

“Noblemen became enthroned”

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Introduction (*Serfdom and freedom*)

Feudalism or patron-client relations (*patronqmoba: patroni* – patron, lord and *qma* – client) ended in Georgia in Queen Tamar’s era (1184-1213) and developed into a new phase of relations called serfdom (*batonqmoba: batoni* – master) (Berdzenishvili 1979). Society in the conditions of serfdom is characterized by a universal restriction of social freedom and the latter becomes of crucial importance in determining the typological essence of the Georgian state of those times.

Under patron-client relations, representatives of different social strata had one thing in common: Most of them (with the exception of prisoners of war or slaves) were not owned by anyone and were free in this sense. Belonging to “kin” and being someone’s “son” or “blood relative” guaranteed a person’s social freedom. “No ‘seigneurs’ – a prince’s child, sovereign, landed gentry – could be free nor an ordinary, taxpaying “layman” and “peasant” be semi-free without “kin”, which means that a person’s being part of “kin” was a precondition of freedom in the ‘Kingdom of Kartli’” (Mamulia 1987, 189).

The situation changed in the era of *serfdom*. It was possession of land, not belonging to “kin”, that became the precondition for freedom. A vast majority of the people involved in production became serfs. “There were numerous free land tillers in the 11th century, but the 12th and 13th centuries were the era of their enslavement and transformation into peasants” (Berdzenishvili 1979, 135). *Due to the introduction and establishment of serfdom, most people lost their freedom.* “A free person is a producer, who is not under the exploitation characteristic of *serfdom*. ‘Free’ should be understood as the antithesis of serfdom” (Antelava 1980, 74). Peasants were attached to land plots belonging

to landlords and became their property. Being such a property means slavery. “The slave was a species of property; thus he belonged to someone else. In some societies slaves were considered movable property, in others immovable property, like real estate” (Hellie 2001). Also, “slavery is one man working for another, a working person being a property of another person who purloins the fruits of his labour”¹ (Рабство 1989).

The transformation of the term *qma* also shows the main essence of this revolutionary change:

Initially, *qma* denoted a junior member of a family, who was not regarded as enjoying his own rights until he reached a certain age (like present-day *qmatsvili* “juvenile”). In the era of the emerging chain of authority, *qma* became a term denoting a social status within the class of servants. It continued to refer to a junior person, who, however, had certain authority:² Being a *qma* of a patron implied a position in the feudal hierarchy and a set of rights and obligations. A *qma* first became a *mosakargave*, who received his share and wages in exchange for military service and the use of land (*mkvidreba*) on the condition of being a temporary tenant of the land³ and then he came to own the land forever, becoming a *landowner* (Mamulia 1987, 184). In other words, former members of the community first separated from their “kin” (thus rejecting the freedom of the patriarchal “kin” and “sonship”), started to serve (preparing for the “great freedom” of the *aznauris* – landed gentry), and then he (his descendants) acquired the status of the “great freedom” of an *aznauri*, ending up in becoming landowners. Thus, in this context, *qmob* (the state of being a *qma*) retained the essence of freedom to the end and developed it on the ascending scale.

The term acquired quite a different meaning later, when it started being used to denote the broadest and lowest stratum of the social pyramid – the *mdabiuris*, who had turned into peasants. In comparison with peasants, being a *qma* came to denote the lack of rights, being the property of another person, and dependence on another person. The process of belittling the freedom of future peasants, which started due to the emergence of a social vertical, finally ended in the actual enslavement of “minor people [peasantry]” (Juansher Juansheriani 2014) at the end of a long-term class struggle. As a result of this descending and involuntal zigzag of social freedom, peasant serfs had to live for 600 years without any rights.

1 “Рабство – труд одних людей на других, соединённый с личной принадлежностью трудящегося тому, кто присваивает продукт его труда” (Рабство 1989).

2 “The oldest meaning of *qma* is ‘servant’” (Mamulia 1987, 19).

3 “A *mosakargave* belonged to the social stratum of *aznauris*, but differed from ‘landowner *aznauris*’, i.e. those, who inherited the title” (Meskhia 1982, 366).

The landowners who became enthroned in the provinces had all the necessary military, administrative, economic, and legal instruments in place to keep land tillers, who had turned into enslaved peasants, in effectively slavish subordination. Correspondingly, they did not need support from either their class brothers or the king in their struggle with the subordinated stratum, particularly as both the king and the royal court had become different from the class brothers long ago, *the king personifying a fundamentally different political system, the authorities, i.e. the state*. The Georgian term *state* (*sakhelmtsipo*) is derived from *khelmtsipe* (*king*), showing that first the feudal system took shape (*mamasakhlisi* “community head” and *mepe-upali* “king-lord”) by way of a broadened patriarchal family and clan and then (after the authority of the king expanded and the king reached the rank of *khelmtsipe*), a state took shape from this system. Such a *khelmtsipe* and suzerain regulated the rights and obligations of other minor kings and claimed to be the external institution unifying the individual countries (provinces) governed by the minor kings. The king restricted the tendency of the enthronement of the feudal lords, who had voluntarily become his *qmas*, and their becoming regional kings. As monetary relations developed, he aspired to transform them into royal officers or hired servants. Therefore, even before serfdom, i.e. as early as from the phase of patron-client relations, confrontation with the king and, correspondingly, the state became an unremitting and innate social instinct of the class of feudal lords.

“The essential point is that the kingship was ... in the feudal order but not of it” (Finer 1999, 884). “The Church too was in the feudal order, but not of it” [Finer 1999: 888]. “Like the kingship, the Church anteceded feudalism... Both of them were antibodies but strangely, as we have seen, it was the feudal arrangement which brought them into a symbiosis” (Finer 1999, 893).

The king (state) made constant attempts to make the future landowner an *officer* of the central government or royal court, but as time passed, it became clear that the former *mamasakhlisi* and the like tried to use all rights and posts the king bestowed on him in order to become enthroned in the regions they governed. In other words, noblemen were becoming landowners, not officials, and the royal family tried to promote minor *aznauris* as officers of the central apparatus instead of their subordinates, who had already turned into men of importance and noblemen.

“It was to be clarified in the future, whether the state vizier [the chief officer, minister] would overcome the *eristavteristavi* [local ruler ready to become enthroned] or whether the vizier-eristavteristavi would become king, retaining the title of vizier just as an outward decoration” (Berdzenishvili 1965, 90).

