

# Georgian Diplomat \_ Queen Tamar

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The Middle Ages is not characterized by recognition of women's rights and its spreading in the world history. From the women of different parts of the world, only the nobles and the king's children enjoyed all human rights and privileges. Georgia was no exception as well; in the 12th-16th centuries feudalism was the governing system in Georgia and the women's rights and, in general, rights of human beings were rarely discussed. But in the 12th century in Georgia, the country located in Eastern Europe and South Caucasia, a very interesting fact occurred: unusually for Georgia, a woman became the ruler of the country. It was the first case, when a woman became King of Georgia. She was Tamar. She ruled in 1184-1213. Ruling of Queen Tamar has radically changed the direction of history of Georgia forever. Only the period of her ruling is named "Golden Age" in the history of Georgia. During the period of her ruling, completely unusual decisions were made, that were unusual even for the world of that time: (1). Death penalty was abolished! (2). An authority similar to modern Parliament was formed \_ so-called Kutlu Arslan Dasi. The King took into account the decisions made by this authority. This fact was evaluated in the history of the world history as the point of reference of the history of Parliamentarism. (3). Georgia was the first country in the world, where a civil war occurred. The peasants' demonstrations of that time are very well studied by law specialists and, considering all criteria, they were assessed as Civil War. We think that Queen Tamar was a leader and a successful female diplomat, whom the whole world should know well. Georgians refer to Tamar as a King (not a Queen). But, in this article we will refer to her as a Queen to highlight her diplomatic skills.

*Keywords:* Georgia, King Tamar, The Middle Ages, "Golden Age"

## Introduction

Tamar was the monarch of Georgia from 1184. She was the daughter of the King of Georgia—George III. Tamar was a representative of the Bagrationi royal dynasty. Tamar was proclaimed as a co-regent by her father in 1179. From 1184, when King George died, Tamar became a sole ruler.

The reign of Tamar begins with hard battles against the feudal lords: Tamar's father had also previously fought against the increased privileges and rights of the feudal aristocracy. Tamar had to continue this fight. The aristocracy demanded the restoration of lost privileges. It was the first time that a female ruler ascended the throne of Georgia and the feudal lords believed that a female ruler would reveal weaknesses.

Tamar had to not only take care of solving the internal problems of the country, but also had great battles against external enemies. These battles ended with Tamar's glorious victories.

During her reign, Georgia expanded its territories and created the Trabzon Empire under its protectorate. This is the only period in the history of Georgia when it was an empire. The battles led by Tamar on the political arena or fights with swords were concluded with great victories of Georgia which is the merit of her as a smart monarch and diplomat.

### **Used Scientific References**

While working on the period of Queen Tamar's reign, we got acquainted with many interesting scientific and historical works.

First of all, we got acquainted with "The Georgian Chronicles". This work is a fundamental source for the study of the history of Georgia. "The Georgian Chronicles" consists of historical works by several authors, which are arranged chronologically and tell about different periods of Georgian history. Our attention was drawn to the period of Tamar's reign. This collection includes two interesting works about Tamar's reign: The work of Tamar's historian, Basili, Master of the Court, "Life of the King of Kings, Tamar", in which the historian recounts the current events during the reign of Tamar, and the second—the work of the so-called first historian of Tamar, "Histories and Eulogies of the Sovereigns".

We have learned about the life and governance of Queen Tamar in one of the fundamental works, such as "King Tamar" by Roin Metreveli. This monograph studies the activities and reign of Tamar in details, the struggle of her famous ancestors for the unity and strength of Georgia, the domestic and foreign policy of Tamar's period, her multifaceted reforms, great struggles and the successes or internal turmoil of the Georgian state.

Also, the second volume of the twelfth volume of the great Georgian historian Ivane Javakhishvili is an important work, which covers the history of Georgia of VII-XII centuries, including the period of Tamar's reign.

We got acquainted with some fundamental works about the Trabzon Empire, including Vakhushti Batonishvili's "Description of the Kingdom of Georgia". This work was written in the eighteenth century; Also, "The Chronicle of Trebizond" by Michael Panaretos and "The Origin of the Empire of Trebizond" by Zurab Batiashvili.

We introduced to the interesting reports in the work of Z. Avalishvili "From the time of the Crusaders (four historical essays)". We also got acquainted with a number of other scholars working on the history of Georgia during this period.

### **What Legacy Inherited Queen Tamar**

At the turn of the XII-XIII centuries, Georgia was the strongest state in the Caucasus. At that time Georgia included the area from Nikopsia to Daruband or the geographical area from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea. Georgia was the only leading political entity in the Middle East with a strong army and was already leading wars of conquest. Georgia was also an economically strong country: agriculture and trade were highly developed. Culture and various fields of art reached a high level of development for that period.

That is, Queen Tamar inherited a fairly good legacy: her immediate ancestors, especially David the Builder (1073-1125), left her with a strong feudal state. But the fact is that Queen Tamar herself turned out to be a strong

ruler and not only took good care of the inheritance, but also turned Georgia into a much stronger feudal state and empire.

