

# The Epitaphs of the Amilakhvari Family from Samtavisi

(19<sup>th</sup> c.)

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1. "For the Family History of Maghaladze", Georgian Source Studies, Vol. XVII-XVIII, pp. 108-114, Tbilisi: Universal Publishing, 2015-2016.
2. "The epitaphs of the Amilakhvari Family from Samtavisi (XVIII c.)", Acad. Journal "Caucasian Studies", VII, pp. 242-249, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 2015.

## **Abstract**

The article presents the 19<sup>th</sup> century epitaphs of those members of the Amilakhvari family, whose data can be traced in archives of some other sources. This research aims to encourage the establishment and emendation of the chronological and genealogical accounts about the Amilakhvari Family.

**Keywords:** *The Amilakhvari Family, Samtavisi, Epitaph, Chala.*

The Samtavisi Cathedral is well known in Georgian Academic literature. The Church with its lapidary and fresco inscriptions are fundamentally studied by M. Brose (1), Th. Jordania (9), A. Khakhanashvili (16), S. Barnaveli (3), V. Beridze (4), P Zakaraia (7;8), N. P. Severov (10), G. Sokhashvili (11; 12).

Yet the scholarly interest somehow overlooked the epitaphs of the graves of the Amilakhvars buried in Samtavisi.

Inside the Samtavisi Cathedral more than 40 graves are preserved dated to the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> cc. a separate research has been done about the epitaphs of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. graves.<sup>1</sup>

This article presents the 19<sup>th</sup> century epitaphs of those members of the Amilakhvari family, whose information can be traced in archives of some other accounts.

The aim of the research is to reveal the individual members of the Amilakhvari family and recover the 19<sup>th</sup> c. history of the family (of the time of slavery as well as after its abolishment) on the grounds of comparing it against other data.

This research will encourage the establishment and emendation of the chronological and genealogical accounts about the Amilakhvari Family.

### #1 Epitaph of Agathonike Amilakhvari

The Epitaph is located within the centre of the inner space of the church. It has 10 lines in Mkhedruli alphabet. The size of the stone: 48X27; The area of the inscription: 30X19; Height of graphemes: 3-0.5 ბმ.

Damage: The upper part of the stone is broken, some graphemes cannot be read. The inscription has no date or it may be erased.

1. The name of mine was Agathonike
2. And the Family name was Amilakhvari
3. .... by birth the son of Revaz Amilakhvari
4. And having an younger brother Otar also Amilakhvari
5. I have [am] 54 years [old]
6. This grave is erected as a monument
7. Prepared by the daughter of Melikv
8. I have [am] 54 years [old]
9. This grave as a monument
10. [was] prepared by the daughter of Melikv
11. for her still living husband
12. for the wish to have it adorned at some point
13. for the one who is now killed by death and turned into earth

The grave does not give the dates of birth and death. Therefore it is very difficult to find out which Revaz Amilakhvari is the father of Agathonike.

I. Chikovani writes in his work that Agatone (Thornike) Amilakhvari was the son of Revaz the

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding this subject see in more detail my previous article "The Epitaphs of the Amilakhvari family from Samtavisi (XVIII ბ.)", *Caucasian Studies*, Vol.VII, pp. 242-249, Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press, 2015.

son of Otar (1737-1775) and the son of Mariam the daughter of Bezhan, the Duke of Aragvi. He dates his birth and death to 1776-1826. (Chikovani, 2010:11). If Revaz Amilakhvari died in 1775, then his son Agathone could not have possibly been born in 1776. The author also mentions that Agathonike was engaged to Efemia, the daughter of Ivane Rusashvili (Chikovani 2010:11).

Since we only know one Agathonike (Aghathonike) from the Amilakhvari family, it should be thought that the person mentioned in this epitaph should be exactly that Aghathonike that is mentioned in the following two documents:

1) The Court Statement about Aghathonike Amilakhvari's abandoning of his wife issued on August 20, 1800 – Datua, the son of Ioane Naziri Korchibashishvili complains against Aghathonike for the fact that 9 years ago Aghathonike asked the hand of his sister Melania in marriage and then abandoned her. The senior judges made him pay 3840 roubles. The court rulling was confirmed by King Giorgi XII (1746-1800) in a different document on September 6, 1800. (Dolidze 1977: 218).