Officials of noble origin, i.e. semi-independent regional rulers and future "masters", disobeyed the king in the times of patron-client relations, because the latter claimed to legitimize their authority and the extent of disobedience depended on the scale of the king's claims. Without the king's interference, their rights became arguable (which was equally true of their judicial, economic, and military rights) (Melikishvili 1973). Therefore, when they had their own way later and became masters of the regions forever, they decided to use the central state government for their own benefit. The situation was of a contrary nature earlier: State officials (*eristavis*) served at the royal court to implement the will of the central government in the regions (*saeristavos*). *After the establishment of serfdom, relations between the military and political elite and the central royal authority were reversed. After saeristavos turned into estates and they became masters there, noble masters started regarding their subordination to the central royal authority as unnecessary. They regarded themselves rather than the king as the source of the legitimacy of their authority, viewing the central government as an instrument for the implementation of their interests, contrary to viewing themselves as serving the state. Previously (in the times of patron-client relations), they served at the royal court, being the king's officials, but the situation reversed and they wanted the royal court to serve their interests.*

The domestic political crisis in Georgia at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries was the final phase of precisely this centuries-long socio-economic trend. Noble magnates limited the king's autocratic aspirations, satisfying their class interests.

Problems of autarchy⁴

Under the rule of Queen Tamar's father Giorgi III (1156-1184), the elite noblemen organised another revolt to limit the king's autocratic rights (1177). The king had the leader of the revolt, Ivane Orbeli, "approved" to the post of *amirspasalari* (commander-in-chief of the army). According to the Armenian historian Vardan the Great, it was Ivane Orbeli who Giorgi III relied on in getting rid of his elder brother David.⁵ Afterwards (and due to this), King

4 The notion of autarchy herein implies unlimited authority of the king.

5 The king of Iveria, Demetre, died after 32 years of his rule. His son David, a smart man inclined to virtue, inherited the crown. He freed Tirkash, who his father incarcerated in a dungeon and appointed him as a commander-in-chief, but he himself died a month later. Some say, he died due to the treason on the part of Sembat and Ivane Orbeli, because he appointed Tirkash to their post and that they agreed on this in advance with his brother Giorgi, who promised to appoint them as commanders-in-chief. In the year 605 – 1156, Giorgi inherited his brother's crown. (Вардан Великий 1861, 627).

Giorgi appointed Ivane Orbeli as the “educator” (actually supervisor) of Prince Demna, the heir of his deceased (presumably murdered) brother David.⁶ In spite of this, Orbeli confronted King Giorgi too, using Prince Demna as the “evidence” in support of his claims. The revolt of 1177 was organized by noblemen, not the prince, who fought for the throne, which is confirmed among others by the fact that Prince Demna had fled the besieged fortress: “And Demet’re slipped down the wall of the fortress by rope, and on foot, came to his uncle” (Unknown chronicler 2014, 236). The great number of the people involved in the revolt⁷ made it clear that the reasons lay deep in social problems, but nevertheless, the king overpowered the rebels, punished them using the legal norms in force, and, of course, deprived them of their posts. However, the king’s victory was not full. Rebels also attacked him from the Church and were successful, too. At a special assembly, the Church demanded that the king “exempt them from feudal dues” and the king had to cede and restore the exemption he had abolished previously.

This turmoil was linked to Tamar becoming co-regent. Noblemen wanted to forestall and prevent Tamar’s enthronement (co-regency). To make a prince co-regent, the king needed consent from the civic and military elite and a blessing from the Church. Having noble aristocrats ensconced in leading positions, the Church secured the king’s decision on tax exemption. However, this was not the main thing. It was more important that at that time, “a supporter of the democratic trend of the kings’ social policy, ...a prominent author and philosopher” (Javakhishvili 1984, 112), *Nikoloz Gulaberisdze*, was forced to cede the throne of Mtskheta Catholicos to a representative of the opposition-minded nobleman *Mikael Mirianisdze*. The king suffered a defeat in the Church, but took it out on the secular authorities (also noblemen), depriving them of their posts and giving them to *aznauris* loyal to the court.

Thus, none of the sides managed to win a decisive victory in 1177: Noblemen lost supreme executive posts, but strengthened their positions in the Church. The struggle aimed at limiting the king’s authority moved to a new phase.

Soon – in 1184, Giorgi III unexpectedly died (was probably poisoned) and the turmoil resumed. Tamar, who was just a co-regent by that time, was

6 “In the struggle between David and Giorgi, Ivane Orbeli was on Giorgi’s side and received the post of *amirspasaari* as a reward. Ivane raised Prince Demna and ... initially, this could be due to an agreement between Giorgi and Ivane, who wanted to render Demna harmless” (Lortkipanidze 1979, 291).

7 “All the Orbelis, together with their ‘dependants and neighbours’, ... made a stand against the king: Ivane son of Vardan, Shota son of Artavachosdze, Kartli Eristavi Sumbat son of Liparit, stable-keeper Kavtar son of Ivane, Anania of Dvin, Mkhargrdzeli, Didi Gamrekeli, Memna Jakeli, Hasan patron of Cain, Grigol of Ani son of Apirat, and others” (Lortkipanidze 1979, 292).

to become a full-fledged queen. We could see that the Church did not give King Giorgi its unconditional consent to make Tamar co-regent, even more so in this case. The Church gave its consent in exchange for an extremely undesirable concession:

The institution that was a major support for the royal authority was the post of *Chqondideli-Mtsignobartukhutsesi* (prime minister). The opposition-minded noblemen who had reinforced their positions now started targeting this post.

The History and Eulogy of Monarchs makes it clear that at the moment of Giorgi III's death, "the king's loyal official" *Anton GnoIistavidze* held the post of prime minister. Tamar and her aunt Rusudan, who visited the Geguti Palace to mourn the death of the king, "[in] looking around they saw Patriarch Mikael, who stood with the other bishops, Vizier Anton, amirsp'asali Q'ubasar, and other officials, the *mech'urch'letukhutsesi* Q'utlu-Arslan, ... the *msakhurtukhutsesi* Apridon" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 238). In the situation that had taken shape, Catholicos Mikael "thoroughly distorted the ecclesiastical rules, and managed to obtain from the lord⁸ by perfidy the position of the archbishop of Chq'ondidi and the archbishop of Atsq'uri, as well as of *mts'ignobartukhutsesi*" (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 289).