In history we often meet kings and queens who fail to not only strengthen their state, but even to maintain the inherited heritage. There are many such kings in the history of Georgia. But Tamar's strength also shows that she occupied a special place among the Georgian monarchs. "Tamar's bright personality, powerful reign, prudent politics and insight contributed to the political and cultural prosperity of Georgia" (Metreveli, 1992, p. 170).

### **The Conception of Parliamentarism?**

At the beginning of Tamar's reign, part of the princes and feudal lords were skeptical of the king-woman ascending the royal throne, and part of them tried to curtail the rights of the queen. This created some problems at the royal court, and in the first years of her reign the queen was even forced to dismiss several of her loyal fellow-warriors. Some of the feudal lords perceived this as the weakness of the queen and they set more expectations. Kutlu Arslan, the Treasurer/Minister of Finance also took advantage of the situation, he was supported by a large number of groups and he set up the so-called "Camp" in one of the historical districts of the capital of Georgia—Isani (The Georgian Chronicles, 2012, pp. 405-406). That is, Kutlu Arslan came up with a plan for state governance reform, according to which royal power was to be limited: the king's rule was to be nominal, and a new institution was to be created parallel to the royal court, to be given legislative and supreme judicial functions. The king's government only had to carry out the decisions of this "Camp".

Shortly after making these demands, Kutlu-Arslan was captured by order of Queen Tamar but was released quickly because the number of his supporters was quite large and Tamar avoided a civil war. She decided to solve the challenges diplomatically and she dispatched her diplomat friend ladies on a diplomatic mission to have negotiations in the process. They were Kravai Jakeli and Khvashak Tsokali.

Negotiations began with Kutlu-Arslan's political group, led by women diplomats. Tamar had no plans to make concessions.

The fact is that the king or queen did not make a sole decision at the royal court in Georgia. Georgia's political system was arranged in such a way that the monarchs had an advisory council and the highest decisions were agreed upon and consulted. Queen Tamar in particular was endowed with quite great generosity and ability of cooperation. She was the first monarch from the Georgian kings to abolish the death penalty for the offender. In this case, the demands of the wealthy feudal lord Kutlu Arslan had to be met.

In the negotiation process, it became clear that Arslan's group was more interested in the division of power than in the institutional development of the country. Negotiations were profitable for the Queen. Kutlu Arslan's supporters preferred to retreat, they appealed to the queen, apologized and vowed allegiance to the throne. Kutlu Arslan was dismissed and replaced by Kakhaber Vardanisidze. Tamar managed to replace the entire military elite and hand over other high positions in the state to her supporters. The Queen thus greatly strengthened her positions. In general, it must be said that Tamar did not make any mistakes in strategic calculations during her entire reign.

### **Queen Tamar's decisive battles**

Soon after the coronation, Queen Tamar had to hold difficult military battles to fortify the borders; One of the most notable episodes is the battle of Shamkor on June 1, 1195, against Abu Bakr of Atabeg, Azerbaijan of Iran, and a glorious victory of Georgia. The fact is that in 1192, the Chief Amir of Azerbaijan, Abu Bakr invaded Shirvan—the side officially protected by Georgia. The rulers of Shirvan appealed for help to the king of Georgia. The Georgian Royal Army was led by Queen Tamar's husband David Soslan. The battle with Shirvan started with a great advantage of the Georgians and ended with their victory. According to reports, Bakr helped himself to escape. The Georgians took great treasures from this battlefield. The booty included the flag of the Khalif as well. Tamar won a brilliant victory over the Eastern Turk-Seljuk coalition.

However, Tamar was not satisfied with this victory and continued to invade the lands to the south and southeast: in 1100-1203, the Georgians occupied the lands previously being under Armenian rule: Ani, Dvin, Amberd, Bijlisi.

When talking about Tamar's victories, one can not fail to mention the strategically important Castle of Kars. This Castle was previously occupied by the Turk-Seljuks. Tamar traveled to this city. She managed to take it and appointed Ivane Akhaltsikheli as its governor. This fact caused great dissatisfaction in the Muslim world at that time.

The Seljuk Turks were so agitated by the strengthening of the Georgian king that soon they decided to carry out a decisive attack on them. This case was handled by Rukn ad-Din, the Sultan of Rum. He requested the help from the rulers of Erzincan, Abulistan, Borit, Arzrum, and Sham, and organized an army against Georgia. Rukn ad-Din wanted to bring the Black Sea and its surrounding territories under his influence. But he knew that he could not achieve this goal without defeating the Georgian king. Rukn ad-Din also sent a threatening letter to the Queen of Georgia, demanding her obedience. In the letter, Rukn ad-Din noted that all women are stupid and it is impossible for them to govern the state. So he advised Tamar to obey and become his mistress, otherwise he would destroy her kingdom to the ground. Tamar's historians write that when the ambassador sent by Rukn ad-Din read this letter, one of Tamar's commander-in-chiefs Zakaria Mkhargrdzeli, slammed the ambassador. When the ambassador regained consciousness, he was rewarded and sent back with a proper response. Tamar notified Rukn ad-Din that she was waiting on the battlefield.