2) The Court Rulling of the mediators about the distribution of the property and slaves of the Amilakhvari family issued on February 10, 1808. Otar, Aghathonike and Erasti Amilakhvaris move out together with their brothers (Dolidze 1977: 394)

It turns out that Aghathonike together with major-general Otar Amilakhvari applied to the council of nobles for the acknowledgment of their nobility on March 3, 1821. This application was processed and the title was granted on April 27, 1826 (fund 213: case 205).

This document clarifies that Aghathonike lived in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> cc.

The inscription of the grave mentions the elder brother of Aghathonike – Otar. Most likely, mentioning of Otar in the epitaph must be conditioned by the fact that he was the head of the household of the Amilakhvari. At the time when there were manors in Georgia, every manor had a primate or the head of the manor house. Manors were abolished in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. and the rule should have been abolished as well, yet, it seems like in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the old tradition remained in the consciousness of Georgian noble families.

## **#2 The 1860 Epitaph of Giorgi Amilakhvari, the son of Joseph**

The epitaph is located by the north wall, consists of 4 lines in Mkhedruli alphabet; the size of the stone is 34X40; The area of the inscription is 29-38; Height of graphemes: 5.5-1.5 ბმ.

Damage: The stone is covered with yellow spots on different areas.

The inscription provides the dat: 1860.

1. Ta...i (tavadi – Prince) Giorgi, the son of Ioseb [Joseph]
2. Amilakhvari
3. Passed away
4. On the 20<sup>th</sup> day of September in 1860.

Giorgi, the son of Ioseb is buried by the side of his mother, Elisabeth Kherkheulidze, the daughter of Aghatang.

Giorgi Amilakhvari was married three times: his first wife Sophia magalashvili, the daughter of Gabriel with whom he had five sons (Revaz, Ivane, Nikoloz, Grigol and Mikheil) and two daughters (Mariam and Anastasia).

After Sophia passed away, Giorgi married Mariam Pavliashvili, the daughter of David and had one son Alexander (1850-1919).

After the death of Mariam, Giorgi Amilakhvari married Anastasia Paul (1821-1890), the daughter of Jacob and they had a daughter Elisabeth (Chikovani 2010: 8)

Giorgi Amilakhvari applied to the Council of the Nobles to grant him the status of a nobleman for which he submitted a genealogical scheme with a brief description (fund 213: doc. 136). The description says that he is married to the daughter of the prince Gabriel Maghalov, Sophia and has sons: Revaz, Ivane, Nikoloz and Grigol.

### **#3 1862 epitaph of Nikoloz Amilakhvar, the son of Givi**

The epitaph is located opposite the sanctuary. It is carved in Georgian and in Russian. The Georgian inscription is made using the Mkhedruli alphabet and consists of 6 lines; Stone size: 109X60; Area size: 39X22; Height of graphemes: 3.5-0.5 cm.

Damage: the frame of stone has yellowed; Some of the graphemes are hard to read.

The inscription gives a date - 1862.

1. Under this stone the body is resting [the son of – moved from the 3<sup>rd</sup> line in translation] of Nizhego[ro]d
2. Dragoon regiment Poruchik Prince Nikolaoz
3. Amilakhvari, the son of Givi, murdered on May 24
4. In 1862, during the battle against the Abazekh [Abkhazians] by the bank of
5. The river Belaia near the Abazekh [Abkhazian]
6. Station, on the 29<sup>th</sup> year of his life.

Nikoloz was the son of Givi Amilakhvari, the son of Bardzim and the Dutchess Anastasia He is mentioned together with his parents and siblings in the 710<sup>th</sup> document of the fund N207. His father, Givi is asking for acknowledgment of his title as a Prince. The document lists all the members of his family (see the details below).