In other words, as Ivane Javakhishvili explained, Catholicos Michael "assisted in resolving the disputable problem of the right to enthrone Tamar peacefully and in Tamar's favour" in exchange for the post of prime minister (Javakhishvili 1984, 114). Thus, the opposition to the royal court gave consent to Tamar's enthronement *only after changes of a constitutional nature were carried out*.

The royal court's refusal to cede the post of prime minister would again be followed by unrest within the country and an armed confrontation. The royal court made a compromise and Tamar ceded after some hesitation.⁹

Ivane Javakhishvili assessed the changes as the establishment of theocracy, because according to the legislation of the Georgian state, the *mtsignobartukhutsesi* was regarded as the king's "father" and the king could not do anything without consulting him. Therefore, *from that moment, Mikael would have even more power and authority than the king*. The king had no right

8 Queen Rusudan is meant by 'lord' in this case. It was 'from the lord', i.e. the supreme person in the country. "The representatives of the seven parts of the kingdom had gathered and dared to tell Queen Rusudan: 'Now you are the adoptive parent for Tamar'" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 239).

9 Tamar did not seem to agree with giving the post of Chqondideli-Mtsignobartukhutsesi to Mikael, but "listened to the request of the *didebulis* of the seven kingdoms and obeyed though not completely willingly" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 239).

and was unable to interfere in ecclesiastic affairs, but Mikael had both secular and ecclesiastic powers and could aggregate them.

“As Mikael was first and foremost Catholicos, the situation foreboded the dominance of the church in the secular and state spheres. This was equal to what is known in historic studies as caesaropapism and was similar to the legal status of the Roman Church” (Javakhishvili 1984, 115).

Mikael acted in coordination with an opposition consisting of noblemen. Otherwise, he could not have “obtained ... by perfidy” the post of Mtsignobartukhutsesi-Chqondideli. It is obvious that Queen Tamar encountered a united front of the secular, military, and ecclesiastic opposition. Basil Ezosmodzghvari confirms that Mikael deprived Anton of the post of Chqondideli “thanks to the perfidy of some of the king’s advisers”. The fact that the “advisers” were involved in perfidy means that they were involved in the conspiracy, being guided by their interest of obtaining titles.

The appointment of Chqondideli-Mtsignobartukhutsesi was at the discretion of the king and the royal council (not a church council).¹⁰ Therefore, theoretically, Tamar could use this formal right after her enthronement and restore Anton to the post of Chkondideli. However, taking into account the real distribution of forces, it would not be appropriate to dismiss Mikael even on the basis of a direct order or through the council. Had the queen been able to issue an order and dismiss Mikael, it would be senseless for the Catholicos of Mtskheta to “obtain ... by perfidy” the post of Chkondideli. The problem was that the king could no longer resort to autocratic methods to abolish the changes that had taken place after the aristocracy reinforced their positions and established theocratic rule (even if it was perfunctory). Therefore, Tamar chose a long-distance approach. The first thing she did was to try to shake Mikael’s positions within the church (where the royal court had suffered a lot of defeats for a long time). “The incumbent Catholicos Mikael’s predecessor and his rival, Nikoloz Gulaberisdze, was appointed as the head” of a specially-prepared church council. “It should have been clear to everyone that the church council was organised to confront the Catholicos and mtsignobartukhutsesi” (Javakhishvili 1984, 116-117).

Catholicos Mikael was awaiting a verdict of the council in the role of defendant. Tamar gave direct instructions to the participants: “Investigate everything thoroughly, sanction the just, and banish the unjust” (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 289). Had the accusations been confirmed, Mikael

10 A powerful absolute monarch would “select” and effectively appoint the Catholicos proper, never mind the mtsignobartukhutsesi. Although in his *Georgian Law and Legislation*, Prince David describes the situation in general, his evidence is nevertheless noteworthy: Глава III #46. Каталикос избирается царем (Багратиони 1959, 228).

would have to quit the post of Catholicos as well as the diocese of Chqondidi as a violator of the rules. Since the royal vizier (mts'ignobartukhutsesi) was to be bishop of Chqondidi, Mikael would also lose this post. Mikael was not even allowed to attend the meeting of the council. “And the leaders of the assembly, Nik'olaoz and Ant'oni ... did not wish to have among their company the Catholicos of Kartli, because he thoroughly distorted the ecclesiastical rules, and managed to obtain from the lord by perfidy the position of the archbishop of Ch'qondidi and the archbishop of Ats'q'uri, as well as of *mts'ignobartukhutsesi*. But they could not excommunicate him, despite trying mightily” (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 289).

They failed to dismiss Mikael!

Thus:

At the beginning (in exchange for giving consent to Tamar's co-regency in 1177), Mikael “obtained ... by perfidy” the post of *Patriarch* and then (in exchange for giving consent to Tamar's enthronement in 1184) that of *Chqondideli-Mts'ignobartukhutsesi*. Due to this, in their struggle for class interests of the stratum, the noble opposition at the royal court, who Mikael was most likely part of, laid hands on two supreme posts – those of the head of the Church and prime minister. *Given this, Professor S. Meskhia's assumption that the queen maintained her autocratic rule*¹¹ (Meshkia 1979) *seems to be unnatural. The authority of the queen was restricted.*

The failed attempt to remove Mikael made the situation extremely acute. The many-sided configuration of the forces had one noteworthy aspect: The reinforcement of the positions of the Church and of Mikael was a conundrum not only for the queen, but also the secular and military elites. The opposition to the royal court managed to weaken the queen by means of the Church, but it was Catholicos Mikael who now became their headache, as he had not only the formal right, but also the will to establish theocracy. However, the implementation of this potential was no longer in the interests of the noblemen. They needed Mikael to restrict the king's powers. Otherwise: “The Catholicos of Kartli, *ch'qondidel-mts'ignobartukhutsesi*, Mikael, son of Mirian, ...died, but nobody was sorry for him, neither great, nor small, because everybody despised him.” (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 290)

The hatred was due to Mikael's broadened powers. Noblemen could not reconcile with this. The excessive powers of the king – the secular authority – and the spiritual leader were both equally unacceptable for them. To broaden

11 This is true if we regard only “non-enslaved freedom” (Mamulia) as the content of autocratic rule, i.e. the non-existence of an institution above the king. However, it is effectively the unlimited powers of the king that are implied here.

their rights and privileges, the noblemen again launched an attack against the queen.

