

Nana Tsikhistavi

*New Higher Education Institute-NEWUNI
Affiliated Associate Professor*

Tamar Kopaleishvili

*New Higher Education Institute-NEWUNI Assistant,
Doctoral Student of Technical University of Georgia*

THORGVA PANKELI – THE HERO OF THE KOKHTASTAVI CONSPIRACY OR A TRAITOR TO THE GEORGIAN STATE!?

**KEYWORDS AND TERMS: PANKISI CASTLE, TORGVA PANKELI,
DAVIT ULU, JIGDAKHATUN, MESTUMRE JIKURI, KOKHTASTAVI**

Abstract

There are historical figures in the historical past of Georgia, about whom we still have interesting facts and data, but their contribution and role in the construction of the Georgian state has not been studied in depth. On the contrary, their names and activities are forgotten and degraded. There are quite a number of such historical figures in the past history of Georgia, and among them is an interesting character from the 13th century – Torgva Pankeli, who is mentioned as the owner of Pankisi Castle.

Torgva Pankeli attracts our attention with his boisterous but mysterious adventure. He was there and took part in the Kokhtagori conspiracy against the Mongols. Then he stood up to the government and announced the disobedience of Pankisi Saeristavo(Kingdon). According to some reports, he was thrown from the cliff and killed by the orders of the Mongolian queen, Jigdakhatur and her servant Mestumre Jikuri.

In this way, Torgva Pankeli, the Feudal of Pankisi, a participant in the conspiracy of Kokhtastavi, the owner of Pankisi Castle, a close person of the aristocratic society of that time, himself a legendary person, mentioned in Georgian folklore as a hero, in fact one of the knights of that era dies as a traitor to the king and Queen Jigdakhatur gives him the death penalty. The verdict is handed down by the hand of the servant- Mestumre Jikuri. The chroniclers of that period are silent about this. However, this person is disgraced as a hero in folk tales and legends, and such an end of his life is very incomprehensible.

As a conclusion, we can write that in the middle of the 13th century, a radical change occurs not only in the internal and external affairs of the state, but also in the Georgian society. If after the death of Rusudan Queen, the heroes of the Kokhtastavi conspiracy played a very big role in the Georgian society, including Torgva Pankeli, whose name was mentioned in legends along with other heroes, during the period of the two reigns (during the reign of David Ulu and David Narin), due to the establishment of the Mongol rule, they were promoted to low positions by the government. Individuals and they decided the issues of protection of public order. Therefore, in this situation, we don't have a variety of materials left by chroniclers about this hidden history, and in general, the central government is justified in the surviving sources around this fact.

There are historical figures in the historical past of Georgia, about whom we still have interesting facts and data, but their contribution and role in the construction of the Georgian state has not been studied in depth. On the contrary, their names and activities are forgotten and degraded. There are quite a number of such historical figures in the past history of Georgia, and among them is an interesting character from the 13th century – Torgva Pankeli, who is mentioned as the owner of Pankisi Castle.

Pankisi Castle – Torgva Pankeli (Pankisi Castle was called Maghraani Castle in the late Middle Ages) is located on the watershed of Khalatsni and Maghraani (Machareuli) ravines, in a forested area. Feudal of Pankisi is first mentioned in the sources in the middle of the 11th century, although the fortress itself must have been built earlier. In the developed Middle Ages, the Pankisi Castle was the center of the Saeristavo(Kingdom) of Pankisi, which was founded by the King of Kakheti Kvirike III the Great (1010-1037). In the 12th-13th centuries, it was the center of Saeristavo(Kingdom) in Kakheti. In the 13th century (40-is of the 13th century) Torgva (Torgva) Pankel, a nobleman of Pankisi, carried out large-scale construction works in the Pankisi fortress. He was a participant in the anti-Mongolian conspiracy of Kokhtastavi. During the stay in the Ulu Horde of King Davit VII, Torgva strengthened his separatist positions, he declared himself the full governor of Kakheti and fortified himself in the Pankisi Castle. Even under the conditions of the king's return, he continued to disobey, did not approach him and strengthened the castle. Therefore, he was lured out of castle and killed.

It seems that Torgva enjoyed great influence in the mountains of Eastern Georgia and he represented the Dzaganisdze clan. The name Torgva (Torgva Dzagani) is preserved in legends and folk tales. During the Mongol period, the Dzaganisdzes rose and visited the country as Pankeli nobles. However, due to the scarcity of sources, it is difficult to discuss Torgva Pankeli's personality and his legacy. The fact is one thing, Pankisi fortress was strengthened during his period and maintained its great importance. In addition to this particular castle, the name of Torgva is also associated with other bastions and toponyms in the region.¹

In order to explore the hidden history of the person of Torgva Pankeli, let's start a little further, that is, let's delve into an important page of the history of Georgia – the «Golden Age» with all its manifestations.

