, what has been confirmed by the Russian Officials of the time as well<sup>4</sup>. Although, Gregory I's reign lasted only from February 20 to March 6, 1812, the fact is that, he was the last Georgian King from the centuries-old Bagrationi Royal dynasty<sup>5</sup>. His wife was a Polish lady – Barbara Bukrinska (1810 – 1875), who gave wonderful children to the Bagrationi Royal Family. Since 1803, forcibly residing in St. Petersburg David Bagrationi started fruitful scientific and literary activities. Besides native Georgian, he fluently spoke Russian, French and other languages.

David Bagrationi was the first representative of the Georgian Voltairianists. He was familiar with works of European enlightenment authors of the time. He translated into Georgian Voltaire's 'For Christmas', Ansilion's works about esthetics, etc.; Montesquieu's 'The Spirit of the Laws', which Prince David considered as one of the best works. To the pen of David Bagrationi belongs the work 'New Sikhi', where the French Enlightenment ideas have been reflected. David Bagrationi's po-

<sup>2</sup> G. Dundua, *The coin of Prince David* [w:] *Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia*, t. 3, Tbilisi 1978, s. 338.

<sup>3</sup> Дворянские роды Российской империи. т. III, Князья. Руководители авторского коллектива П. Гребельский и С. Думин, под редакцией С. Думина, Москва 1996, с. 73–74.

<sup>4</sup> Акты, собранные Кавказской Археографической комиссией. Архив главного управления наместника Кавказского (под редакцией А. Берже), т. V, Тифлис 1873, с. 63.

<sup>5</sup> N. Dżawachiszwili, *Polka – żona ostatniego gruzińskiego władcy*, Materiały z VII Ogólnopolskiego Zjazdu Katedr Doktryn Politycznych i Prawnych „Kultura i myśl polityczno-prawna”, Jurata, 28–31 maja 2008 r., pod redakcją Andrzeja Sylwestrzaka, Dariusza Szpopera, Anny Machnikowskiej i Przemysława Dąbrowskiego, Uniwersytet Gdański, Sopot 2010, s. 13–139.



etry criticizes state administration officials. The main topics of his lyrics are love and present day dissatisfaction.

Prince David performed Lexicographic activities as well. He paid big attention to improvement of illustration materials. From 1803 in St. Petersburg, he started to compile articles for encyclopedic dictionary, which was a reflection of the widespread encyclopedic activities of the time. In 1814 Prince David issued historical work about History of Georgia from the ancient times to 1744.

David Bagrationi's historical works in Russian language comprise of Georgia's history from ancient times to the beginning of XIX century. Prince David also produced works in Natural Sciences, for the most part in Physics.

The most notable works of David Bagrationi are in the field of law. As early as 1800, when his father – George XII was still alive, he compiled judiciary collected works, which is known as 'Law by Prince David'.

After his emigration to Russia, Prince David was appointed as a member of Russian Governing Senate. At the same time, he headed the special committee responsible for analysis and editing of Russian translation of Georgian King Vakhtang VI's (1675–1737) Law.

In 1811–1816 Prince David wrote in Russian 'The review of law and jurisprudence of Georgia'<sup>6</sup>. 'Law by Prince David' is a Georgian law codification project, which is a precious source for understanding the old Georgian positive law and the historical line of its development. Some influence of enlightenment ideas can be observed in this work<sup>7</sup>. The abovementioned project was developed in two parts, and is known as 'early' and 'later', or revised versions. The early version was developed by request of David's father – King George XII. It consisted of preamble, 245 paragraphs and an index search.

The second version (or the second part) of the same work was developed by David Bagrationi in St. Petersburg in 1811–1813, when he was in charge of the special committee responsible for analysis and editing of Russian translation of Georgian King Vakhtang VI's (1675–1737) Law. The results of this later work were appendixes and add-ons, additional paragraphs and fragments that supposed be added to the original text's relevant chapters.