“Some of the higher-ranked officials colluded and swore: ‘We cannot stay under the command of the old functionaries and executives anymore, because we are ignored and deprived of the privilege of sitting on morocco cushions, and highborn and distinguished families are driven away by people without kith and kin [by unfit people of low birth/უფუაროთა და უხმართაგან A.]’” (Unknown chronicler 2014, 240).

“This was the first strike of the people of this rank aimed at obtaining political rights or privileges” (Javakhishvili 1984, 120). “Sons of noble families serving the state” demanded that only representatives of their circle hold executive posts. “They wanted to restrict the powers of Georgian king, who would be deprived of the right to select and appoint officials according to his own will. From that time on, top posts were to be occupied by representatives of noble families” (Javakhishvili 1984, 121).

Professor Ilia Antelava’s assessment of the events is different. In his opinion, the movement was not directed against the promotion of people of low birth: “*The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* says nothing about a prominent role of low-birth people in the Georgian monarchy” (Antelava 1980, 197). Chancellor Apridon, who the opposition wanted the king to dismiss, was indeed “of low birth”, but that is not true of Commander-in-Chief Qubasar. “The term ‘of low birth’ cannot be applied to Qubasar without some remarks, as there is no firm evidence of this. ‘Unfit’ cannot be applied to Apridon. Apridon is ‘of low birth’ and Qubasar is ‘unfit’. He cannot fulfil his duties, because he is ‘useless’, so they demand his dismissal. It is clear that the vacancies of commander-in-chief and chancellor were very attractive for noblemen” (Antelava 1980, 197).

The problem lay precisely in the attractiveness. It was due to the attractiveness that strikers enjoyed broad support. Otherwise, the officials, who were few in number (“some of the higher-ranked officials colluded and swore”), would have failed to organize the strike without support from their class friends. The strike was part of the strategy of the unremitting attacks noblemen had launched against the royal court. This is confirmed by the fact that the strike by some officials was soon followed by a much larger action. It was headed by the queen’s treasurer. However, let us discuss this below...

Due to this strike, nobleman satisfied their own class interests. From that time on, unlike after the revolt of the Orbelis, *only noblemen would be appointed as officials at the royal court*, but they had to be loyal to the royal family.

The situation was settled due to some reasonable measures taken by Queen Tamar. Initially, the queen satisfied the demands of the strikers, dismissing

people "of low birth" from their posts and defusing the situation. She then took some time, leaving the executive posts vacant. The strikers "began to wrangle with each other" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241). The queen agreed that posts had to be given to noblemen, but it was decided to distribute posts to those loyal to the royal court. An agreement was first reached on general terms. In principle, the queen agreed to cede executive posts to noblemen, not to those "of unfit people of low birth", but it was clear that she "selected" specific candidates *loyal to the throne*. The opposition had no tool to oppose this option available to the queen. Despite class interests, any nobleman approved to a post was to be loyal to the queen's authority. "Friends" kept a jealous eye on a nobleman holding a post, as it was attractive and others wanted to hold it, too. Therefore, ministers in the posts needed the queen's benevolence to remain in the positions. The opposition to the royal court had to reconcile with this supremacy of the queen and the dispute ended in a compromise: Noblemen obtained class privileges and the queen appointed people to posts on grounds of their loyalty.

Thus, the autocratic royal rule was limited as a result of the events in 1184. "The 'autocracy and divine descent' of Georgian kings was an ideal and aspiration of kings and groups supporting the government rather than the true facts of the life in the country" (Javakhishvili 1984, 98). It is another issue that the royal family had the desire and aspiration to use the king's rights to the full. "Even Queen Tamar, who ascended to the throne following her father's death only after the noblemen had assembled to discuss the issue and found her enthronement possible, nevertheless used to say that the royal throne 'was given to me first from God and then my parents'" (Javakhishvili 1984, 151). She said this in the situation, where "the king alone had never introduced a new law in Georgia and did this only in cooperation and approval of the palace council. ... Georgian kings did not produce the books of justice, i.e. laws, and did not publish them only on their behalf, but 'with the support and in cooperation' with the palace council or the legislative assembly, 'collectively'" (Javakhishvili 1984, 169).

2. The Demands of the "Karaviselis"¹²

Leaving executive posts vacant, the queen appealed to the strikers for compromise, but the noblemen were not satisfied with what they had already achieved and escalated the attack. This time, the head of merchants and craftsmen, Qutlu-Arslan, headed the opposition to the royal court.

"It is terrible to recall Q'utlu-Arslan... who made up some project in the

12 N. Berdzenishvili used this word for Qutlu-Arslan's group (Berdzenishvili 1965, 94).

Persian manner, demanding a tent [a palace – კარავი A. J.] be put up in the field of Isani, and said: ‘Gathering in this tent we will listen to and answer each other [make appointments and dismissals/განმგებელნი მიცემისა და მოღებისა A.J.], and so be in charge of the matters of pardon and punishment [make decisions on guilty and non-guilty verdicts/წყალობისა და შერისხვისანი A.J.] we will pass our decisions to Queen Tamar, who will carry them out [Only then shall our decisions be complete/მაშინღა სრულ იქმნებოდეს განგებული ჩუენი A. j.]’ (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241).

Qutlu-Arslan, who “was linked to urban circles not only through his post, but also roots” (Meskhia 1982, 284), held the post of treasurer at the royal court. Kings usually entrusted financial issues to heads of circles representing merchants and craftsmen. Soon after Qutlu-Arslan, “the emir of Kartli and Tbilisi” (Unknown chronicler 2014, 243), by the name of Abulasan, son of Iobi held the post. The queen, who was involved in a lengthy struggle against landowner magnates, needed merchants and craftsmen as allies and was trying to win them over by giving this post to their leaders, but at that time, citizens decided to take the side of the opposition and their choice was no surprise. In search of independence, the leadership of Tbilisi always maneuvered between landowner magnates, royal princes, and sultans in Asia Minor. In I. Javakhishvili’s opinion, Qutlu-Arslan struck a deal with the striking aznauris and officials back during the 1184 strike: “Noble aznauris and officials, who were on strike, did not have the aim of removing Qutlu-Arslan unlike Qubasar and Apridon. It seems that they did not hate him so much at that time and like Chiaber, he seems to have kept himself safe from the rage of the noblemen” (Javakhishvili 1982, 126). In our opinion, it was in exchange for this deal that the noblemen promised to give Qutlu-Arslan the post of commander-in-chief. Otherwise, it is unclear how he “called himself *amirspāsalarī* and was ready to seat himself in Somkhiti, in Lori, the throne of the the King of Armenia” (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241). However, it is also clear that the post of *amirspāsalarī* (commander-in-chief) was not the main motive merchants and craftsmen were guided by. Like the noblemen, they wanted to restrict the king’s powers and introduce a new system of governance. This time, the initiative belonged to them. The chronicler described Qutlu-Arslan as the leader of the strikers¹³ (“She decided to seize *the chief of the conspirators*”) (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241).