The «Golden Age» began in Georgia at the end of the 11th century, when Davit Agmashenebeli(The Builder) successfully repelled the Turkish-Selchuk invasions and completed the unification process of Georgia. David actively promoted the expansion of Georgia's borders and increasing its influence on the international arena. There are reports that he also marched in the area of Trabzon for this purpose, but without success. After Davit Agmashenebeli(The Builder), the powerful state machine he created continued to work with full force.

After the victory in the battles of Shamkhor (1195) and Basiani (1203), Georgia opened its hand to actively participate in the ongoing processes in the neighborhood. Georgia had a well-founded ambition to be the first in the region, and the Royal Court of Georgia soon made a decision to start a military-political operation in the direction of the Black Sea. There is a high probability that the bold military-political actions carried out by the Georgians in the Black Sea Region at the beginning of the XIII century had their «minimum program» and «maximum program».

In Georgia, from the 30-is and 40-is of the 13th century, the political climate changes, and the conquests of the Mongols become the order of the day. There is no source in the history of Georgia, where in the social structure of this period there is a certain union about the existence of any chivalric union, although Georgians have been communicating with the European crusaders since the time of Davit Agmashenebeli(The Builder) with unions. On the other hand, clear examples of knights and their activities, namely Torgva Pankeli, have been preserved in Georgian oral tradition.

Georgian chivalry was formed and spread in Georgia in the 9th-12th centuries as a result of the high level of development of feudal relations. It is shown that the Georgian chivalry in the mentioned era represented a numerous layer of professional warriors with the best military qualities. During this period, chivalric ideals, morals, physical education, military equipment, sports competitions, and the highly developed spiritual culture of the Georgian chivalric society occupied a great place.

Kokhtastavi conspiracy – the conspiracy of Georgian nobles against Mongol rule developed in Javakheti

around 1245. Egarslan Bakurtsikheli, Tsozne Dadiani, Varam Gagel, Kvarkvare Jakheli, Shota Kupri, Thorgva Pankeli, Gamrekel Toreli, Sargis Tmogveli and others participated. Their goal was to prepare a great anti-Mongol uprising. The Mongols found out about the conspiracy and arrested its participants. Only Tsozne Dadiani and Eristavi Kakhaberisdze of Rachi, who left the country earlier, survived. They took the arrested to Anis, tied their hands and feet, stripped them, smeared honey on their bodies and laid them in the sun. Tsozne Dadiani heard the story of the capture of the Georgian nobles. He took two servants and went to Anis. The chronicler informs us that «Tsozne Dadiani came with two men and robbed his Samoseli of (clothes) and sat down bound with the Georgians» – the Mongols reported to Noin. Tsozne told the Mongols that if they punished the innocent so cruelly, then he himself would die next to his friends. The Mongols believed the words of Tsozne Dadiani and released the Georgian nobles.²

Let's go back to Torgva Pankel. In the oral tradition of the Panki people, will is very popular about the treasure of Torgva Castle and its guardian demon. The legend of Torgva Castle repeats the interesting story of the well-known treasure and its guardian demon for the world epic. In addition, significant analogies will be found with the mythical adventure of the first king of Georgians – Parnavazi.

In the Middle Ages, Torgva Castle was the residence of the nobility of Pankisi. It was built on a strategically important place in the east of Pankisi valley. This fortress was assigned the function of strengthening the roads leading from the Alazani valley to the North Caucasus and its defense capability.

The name of the fortress is related to the famous Feudal of Pankisi of the 13th century, the figure of the period of the Mongol rule in Georgia – Torgva. A whole cycle of heroic poems is dedicated to him in Georgian oral tradition.

Some researchers see a significant connection between Pankisi's Feudal Torgva and hero Torgva of folk poems. Torgva Pankeli draws our attention with his boisterous but mysterious adventure, then resigned to the government and announced the disobedience of Pankisi Saeristavo(kingdom). According to some reports, they were thrown from the rock and killed by the order of the Mongolian queen, Jigdakhaturun and her servant Mestumre Jikuri.