We find out from the inscription that Nikoloz, as a military person, Poruchik of the Dragoon regiment, took part in the 1862 battle by the river Belaia. It is likely that the inscription here refers to the river in the north of Caucasus, the left tributary of the river Kuban. This assumption

is based on the fact that exactly at that place is located the Abadzekhi Station, where there was the front line of the battlefield during the Russian-Cherkezian war (1859-1864). It seems that during this very war was killed Nikoloz in the age of 29.

#### **#4 1877 epitaph of Alexandre Amilakhvari, the son of Nikoloz**

The epitaph is located opposite the sanctuary by the column on the north. The epitaph is carved in Russian and in Georgian with the Mkhedruli alphabet; It contains 10 lines; Stone size: 44X37; Area size: 20X34; Height of graphemes 3-1 cm.

Damage: The right side of the stone is faded and the graphemes are readable with difficulty.

Yet, the inscription gives the date - 1814-1877.

1. In the place of your rest oh Saviour, where
2. where all the saints are resting, grant rest
3. Oh Christ, to your servant, Prince
4. Alexander Amilakhvari, the son of Nikolaos who
5. was born on January 10, 1814 and passed away on No-
6. vember 6, 1877.

Alexandre, the son of Nikoloz applied to the council of Nobles in 1834 with a request. He needed the reference letter about his origin for his military appointment (fund 213: doc. 37).

Alexander is also mentioned in the reference letter issued by the Council of Nobles in 1847 where his Princely origin is confirmed. This document says that Alexandre was 32 for the time and had a wide Euphrosyne (fund 213: doc. 710). This Euphrosyne is the daughter of Rostom Tsereteli (Chikovani 2010: 21).

I. Chikovani gives the date of birth as October 10, 1816 (Chikovani 2010: 21). Most likely, I. Chikovani should be referring to the date of his baptism.

#### **#5 1877 epitaph of Givi the Son of Bardzim Amilakhvari**

The epitaph is located by the south door carved in Georgian and Russian. The Russian text consists of 11 lines, the area of the inscription is: 70X63; height of graphemes: 5.5-3.

Damage: The Georgian text is hardly readable.

The Russian inscription provides the date – 1877 ѳ.

1. The spring of life, Christ, un-
2. Reachable depth of goodness. Who
3. I, run to and pray to
4. I, your unworthy servant, do not remember
5. My innumerable sins
6. Let my soul abide with the righteous

7. And grant it eternal peace
8. Under this stone is resting Prince
9. Givi the Son of Bardzim and the grandson of David
10. Amilakhvari
11. Passed away on July 19, 1877. 68 years old.<sup>2</sup>

The fund N213 of the Central Historical Archive of Georgia preserves the following accounts about Givi, the son of Bardzim.

Document N55, June 4, 1841: The office of the Most Holy Governing Synod of Georgia and Imeretia addresses the Council of Nobles regarding the case of the Prince of Gori Givi Amilakhvari, his wife Anastasia, the daughter of Luarsab and their sons Ivane and Nikoloz: They want to know whether their noble origin has been confirmed and if not, then when did the case start. Answer: They are not yet confirmed, and the case was processed on January 15, 1821.

Document 710 [Russian]: "About the approval of the noble origin of the Amilakhvari Family (began on October 28, 1847, ended on November 17, 1847)".

Bardzim, the son of David had three sons: Unter-Officer Givi - 36, Joseph- 28, and David – 23.

Givi was married to Anastasia who was 35, the daughter of the Prince and Duke Luarsab and they had children: Ivane – 16, Nikoloz – 12, Mikheil – 10, Grigol – 7, Elisabeth – 9, Ketevan – 6, Natalia –4.

They lived in the village Chala of Gori Uyezd.

Givi Amilakhvari created personally the document dated to February 21, 1846: A landowner Givi, the son of Bardzim is asking a certificate confirming his noble origin; he needs to submit the document with the school application for his children ( fund 213: doc. 49).