13 Like G. Melikishvili (Melikishvili 1973), Professor Antelava describes Qutlu-Arslan as a nobleman, as well as Abulasan. To support this assumption, he says that the Church of St. Andrew in Tsebelda belonged to Abulasan’s family. Were this an indisputable fact, it cannot annul what *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* says about Abulasan, describing him as the leader of the citizens of Tbilisi: “A person, the leader of Tbilisi residents, a person pardoned and promoted by the king of kings, the emir of Kartli and Tbilisi, called Abulasan, stood before us and was speaking to us/გამოვიდა ვინმე ჩუენდა მეტყუელი, მკვიდროთა

Tamar arrested the opposition leaders. The sworn conspirators threatened with war: "They gathered together and, putting aside their plans [wrote a new charter/დაადგინეს ახალი სიმტკიცე A.J.], decided to defend Qutlu-Arslan with all their forces in order to free him and save him from harm; they prepared to lay Isani to siege." (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241) Attention should be paid to "they wrote a new charter". "The 'charter' or the 'book of charter' was a term denoting a set of documents" (Javakhishvili 1984, 127). The documents (book) should be regarded as a plan for a new state system or some constitutional amendments. The demands of the *karaviselis* were first and foremost about the state system, not "personnel appointments", which becomes clear from the fact that the royalist author of *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* took the ultimatum of the opposition as "the end of Tamar's reign" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241) or the effective abolition of the monarchic rule. "After all, the strike of noble *aznauris* was only about class supremacy in the official arena and did not damage the king's rule in any other way. On the contrary, the plan of the treasurer's group was about the king's authority as a whole" (Javakhishvili 1984, 130).

The situation was so highly strung that negotiations between the royal court and the strikers were held through mediators. The mission of "two respectable ladies" – the mother of the nobleman, Kravai Jaqeli, and the mother of Kartli Chief Lord Rati, Khuashak Tsokali – was a meeting aimed not only at releasing the detained leader and defusing the situation, but at introducing a new state system. The agreement reached defused the situation and "Queen Tamar, an anointed sovereign, sat on her throne [again occupied the throne/ კუალად დაჯდა საყდართა A. J.] and was raised to the sky" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241). "Again occupied" means that the military and secular elite no longer regarded the king's being on the throne legitimate, but that the sides had agreed. The king was the first to cede: Citizens and noblemen "took an oath from Tamar" and then, "swore on their part, to fidelity and obedience to her will" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241).

ტფილისისათა შინა თავადი და მეფეთ-მეფისგან წყალობახელდასხმული და ამირა ქართლისა და ტფილისისა, სახელით აბულასან და მეტყუელმან თქუა" (Unknown chronicler 1996, 328). S. Badridze also regards Qutlu-Arslan as a nobleman: "The fact that during their first strike in 1184, noble members of the opposition ... never demanded the resignation of Qutlu-Arslan must be indicative of the fact that he was not of low birth, so the opposition did not raise the issue of his resignation. ... Had he indeed been of low birth, it would be unimaginable for him to think about becoming commander-in-chief" (Badridze 1979, 306). Why should it have been unimaginable? Being heads of military or police departments was not at all unprecedented for leaders of citizens or "Tbilisi elders". "Equestrians of the city' or a squad of city defenders seem to be subordinated to the city elders. It is noteworthy that, when Bagrat IV was coming to take hold of Tbilisi, it was the 'council members and equestrians, who went to the Digomi field to meet him together with 'Tbilisi elders' in accordance with the appeal of the latter" (Meskhia 1982, 231).

The king rejected the idea of establishing the *karavi* (also referred to as *kari* – “gate” or *sasakhle* – “palace”) as a separate body, deciding to broaden the representative council – royal *darbazi*, turning it into a *body of collective governance*. Collective governance was nothing new in Georgian reality. The model of management established by George of Athos in the Georgian monastery on Mount Athos, which was then extended to the whole system of monasteries, had the assembly of the brethren in the monastery as the supreme body. “The management of the property of the monasteries” was also collective. “Organizational issues in the monasteries were also settled by a supervisor elected by the ‘brotherhood’ ‘with the support and unified will of all the brethren, i.e. with the consent and involvement of the monks” (Berdzenishvili 1973, 288). Tbilisi, as a city-republic, was also governed by elected representatives and the city had the experience of renovating the elected council (council of elders) through rotation (Meskhia 1982).

Thus, following the strike of the *karaviselis*, the political system of the country underwent yet another change: Members of the *darbazi*, of which some held executive posts, obtained supreme powers.¹⁴

Satisfied with their achievements, the opposition also made some concessions and allowed the queen to restore Anton Gnolistavidze to the post of prime minister. It is after describing the female mission that the author of *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* gives a list of people appointed to posts in the centre and in the regions, *also noting fundamental changes in the social evolution and the political system of the country*:

“At the time of her reign... the *didebulis* became rulers [Noblemen became enthroned during her reign/ვახელმწიფდეს დიდებულნი მეფობასა შინა ამისსა A.J.]” (Unknown chronicler 2014, 242). Here, “noblemen” (*დიდებულნი*) denotes people appointed to posts and “enthroned” denotes supreme powers and, correspondingly, a “shared reign”.¹⁵ According to I.

14 Referring to Shota Meskhia, Professor Ilia Antelava argued that this was not the case and the “joint reign” together with members of the *darbazi* was true only of some “quite specific personalities”. ... In Mr. Antelava’s opinion, “unanimity and support” as well as a “joint reign” was a “general rule for governing the country” (Antelava 1980, 122). If “unanimity and support” were not introduced in Tamar’s time, it follows that after the strike of the *karaviselis*, these old terms acquired a new meaning. Previously, “unanimity” reflected the personal will of the king and the consultative voice of the *darbazi* members. In Tamar’s era, after noblemen had restricted the king’s powers, the collective right that was initially implied in this judicial term was introduced. This was due to the socio-economic process discussed in the introduction to this paper. The results of the socio-economic evolution were reflected in the legal and judicial system of the country.