The abovementioned work sets the common standards, which regulates almost all kind of legal relationships of that time, starting with state law and ending with the civil turnover, succession and inheritance, marriage-family Relations, crime and justice in general and the particular issues. It is composed by inspiration of educational philosophy ideas and according to educated absolutism theory and practice. It contains a lot of progressive moral or legal principles, for example, it acknowledges the concept – 'It is better to release ten offenders rather than punish

<sup>6</sup> D. Bagrationi, *The review of law and jurisprudence of Georgia*, ed. A. Rogava, Tbilisi 1959.

<sup>7</sup> I. Surguladze, *From the history of Georgian political sciences*, Tbilisi 1985, s. 307.



one innocent'. In his codification work, Prince David mainly stood on the national traditional grounds. He was revising and updating old and current legal norms as necessary. At the same time, he used his professionalism to adopt for his book some of the Russian legal standards – Alex Michailovich's set of laws of 1649, Peter I's military charter, Catherine II's regulations, and adjust them to Georgia's situation. In this lengthy process of codification work, David Bagrationi did not lose hope that the Kartli – Kakheti Kingdom would be restored at least in the form of self-governance and his work would become useful for the Georgian state. For this purpose, he partly revised his work, translated into Russian and named it 'The review of law and jurisprudence of Georgia'<sup>8</sup>. Prince David's abovementioned normative-descriptive work consisted of 1019 paragraphs. The aim of the work was to show Georgia to the Russian Imperial ruling elite and society as a country of strong state-legal traditions and promote the restoration of its statehood, where this work would have become an acting law<sup>9</sup>. According to experts, D. Bagrationi's view of the subjective culpability demonstrates high level of Georgian legal thinking of the time.

On March 11, 1817, David Bagrationi presented request to the Russian Emperor Alexander I about restoration of the Kartli – Kakheti Kingdom under the Russian pro-protectorate. The heir to the throne tried to prove that this decision would satisfy freedom loving Georgian nation's fair claim, and the Russian State would benefit from it as well. In particular, David was taking responsibility that the Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom would submit to the Russian imperial treasury 1 million ruble assignments annually and would cover all expenses of the Russian army, stationed in Georgia<sup>10</sup>.

The abovementioned attempt by Prince David did not yield any results. The Russian imperial government already considered Georgia as its indisputable property and was not going to grant any autonomy to it.

On May 13, 1819, frustrated David Bagrationi died in St.Petersburg, at the age of 51. He was buried in the John Chrysostom Church of the St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra. The hope to restore Georgian statehood, heir to the throne, Crown Prince David took to the grave.

Thus, one of the worthiest representatives of the centuries-old Bagrationi Royal Dynasty – Crown Prince David (1767–1819), son of the King George XII, was a prominent state and military figure, scientist, lawyer and writer, who created valuable works in the field of law.

<sup>8</sup> D. Purtseladze, *Law by Prince David*, [w:] *Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia*, t. 8, Tbilisi 1984, s. 702.

<sup>9</sup> D. Purtseladze, *The review of law and jurisprudence of Georgia*, [w:] *Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia*, t. 9, Tbilisi 1985, s. 183.

<sup>10</sup> M. Gonikishvili, *Bagrationi's settlement and their activities in Russia*, Tbilisi 1986, s. 228–229.

## Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia sylwetkę jednego z wybitniejszych przedstawicieli gruzińskiej dynastii panującej w XIX w. – księcia Davida Bagrationi. Był on starszym synem George’a XII i z tego też powodu naturalnym następcą tronu królestwa Kartli-Kakheti, co zostało oficjalnie usankcjonowane przez cara rosyjskiego Pawła I. W 1803 r. po aneksji królestwa przez Cesarstwo Rosyjskie, został zmuszony do przeniesienia się na stałe do Sankt Petersburga. Rozpoczął tam działalność naukową i literacką. Poświęcił się także pracy leksykograficznej. Najbardziej znane dzieła księcia Davida dotyczą obszaru prawa.

Opublikowany w języku rosyjskim *Przegląd prawa i jurisprudencki Gruzji* stał się fundamentem kodyfikacji prawa gruzińskiego. Całe życie emigracyjne poświęcił działaniom dyplomatycznym, mającym na celu przywrócenie Gruzji jako królestwa w obrębie Imperium Rosyjskiego. Zmarł w Sankt Petersburgu w 1819 roku.