The mysterious attitude towards the life of the people of Pankisi is strengthened by the fact that, according to the legend, all the participants or organizers of the murder of Torgva Pankeli will be hit by the terrible wrath of God.³

What does the myth tell about the treasure? One hunter had been wandering in the forests of Pankisi for the whole day. He was going to return home empty-handed, when a surprisingly beautiful deer ran past him. The hunter shot an arrow and wounded, but the wounded animal ran away and the hunter followed its trail. The deer entered the fortress-wall of Torgva and suddenly lost track of it. The hunter went down the old tunnel and found himself in a dark room like a cellar. It turns out that he could not find the wounded deer. He bumped into something in the dark, observed it and found a treasure – all gold things. He clapped his hands and put a few pieces in his bag, but suddenly a snake or a terrible-looking Goliath slipped out and stood on top of him. The hunter got scared and ran towards the exit. A greater trial was waiting there – a snake or a bird like an eagle flew towards him with a cry. The man threw down the bag, copied the cross, and after mentioning God, a path appeared. As soon as the hunter reached the top, the entrance disappeared. That's why there is a saying – «If the treasure is not given to you, it will not fit you, nor your family.» The treasure mentioned in the story may reflect some historical event related to Torgva Castle. The treasure of Torgva Castle and its guardian demon Andredzi(will) must represent a fictionalized version of some historical event.

The finder of the treasure of Torgva Castle is gifted with the same ability to penetrate into the world of mysteries as the hunter from Panki who, according to legend, saw the chained Amiran in a cave on the Sakorne(Raven) mountain. However, the hunter does not always achieve his goal – despite his desire and efforts, the hunter from Pankisi cannot free Amiran(Georgian legendary knight, chained to a rock), nor can he take possession of the gold buried under the fortress of Torgva, because neither of them was attached to the salvation of Amiran, nor to the other – the blessing of possessing the found treasure.⁴

Based on these stories, the mastering of Torgva Castle and its treasure, that is, the strategic location of Torgva Castle, was a great challenge for historical figures, and Torgva Castle was not easy to capture. Accordingly, the sudden and mysterious death of Torgva also causes certain differences of opinion.

Torgva is a famous hero also in Khevsuri folklore. Torgva was invincible from the enemy. His nearby castle is still shown today in the village of Mutso in Khevsureti. Torgva wore a shirt with a chain so that he could not hit a bullet. When he touched his head, the whole chain of the shirt was wrapped in one place and returned the fired bullet. This shirt was a gift from his brother, and he never took it off day or night. Who was this brother, and how did he give Torgva this miraculous shirt?

This is how it happened. Once Torgva was hunting in the rocks. Suddenly, a white raven flew over him and disappeared into a crevice of the rock. Amazed by this strange sight, Torgva followed his trail and fell into the ice in one place. A dragon lay there and he was beaten on the head. The dragon felt sorry for the helpless hero, and if he hadn't died of cold and hunger, he would have taken out his eye and blinded him, fed him and even warmed him. Finally, Torgva and the dragon became brothers, and as a gift to his brother, as the rule of brotherhood requires, he gave the famous chain shirt.

As long as Torgva had this chain mail with him, no one could beat him. But it was enough for him to lose his shirt, even a weak person could spin like that.

This is how it happened. Once Torgva went into the river to swim and left his chain shirt on the bank. Left unattended, the chain swam, swam and entered the river. The chain was washed away by the water, and since then Torgva has not seen it.

At the time his enemy Chonta killed a shirtless thug with a sooty arrow.⁵

It is interesting that in this legend, the strength of Torgva is connected with the miraculous shirt of the chain. Here, the characteristic nuance for the knights is brought to the fore: as long as Torgva Pankeli is equated with the conspiracy of Kokhtastavi, no one can kill him. And later, when Kokhtastavi's plot is issued, the power of the miraculous chain shirt is no longer there, and Torgva is vulnerable.

Based on the above, the fortress of Pankisi, also known as Torgva, had a great political and economic importance in the thirteenth century Georgia. His conquest and possession of his wealth are described in legends, and this is not accidental. It seems that the acquisition of this strategic fortress was of some importance to the central government, and the murder of Torgva Pankeli is already clear in this background.