15 “What Queen Tamar’s first historian wrote makes clear that the situation with rights established in Georgia at that time was regarded as a ‘shared reign’ and ‘noblemen’ were considered to be ‘sharing power with king’” (Javakhishvili 1984, 138).

Javakhishvili, the Georgian state of that time was regarded not as the property of the monarch, but as the *homeland of the "nation"*, denoting at that time the so-called "residents of the kingdom", which is the same as "the princes of the kingdom".

I. Javakhishvili was the first to describe the political system in this manner and we regard this approach as absolutely appropriate. However, the great scholar's description is nevertheless somewhat contradictory when he assumes that Catholicos Mikael had maintained a caesaropapist theocracy *until Mikael's death at the end of the 1180s*. *The History and Eulogy of the Monarchs* does not confirm this opinion. In this case, I. Javakhishvili relies on another historian of Tamar, Basil the Housekeeper, who describes Mikael Mirianisdze's death after the passage about the enthronement of David Soslan (1187-1188), referring to Mirianisdze as *chqondideli* (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 290). *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* tells a different story. According to it, the queen had dismissed Mikael from the post of *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi* after the agreement reached with the *karviselis* and restored Anton (Gnolistavisdze) to the post. As noted above, it was after reaching this agreement that Tamar approved officials in top executive posts, leaving them vacant until then. Basil the Housekeeper speaks about these people also after he mentions Mikael's death (1187-1188). Moreover, Basil speaks about the appointments after he mentions the end to the revolt of the west Georgian noblemen in 1191. However, does this mean that the executive posts remained vacant until 1191?

The appointments (and Mikael Mirianisdze's dismissal from the post of *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi*) were of course made in 1185, which *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* correctly notes. The fact that Basil the Housekeeper refers to Mikael as *chqondideli* at the time of his death (1187-1188) means nothing other than his being *chqondideli* previously. It follows that Mikael failed to remain in the post of *chqondideli* until his death and the caesaropapist theocracy ended very quickly (in 1185). *In 1185, the queen managed to remove Mikael from the position of chqondideli within the frames of the fundamental agreement with the noblemen and citizens achieved after the strike of the karaviselis*. She restored Anton to the post of *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi* in 1185.

First of all she was...focused on the selection of some worthy persons [After the death of Tamar's father Giorgi III A. J.] and the selection of two candidates/პირველად გარდაცვალებასა და გამორჩევასა შინა ორთა A. J.] for the positions of viziers and *spasalaris*. With the full approbation and approval [in coordination and with the unanimity/თანადგომითა და ერთნებობითა A. J.] of the *didebulis*,...she ordered [ordered to approve/

ბრძანა დამტკიცებად A. J.]Anton, *mts'ignobartukhutsesi*, vizier of viziers, brought up by her father, to take the position of *Chq'ondideli*. She appointed [selected and approved/გამორჩევასა შინა ... განაჩინა A. J.] as *amirsp'asalari* Sargis Mkhargrdzeli, ...she granted him Lori, ...She appointed [selected and approved/გამორჩევასა შინა ... განაჩინა A. J.] Ch'iaber to a position of *mandat'urtukhutsesi*" (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241).

3. "Noblemen became enthroned"

Professor S. Meskhia also confirms that Anton Gnolistavidze was restored to his post,¹⁶ but he does not share Javakhishvili's opinion on limited monarchy. He believes that Tamar continued to be an absolute monarch (autocrat). The professor supports his opinion with the fact that after the strike of the *karaviselis*, the queen appointed the personalities she wanted to the vacant posts. Referring to the aforementioned quote from *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* (Unknown chronicler 2014, 241), he writes:

"'Selection' and 'ordered to approve' are used only in connection with the appointment of Anton as vizier and 'decided', 'granted', 'granted again', and similar words in connection with the appointment of all other officials. ... Anton's appointment as minister did need a 'selection' and then the approval of the 'selected' person by a royal decree. Regarding the other officials, the queen acted independently and appointed personalities to specific posts" (Meskhia 1979, 68).

There is one aspect of the quotation making this interpretation disputable. The structure of the sentence is such that "coordination and with the unanimity" applies to not only the "approval" of the vizier – "she approved in coordination and with the unanimity ... as vizier Anton" – but also the "decisions" that follow – "She selected and approved Sargis Mkhargrdzeli as commander-in-chief". It is quite possible to understand the sentence as saying that in addition to vizier and commander-in-chief, the queen appointed other noblemen also "in coordination and [with the] unanimity". "Selection" and "coordination and [with the] unanimity" apply to the vizier and commander-in-chief and only the latter applies to others: "After the death and the selection of two candidates – for vizier and commander-in-chief – she approved Anton in coordination and unanimity as *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi* and vizier. ...She selected and approved Sargis Mkhargrdzeli as commander-in-chief and gave him Lore, and selected and approved Chiaber as *mandaturtukhutsesi*.../ პირველად გარდაცვალებასა და გამორჩევასა შინა ორთა – ვაზირთა

¹⁶ "He received the post again in the very first year of Tamar's coronation" (Meskhia 1979, 41).

და სპასპეტა, თანადგომითა და ერთნებობითა ბრძანა დამტკიცებად ქყონდიდელად და მწიგნობართუხუცესად და ვაზირად ანტონი, გაზრდილივე მამისა მათისა ... და განაჩინა ამირსპასალარად სარგის მხარგრძელი... და უბოძა ლორე ... და განაჩინა და უბოძა ჭიაბერსა მანდატურთუხუცესობა..." (Unknown chronicler 1996, 326). Even if this were not so and "coordination and [with the] unanimity" applied only to the appointment of the queen's vizier and *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi*, this cannot annul the crucial role of noblemen and *darbazi* members in staffing the executive branch, as Tamar had appointed the prime minister, whose powers were equal to those of the king, after she consulted the noblemen and secured their consent. In this case, the noblemen ceded and allowed her to appoint to the post the official she wanted, but they did so in exchange for the conciliatory recognition by the queen of the class privileges of noblemen in executive posts. The opposition secured Tamar's consent on making noble origin a criterion for selection to top posts in the executive branch and the queen dismissed people, who were "of low birth" and "useless/unfit". For her part, Tamar secured the consent of noblemen for the dismissal of Mikael Mirianisdze and the return of Anton Gnostavidze. The functions of the *darbazi* changed and it became a body making collective decisions. The source says directly that the queen made the decision on appointing prime minister together with the *darbazi*. The *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi* was approved through "unanimity" (she approved in coordination and [with the] unanimity), which means that the decision was made at a *darbazi* meeting after Anton's nomination was voted, as "unanimity" implies a unanimous decision.