This fund also preserves the geneology scheme constructed by Bardzim the son of David on January 31, 1856. This scheme shows that Ivane, the son of Givi Amilakhvari was a captain at headquarters and the other other son Mikheil was an Junker.

The same document states that the Amilakhvari Family owned lands and peasants in the following villages: Chala, Kaspi, Pkhvenisi, Dzeveri ...

## **#6 1883 Epitaph of Mikheil the son of Givi Amilakhvari**

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<sup>2</sup> "The spring of life, Christ, the unreachable depth of beatitude, I, unworthy servant, long for you and pray to you: Forgive my innumerable trespasses, let my soul rest in heaven of the righteous and grant it eternal peace. Under this stone rests the prince Givi, the son of Bardzim and the grandson of David Amilakhvari. Died on July 19, 1877, in the age of 68".

The epitaph is located opposite of the sanctuary, towards the south door; the epitaph is carved in Russian in 5 lines; the stone size: 180X83; are of the inscription: 71X68; height of graphemes: 9-3 cm.

Damage: the stone is cracked in the middle

The inscription mentions the date: 1832-1883.

1. Prince
2. Mikhail Givovich
3. Was born on July 25, 1832.
4. Passed away on December 15, 1883.<sup>3</sup>

Mikheil is the son of Givi the son of Bardzim. He is mentioned in the genealogical scheme created by his grandfather, Bardzim, the son of David in 1856. He presented the scheme to the Council of Nobles. This data shows that Mikheil was a Junker (fund 213).

I. Chikovani dates the birth of Mikheil Amilakhvari to April 10, 1833 (Chikovani 2010:19). Chikovani's account most probably relies on the data in his birth certificate.

Since 1873 Mikheil is a captain at headquarters. He was married to Anastasia (1844-1920), the daughter of Estate the Duke of Ksani (Chikovani 2010:19).

#### **#7 1887 epitaph of Ivane Amilakhvari, the son of Teimuraz**

The epitaph is located opposite the sanctuary. Mkhedruli alphabet, 6 lines; stone size: 40X38; Area of inscription: 36X34; height of graphemes: 6-1 cm.

The inscription gives a date: 1887.

1. Here rests the body
2. Of the Prince
3. Ivane, the son of Teimuraz
4. Amilakhvari
5. deceased
6. March 23, 1887.

Ivane Amilakhvari was the son of the captain Teimuraz (1802-1839), the son of Ivane and Salome (1806-1850), the daughter of Ivane Pavlenishvili. Ivane was born in 1829. He married Nino Ivanovna Aldatova in 1854. They had children: Teimuraz, Salome, Alexandre, Giorgi, Konstantine, Sofio and Mariam (16).

In the document dated to 1847, which is issued by the Council of Nobles regarding the

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<sup>3</sup> "The Prince Mikheil Amilakhvari, the son of Givi was born on July 25, 1832 and passed away on December 15, 1883.

verification of the noble origin of the Amilakhvari family, there is also mentioned a widow of Captain Teimuraz, 40 year old Salome and her children: Ivane and Elisabeth (fund 213: doc. 710) Ivane Amilakhvari addresses the Council of Nobles with a request in 1848. He asks a certificate confirming his noble origin, which he needs for applying for a job in the office of the Tzar and the Emperor.

The application to the Council of Nobles filled in by the Princes of Gori Uyezd Bardzim, the son of David and Captain Teimuraz, the son of Ivane has an appended genealogical scheme dated to 1829, which mentions Ivane, the son of Teimuraz as well (fund 213).

### **#8 1894 epitaph of Natalia Amilakhvari-Alekseev-Meskhiev, the daughter of Vakhtang**

The epitaph is located in the centre of the interior space. Mkhedruli alphabet; 8 lines; Stone size: 59X36; area dimensions: 49X31; height of graphemes: 4-1 cm.

Damage: Some graphemes are faded away.