In the 13th century, in the 40s and 50s, a famous confrontation took place at the court of David Ulu, the son of Lasha-Giorgi, which was followed by the assessments of historians and at the same time reflected in the legend. This legend is generally called Jigdakhatur's revenge. The contents of the legend and the official version that we will discuss are different. According to the legend and the version of some sources, the Mongolian queen Jigdakhatur of Georgia (David Ulu's wife) examined her servant, the Mestumre Jikuri, the erist of Torgva Castle – Torgva Pankeli. He was a Georgian feudal lord, the governor of Kakheti in the 40s of the 13th century, a participant in the Kokhtastavi conspiracy.⁶

Pavle Ingoroqva a very famous Georgian scientist claims that Shota Rustaveli was a participant in the Kokhtastavi conspiracy. However, according to the later studies of certain historians, this version is not confirmed, but even today this story is not completely certain. It is a fact that Shota Kupri was indeed a participant and mastermind of the Kokhtastavi conspiracy. Egarstan Bakurtsikheli, Tsotne Dadiani, Varam Gagel, Kvarkvare Jakheli, Shota Kupri, Thorga Pankeli, Gamrekel Toreli, Sargis Tmogveli and others connected with Kokhtastavi.

Torgva Pankeli was in such an environment during the Treaty of Kokhtastavi and later he was accused of treason.

Before leaving for the Horde of Ulum Batho-Kaeni, David VII handed over Kakheti to Thorga Pankeli and submitted to Queen Jigda-Khatun and Mestumre Jikuri. Since Davit was late, Thorga Pankel thought that he would not return to him and wanted to take possession of Kakheti.

After the return of David VII, Pankeli, a frightened thief, did not dare to approach the king. They swore to him and promised him no harm, but then on the order of Jikuri, they threw him off the cliff. 7 This is the official version.

David Ulu's first wife was Jigda-Khatun, the daughter of Noin of the Mongols, who was probably brought to him while he was in the Great Horde, when he went there to prove himself as a king.

Davit Lasha's son left for the north with great gifts. In the palace, he left his wife, queen Jigda-Khatuni, and his guest, Jikuri, i.e. he entrusted the country to them. Davit Narin – Davit Ulus cousin and co-king, at that time had already moved to Kutatis and controlled western Georgia.

Mestumre Jikuri was a very talented and loyal person to the king. He established such order in the kingdom that there were no more thieves and thugs, and if they appeared anywhere, they were hanged.

The name of the visitor (Mestumretukhutses-the head of servants) at the king's court, that is, the position, was not a vizier, that is, one of the highest titles. In modern terms, the visitor was not a member of the government, he was considered one of the assistants of the Vizier Mandaturtukhutsesi.

The duty of the visitor included the reception of foreign ambassadors to the palace, their departure, etc. The chronicler calls the jester «guest». Probably, Jikuri was a visitor, that is, he was the handmaiden of other visitors. It seems that Jikuri was not a noble, but he approached the king and, in fact, handed over the rights of the head of the house to him and the first vizier, because he managed both the palace and the kingdom. However, as a rule, the king, in case of departure from the country, had to hand over the kingdom to the scribe. Mestumre Jikuri was very helpful to the impoverished population of the country and was also popular among the common people.

Queen Jigga was also a very energetic woman and was actively involved in the management of the country. In general, the Mongols attached great importance to the advice of women, and often the queens ruled the kingdom as

In those days, by the order of the queen, Jikuri built a new palace in Isan. The people of Pkhoveli have obeyed him and will obey him – this means subordination to the state: representatives from all parts of the country

They were obliged to pay taxes and participate in all spheres of the country's life, especially since the kingdom was forced to send tribute to the Mongols and send Georgian troops to their army.

Before going to Caen, the king handed over various corners to the local nobles. He handed over Kakheti to the young warrior Pankeli and ordered him to obey the queen's orders. He went to Davit Lasha's son Bathos. Batho Kaen received him with great honor and fulfilled what our king asked. David Ulu was in the Horde for a long time. It turns out that Thorgva thought that the king would never come back and fortified himself in Pankisi Castle, which was later called «Torgva's Castle»; He occupied Kakheti and no longer obeyed the queen and the visiting jackass. The reason for the disobedience is unknown, perhaps he could not bear the command of a low-born jerk. There is another version: according to the legend, the young swordsman Jigda-Khatun liked, but Pankel could not understand the betrayal and insult of the king, and therefore he did not obey Jigda and Jikuri. They also said that Jigda loved Jikuri and that's why he was promoted. These are legends, rather assumptions, and the chronicler only tells us about Torgva's disobedience and Jikuri's talent in managing the state, as well as Jikuri's loyalty to the king and the sympathy of the common people, the poor and the widows and orphans for Jikuri.