Javakhishvili also explains "selection" as election by vote: "In Georgia of that time, 'coordination' meant involvement and 'unanimity' meant having one voice, while 'selection' in the monastic-republican system was a term denoting election. Thus, viziers were elected unanimously with participation of all the noblemen." (Javakhishvili 1984, 138) Therefore, the following conclusion of Professor Meskhia – "Thus, ...the involvement of noblemen in the appointment of new officials is completely ruled out" (Meskhia 1979, 68) – was drawn on the basis of a complete neglect of the situation behind the formal side of the events, although even formal aspects not in favour of the queen seem to have been changed, but those in favour of her opposition. Previously, the king had appointed the *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi* based on his own will, but the situation changed after the revolt of the *karaviselis*: The king needs the consent (selection and unanimity/გამორჩევა და ერთნებობა) of the noblemen. Basil the Housekeeper also confirms the opinion: "They brought him to her... He was appointed a vizier [They brought him, ... made him vizier/ესე მოიყვანეს...

ესე დასტურს ვაზიროდ A. J.], and given Chq'ondidi, Samtavisi, K'isiskhevi, and the post of *mts'ignobartukhutsesi*". (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 291) Why does the chronicler speak in the plural ("They ... made him vizier")? Tamar was not married at that time and her spouse and co-regent cannot be implied here. Who are then those, who were to be "unanimous" and "select" the *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi* at this time? It was with good reason to speak about a "shared reign".

However, Professor Meskhia believes that the "coordination and unanimity" mentioned in *The History and Eulogy of Monarchs* are nothing other than a general phrase reflecting support from the noblemen and the fact that they had accepted the orders and decisions of the royal power unanimously and without hesitation (Meskhia 1979, 69), so we should not regard noblemen as having a share in the king's authority.

"We think that some researchers artificially declare one expression used by Tamar's first historian – 'having a share in their reign' – as a testimony that the king and noblemen divided power". (Meskhia 1979, 69) Queen Tamar magnanimously pardoned noblemen and "being so 'elevated and pardoned' and seemingly sharing the king's powers (shared reign), what reasons did they have to revolt, the astonished historian writes. Thus, the historian resorts to such a description to emphasize that the actions of the rebels were unjustified, not to describe Tamar's domestic policy (Meskhia 1979, 70)."

Can that be true?

In this context, the fact that the queen had "pardoned" noblemen implies material support for those appointed to posts – a kind of "salary". Instead of a salary, an official received "benevolence": some land, country, or a fortified city. Previously, when an absolute monarchy (autarchy) was in power (David the Builder, Giorgi III), the king preferred "fiefs" (*sakargavi*) to "benevolence". As Professor Meskhia clarified, *sakargavi* "in the Georgian language of the 11th-13th centuries denoted a certain territory, city, or the like, handed over to someone to govern, manage, or regulate, as well as a salary or monetary remuneration" (Meskhia 1982, 366), and an "estate granted as alms' was in hereditary ownership" (Vacheishvili 1963, 92). This is why David the Builder opposed landowner *aznauris* (*eristavis*) to non-hereditary *aznauris*, those officials who depended on salaries and the king. "The victory of great *aznauris*, 'landowner *aznauris*', put an end to the prospects for the further reinforcement of the *sakargavi* as an institution, particularly after Tamar's era" (Meskhia 1982, 374). Laying hands on granted land and transforming them into estates was linked to the hereditary ownership of a post and as Tamar had "pardoned" noblemen at this time, it was precisely about the confirmation of

their rights and not a manifestation of the royal will. It was the act of "granting a *sakargavi*" that corresponded to it, rather than "benevolence". If the land granted to an *aznauri* was to be transformed into an estate as time passed, it would become even more difficult to deprive him of what he was bestowed through benevolence. The noblemen who obtained executive rights on the basis of "benevolence" not a "fief", carried out their duties within the frames of a shared reign, i.e. supreme power. The chronicler makes this quite clear, when he says: "*Noblemen became enthroned during her reign*" (Unknown chronicler 1996, 327).

Thus, as a result of the revolt of the *karaviselis*, the king's powers were shared: the *darbazi* was transformed into a representative council, whose members "shared the reign". A formal (and not only formal) precedent for such a division of power was created by the existence of the post of *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi*. As noted above, *chqondideli* as the "father" had the power to veto a king's decisions and, on the contrary, the king had the power to cancel the *chqondideli*'s decisions. The aim of the *karaviselis* was more far-reaching. They wanted the king to have only the power to execute their decisions,¹⁷ but the royal power was not reduced to this level at that time.

4. The representative council and the king's powers

Thus, the function of the royal *darbazi* changed from 1185. Previously, in the era of autocratic rule, the *darbazi* was a consultative body, but it acquired some features of a parliament. The king was to make decisions with the consent of representatives of various ranks. "It is particularly noteworthy that the second group of 'darbaziselis' comprised 'people holding no posts,' but representing high ranks – 'noble princes,' *aznauris*, merchants, and citizens 'belonging to the estate,' or, to be more correct, representatives of those 'belonging to the estate'" (Javakhishvili 1984, 182). Of course, clerics did not remain idle either. The change was also reflected in the rules applied in the *darbazi*: Previously, "members assembled in the *darbazi* sat in front of the king, i.e. opposite him" (Javakhishvili 1984, 184), but the *darbazi* was transformed into a parliament, "as Tamar's first historian said, some viziers were seated to the right (of the king) and others to the left" (Javakhishvili 1984, 184).