The battle between Rukn ad-Din and Tamar took place in 1202, on July 27, in Basian, in the territory of present-day Turkey. The Georgian army was commanded by David Soslan. On his advice, the Georgian side chose a tactic of sudden attack. This tactic was justified and the Georgian side won the battle with a big advantage.

In general, it must be said that during the reign of Tamar (and not only hers) , in every battle she fought, the enemy's army was much larger than the Georgian army. But, with the right tactics, strategy, organization, the level of army training, proper skills, armament and attitude, the Georgian army had always achieved brilliant victories.

With the battles of Queen Tamar, Georgia managed to fortify its borders and keep the country's population prosperous. Georgia was bordered by sworn and subjugated kingdoms.

### **Establishment of the Trabzon Empire**

The Trabzon / Trebizonde Empire was founded with the active intervention and support of Queen Tamar, after the Byzantine Empire virtually ceased to exist. However, it must be said that other kings of Georgia also tried to occupy the territories on which this empire was located. During the Crusades, Tamar believed that the Georgian royal family could have ambitions to control the territories in the northeast of Asia Minor. The population in this geographical area was also mainly Orthodox Christians. Religious uniformity had some significance. Georgian army occupied Chaneti, Trabzon, Limnia, Sinop, Cerasus, Kotyora, Amastris, Heraclea, Paphlagonia and other places of Pontus in 1203-1204. In 1204 Georgia announced the founding of the Trabzon Empire under its protectorate. This was happening during the Fourth Crusade. The capital became the city of Trabzon. The main population of this empire were Greeks and Laz or Georgians. The empire was divided into three military districts: Matsuk, Gimori and Trabzon.

The opinion of historians is divided into two parts about the creation of the Trabzon Empire; Part of them believes that the establishment of the empire was the result of the coincidence of certain events. Other historians consider that this was a deliberate act of the Georgian king. We do not want to enter into this dialogue and talk about this in details. We only mention that whichever version is closer to the truth, the fact is that the Georgian royal family has the power to maintain a protectorate, appoint emperors and, consequently, manage the foreign and domestic policy of the empire.

It is noteworthy that the rulers of Trabzon considered themselves as Byzantine emperors from the beginning of their rule. But, after the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II and the Emperor John II of Trebizond met in 1282, they agreed that only the rulers of Constantinople should be nominated as the Byzantine emperors; And the rulers of the Trabzon Empire would be “the emperors of every East, Iberia and Perateia (place beyond the sea)” (Oikonomide, 1979, pp. 321-332). Under this agreement, the emperors of the Trabzon Empire retained their imperial dignity, although they had already renounced the inheritance of the Byzantine Empire.

Tamar appointed Alexios Komnenos as the first emperor of the Trabzon Empire. Alex and his brother David were close to the Georgian royal court, and according to some historians, grew up in the Georgian royal court, they were princes and were distinguished by their loyalty to Georgia, as well as their entire dynasty.

The founding of the Trabzon Empire was the result of strategic calculations. It was a buffer created for the Georgian royal court to protect it from the Byzantines from the west and to avoid the invasions of the Rum sultans from the southeast. Georgian kings have always sought to control these territories. Scholar Zurab Batiashvili conveys this situation well when he notes that “based on the available factual material, we can assume that the Georgian program was the maximum to restore the family of allied and related Komnenos on the Byzantine throne and to present a common position in the international arena” (Batiashvili, 2012, p. 84).

During the reign of Tamar, the Trabzon Empire pursued a pro-Georgian policy. The Byzantine Empire could not control it.

The Trabzon Empire existed until 1461. Its former territories are part of the present-day Republic of Turkey.

### **Conclusions**

Thus, our narration reveals that Queen Tamar was not only the heir of her great ancestors, she was also a glorious monarch, that is why she is referred to as the king in Georgian historiography. Tamar’s powerful army

and economically empowered state with great conquest wars further strengthened the country and established an empire.

Her reforms served the welfare of the country. Tamar always solved state issues with the help of the army, but her diplomatic talent and ability supported the country to solve numerous issues.

We would like to focus our attention on another interesting point: Queen Tamar is canonized by the Autocephalous Church of Georgia and May 1 is the day of her remembrance.

Tamar was a charitable queen. She always took special care of her people: by her decree 10% of the whole income of the kingdom was distributed to the poor. Also, her personal charity should be mentioned: when she got rid of state affairs, she immediately turned to handicrafts—she spun and sewed and distributed her own hand-knitted stitches to the elders and peasants.

Tamar also wrote poems. Her iambics (small poems) have survived to the present day.

Numerous folk verses and poems were dedicated to the outstanding monarch in the history of Georgia. “The Knight in Panther’s Skin” by her contemporary poet Shota Rustaveli deserves special mention. Also, “Tamariani” by Chakhrukhadze.

Queen Tamar is a remarkably adorable, praiseworthy and respectable monarch in the history of Georgia.

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