The inscription refers to the dates of the birth and death of Natalia: 1826-1894 წ.წ.

1. Of the prince Vakhtang
2. Amilakhvari
3. Daughter Natalia
4. Alekseev-Meskhiev [in marriage]
5. Was born on August 26
6. 1826
7. Passed away on the 17<sup>th</sup> of
8. February, 1894.

Natalia is the only daughter of Vakhtang Kaikhosro Amilakhvari and Ana Gedevanishvili, the daughter of Betsia.

Natalia was married to Iakinthe Aleksi-Meskhishvili, the son of Dimitri.

Natalia Amilakhvari addressed the Council of Nobles in 1870. She requested a verification of her being a descendant of the noble family of the Amilakhvari (fund 213: case 1538).

Natalia and Iakinthe produced one son – Nikoloz. He is usually mentioned by Natalia herself in the document submitted to the Council of Nobles. This document shows that Natalia lived in the village Chala (Gori Uyezd).

The text is compiled in the Georgian and Russian languages.

Fund also preserves a certificate, which attributes Natalia to the Amilakhvari family. The certificate states that Natalia was born on August 26 and was baptized on September 15.

Natalia's intercessors were her relatives: Giorgi, the son of Ivane and Captain Luarsab, the son of Kaikhosro Amilakhvari (fund 213: case 1538, document 76)

### **#9 1895 epitaph of Giorgi, the son of Ivane Amilakhvari**



The epitaph is located in the centre, turned towards the west door. Mkhedruli alphabet, 5 lines; stone size: 37X39; area dimensions: 38X31; height of graphemes: 6-1 cm.

Damage: The stone has yellowed

The inscription gives the date: 1820-1895.

1. Prince
2. Giorgi, the son of Ivane
3. Amilakhvari
4. Was born in 1820
5. Passed away on March 28, 1895.

Giorgi had another name Pachua (Chikovani 2010:28). He was the son of Ivane, the son of Kaikhosro and Ketevan, the daughter of Nikoloz Baratashvili (17), His wife was Mariam, the daughter of Giorgi Sarajishvili (Chikovani 2010:28) and they had ten children: Ketevan (Kekela), Alexander, Christophore, Sofia, Nino, Ekaterine, Ivane, Grigol, David and Vasili (17).

I. Chikovani dates the death of Giorgi, the son of Ivane to 1821 (chikovani 2010:28). This may well be the date of his baptism.

Giorgi is mentioned in both the document and the appended geneology scheme created by Giorgi, the son of Ioseb (fund 213: doc.136), according to which he is 25, is married to Mariam, the daughter of a citizen Sarajiev and they have a two year old daughter Ketevan.

There is also a document of intercession issued by Giorgi on April 24, 1870 to his cousin Natalia Amilakhvar-Aleksi-Meskhishvili.

"on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of 1870 I, Prince Giorgi Amilakhori, the son of Ivane signing this below, fully appreciating the value of nobility grant this certificate cerifying that the deceased Prince Vakhtang Amilakhvari, the son of Kaikhosro and his daughter, the legitimate state consultant Natalia belong to my noble family and are direct descendants on the male line of one of the heads of my family tree. Among them, Vakhtang would be my third degree relative since he is my father Ivane's own brother; his daughter Natalia is my fourth degree relative that I verify by my own signature. The text is provided in Georgian and in Russian (fund 213: doc. 76).

Therefore, the epitaphs of the graves discussed in the article gives us all sorts of accounts: Sometimes we learn dates of births and deaths of people, their names and titles. The names of the members of the Amilakhvari family that we came across in these epitaphs allowed us to figure out their relationships with other people mentioned in documents by collating them and identifying them with more precision on the grounds of comparison. From the documents preserved at the central historical archive of Georgia we see that the members of the Amilakhvari family discussed above still occupy military titles and positions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they serve the Tzar and own large lands and servants. During the same period, the members of the Amilakhvari family were also actively involved in the process of the formation of an integrated title of aristocracy and they tried to prove their noble origin by official documents.

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