The representative council that emerged in Georgia of those times was not a unique institution. Various bodies representing ranks were created in medieval European countries in support of royal power or in order to limit

17 They were probably based on the legal standards of that time: the king, as the supreme person in the judiciary and executive branches, was obliged to perfect ecclesiastic law that was independent from secular law.

them. These were councils, halls, courts, and so forth. They were called parliaments in some countries – England, Ireland, Scotland, Sicily, and papal states; cortes or courts on the Iberian Peninsula, States-General in France, landtag in Germany, riksdag in Denmark, sejm in Poland, and so forth. All of them were political assemblies consisting of representatives of the privileged strata. Like the royal council in Georgia, they initially emerged as ad hoc councils functioning “from time to time” and started functioning regularly later. “This development of the representative system and of parliaments was one of the greatest achievements of the Middle Ages” (Finer 1999, 1025) in European history. In this regard, Georgia followed after feudal countries. To be more correct, it went even ahead of them chronologically.

The unrest during the eight years (1177-1185) transformed the autocracy into a limited parliamentary monarchy. The king’s powers were shared, but he still had broad powers. He presided at the *darbazi*, retained the status of the supreme executive and judiciary official (together with the *chqondideli-mtsignobartukhutsesi*), and “ordered/nominated” and “approved” personalities to the post of commander-in-chief and other posts: “She ordered Anton, *mts’ignobartukhutsesi*, vizier of viziers, ... to take the position of *Chq’ondideli*. She appointed Sargis Mkhargrdzeli as *amirsp’asalari*” (Unknown chronicler 1996, 326). The king also granted and approved “donations”. The so-called “Chiaberi Charter”, which was also compiled in the 1290s and is about the donation of land by the *mandaturtukhutsesi*, comprises an inscription by Tamar: “I approve this donation by the *mandaturtukhutsesi*”, which means that the donation would not be valid without king’s approval.

In the *darbazi* that was transformed into a parliament, the queen probably had a lot of supporters who presumably played an active role in removing Catholicos Mikael and reinstating Anton. This idea is supported by the fact that Tamar failed to remove Mikael at the last church council, but she replaced some bishops and made others to elect candidates desirable for the royal court. “Other bishops were also dismissed, and godly men were assigned in their place” (Basili Ezosmodzghvari 2014, 289). In the meantime, the bishops were represented at the *darbazi*.

As a result of the compromise reached, Tamar made most important decisions and adopted laws in coordination with others at her own court. Due to this, the others “shared the reign” – “noblemen became enthroned” (Unknown chronicler 1996). “Georgian kings did not produce the books of justice, i.e. laws, and did not publish them only on their behalf, but ‘with support and in cooperation’ with the palace council or the legislative assembly, ‘collectively’” (Javakhishvili 1984, 169). According to some data, the “shared reign” with *darbazi*

members is also confirmed during the reign of Giorgi the Brilliant after the rule of Mongols. The Legal Code (Purtseladze 1988) says that it was the prerogative of the *darbazi* to remove and appoint military and administrative officials, grant and take away land plots and fiefs, establish fiscal regulations, introduce taxes, and the like. The *darbazi* was also the supreme body of appeals, but decisions by the council could be implemented only after king's approval. According to the same source, the functions and procedures of state governance agencies seem to be strictly regulated. For example, according to the Legal Code, the domain of a vizier functions as a separate institution.¹⁸ David Purtseladze, who translated and published the Legal Code in Russian, said:

"In all cases, the actions of the government are made in accordance with the established 'darbazi procedures' (article 9). Pending issues pertaining to local governance are submitted to the cabinet of viziers, who are referred to in plural in the text – *vezir-ni*, *vezir-t*, *vezir-ta*; then, they submit the issues for resolution to the *darbazi*, which, unlike the cabinet of viziers, is referred to both in the singular (Articles 11, 17, 18) and the plural – *darbazi* (Articles 5-7), which can be regarded as *evidence of the collective nature of the agency*. Orders and directives pertaining to central governance as well as decisions on issues of local governance submitted are implemented as those issued by the *darbazi*..." (Purtseladze 1988, 134). We think that this idea is confirmed also by the chronicler: „რამეთუ მთავარნი და ერისთავნი ვერ სცვალნის შიშისათვის ყანისა/As they were unable to replace princes and eristavis, fearing the khan (Chronicler 1987, 142).“ The Georgian verb used here is in the plural *stsvალის* (change) and implies not only the king, but also the *darbazi* members.

The fact that there are no documents approved by the *darbazi* or the cabinet of viziers does not seem to be in line with the situation described: "There are no documents approved directly by the cabinet of viziers as well as the *darbazi* available to us. As a rule, not only normative, but also all documents pertaining to management were approved under the monarch's name and his/her signature" (Purtseladze 1988, 134). This is true, but this not at all strange, as the king presided over the *darbazi* with broadened powers and signed its decisions. Let us recall a demand of the *karaviselis*: "დასხდომილნი მუნ შიგა, განმგებელნი მიცემისა და მოღებისა, წყალობისა და შერისხვისანი, ვჰკადრებდეთ და ვაცნობებდეთ თამარს, მეფესა და

18 Issues pertaining to local governance were reported to "viziers" and viziers appealed to the *darbazi* for final decisions. According to Article 5, a *khevisberi* (chieftain) deprived of his fief and post "shall come with an appeal to the eristavis on the third year; the eristavis shall report to the viziers, the viziers shall raise the issue at the *darbazi*, and the *darbazi* shall decide to grant a fief to the *khevisberi*" (Purtseladze 1988, 48).

დედოფალსა; მაშინლა სრულ იქმნებოდეს განგებული ჩუენი¹⁹/ Those, who will assemble there, those, who make appointments and dismissals as well as make decisions on bestowals and withdrawals will say humbly to King and Queen Tamar and inform her. *Only then shall our decisions be complete*” (Unknown chronicler 1996, 325). As it is known, Tamar did not limit herself to the powers proposed (“Only then shall our decisions be complete”). The queen did improve (through her viziers) the decisions of the *darbazi*, but not as a supreme executive and an outsider, but first and foremost as a participant in the decision-making through the *darbazi* – its head – and then as an executive. In other words, there were two stages of improving decisions of the *darbazi* members: the king first approved a decision, making the document complete (“Only then shall our decisions be complete”), and then implemented it (through the viziers). The documents proper – decisions adopted collectively by voting – were completed by the king’s seal and signature. Given what the Legal Code says, “the king could refuse to approve a decision by the *darbazi*” (Khizanishvili 1982, 316), i.e. use the right to veto.

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19 ...and said: “Gathering in this tent we will listen to and answer each other, and so be in charge of the matters of pardon and punishment; we will pass our decisions to Queen Tamar, who will carry them out” (Unknown chronicler 2014, 242).

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