Priest Dimitri Janashvili focuses on the revenge of Jigda-Khatuni in his work in the 20s of the 19th century: «After that, the fate and misfortune of Georgia is in the hands of women. They spin the kings as they please. They also abducted Mongolian women by their example. This is what Jigdakhatun is doing, after dividing the kingdom in two, the king went to Caen with his troops: because he was summoned. He handed over the administration of the kingdom to his wife and the first vizier to Jikuri. This man was very loyal to the king and ruled the country well. During his time, thieves and thugs were not to be found in the kingdom, says the Chronicle. This angered the king's «chamber of men», because the kingdom had a lot of

income from his own «Jikuri teaching». But even this man did not survive the influence of the woman. By the order of Jigda-Khatun, he caught the main torghu of the opposite shoulder of Kakheti, broke his oath, took him to a rock-carrier and pushed him over a cliff to the knowledge of the meek king. The queen plays the king as she pleases

There is an interesting correlation between the legend and the official history, the main reason for the conflict and also the real picture are more interesting. Here the life and activities of several historical figures are unfolded: Davit Ulu, Jigda-Khatuni, Mestumre Jikuri, Thorgva Pankeli. All of them are in the center of attention of historians, writers and public speakers, i.e. oral storytellers and are evaluated in different ways.

In this way, Torgva Pankeli, the erist of Pankisi, a participant in the conspiracy of Kokhtastavi, the owner of Pankisi Castle, a close person of the aristocratic society of that time, himself a legendary person, mentioned in Georgian folklore as a hero, in fact one of the knights of that era dies as a traitor to the king and Queen Jigdaxhatun gives him the death penalty. Verdict by the hand of the servant-visitor.

During that period, a deep change took place in the institutions of Georgia. The leadership and the rise of Mestumre Jikuri, his work at the royal court and the tragic end. Being under the yoke of the Mongols did not only cause military and economic damage to Georgia. Its influence was strongly felt in other spheres of institutions and household life and left a big mark here as well. The rule of the Mongols left a deeper mark on Georgia. At that time, a decent way was no longer necessary for promotion in the state arena: personal attitude was then given more importance than in the past. A low official – if the ruler of the country listened to his talks and whispers and took into account his advice – it was possible to strengthen himself in such a way that he gained more influence over all his superiors and became the real helmsman of the state. The emergence and promotion of such officers was facilitated by the Mongolian rule, because the military power of the serfdoms had to come under the command of the king himself, or the proper supreme authority of the country. The rulers of the states that were already dependent on the Khan of the Mongols often had to be in his horde, as none of the important state matters could be resolved without agreement with the Khan and his influential advisers.

As a conclusion, we can write that in the middle of the 13th century, a radical change occurs not only in the internal and external affairs of the state, but also in the Georgian society. If after the death of Rusudan Dedofli, the heroes of the Kokhtastavi conspiracy played a very big role in the Georgian society, including Thorgva Pankeli, whose name was mentioned in legends along with other heroes, during the period of the two reigns (during the reign of David Ulu and David Narin), due to the establishment of the Mongol rule, they were promoted to low positions by the government. Individuals and they decided the issues of protection of public order. Therefore, in this situation, we do not have a variety of materials left by chroniclers about this hidden history, and in general, the central government is justified in the surviving sources.

Used sources and literature:

1. <https://shalvanakaidze.blogspot.com/>;
2. https://ka.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%AE%E1%83%A2%E1%83%90%E1%83%A1%E1%83%97%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1_%E1%83%A8%E1%83%94%E1%83%97%E1%83%A5%E1%83%9B%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90; Chivalry in medieval Georgia – G. Akofashvili, 1992;
3. <http://wikimapia.org/33077189/ka/%E1%83%97%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%A6>
4. https://www.facebook.com/941232199317810/photos/a.941237799317250/2134381310002887/?paipv=0&eav=AfbUAI3TcFtUuAZd_FGfIdiCuXe6FA3qNV7jHa-sTRfubagLZjIT_0jaGQWU3eXT1CI&_rdr;
5. <http://www.nplg.gov.ge/wikidict/index.php/Torgva>; mythological encyclopedia for youngsters (Georgian mythology);
6. **Roland Topchishvili, Ethnic History of Georgians and Historical-Ethnographic Aspects of Georgia, Vol.Tb. 2002; Pavle Ingoroqva – «Rustaveliana»,Tb. 1926.**<https://modernnarrative.wordpress.com/>;
7. <http://georgianencyclopedia.ge>;
8. **Historical pictures of the separation of the Georgian Church from the Greek Church and the Georgian woman Mg. Dim. Janashvili Gori fast-printing printing house «Kartli». 1814 MG;** Dimitri Janashvili, <http://dspace.gela.org.ge/bitstream/123456789/5175/4/istoriuli%20suratebi.pdf>