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JUSTINO DA LIVORNO'S LETTER DATED BACK TO 1687 YEAR AS THE  
SOURCE FOR THE HISTORY OF GEORGIA

ПИСЬМО ДЖУСТИНО ДА ЛИВОРНО ОТ 1687 ГОДА КАК ИСТОЧНИК

GÜRCİSTAN TARIHİ AÇISINDAN BİR KAYNAK OLARAK 1687'DE  
CUSTINO DA LIVORNO TARAFINDAN YAZILAN MEKTUP

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper deals with the letter sent to Rome in 1687 by Justino Da Livornos - a missionary of the Capuchin Order (Rtsihivio, vol.31).

Justino arrived in Georgia in the second half of the 60s of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1666-1667). He gained a great authority among the locals because of his good knowledge of the Georgian language. The Capuchins' Mission was founded in 1667 in Gori and was led for 7 years. He became Vice-prefect in 1675 after death of Tbilisi Mission Prefect Seraphino da Melikoka and he led it till October 29, 1687. A new Prefect of the Mission, Brother Bartolomeo da Milano arrived in Tbilisi that day. Although Justino was aware of the Roman chiefs' desire about his returning back to Rome, he decided to obey neither their desire nor the order and remain under the new Prefect's leadership. His decision might have been supported by a close relationship with King of Kartli, Giorgi XI who is characterized in his letter.

After reading the letter, it appears that Justino was a heavy-handed, ambitious person, he had difficulty in finding common language with colleagues. When dealing with them he felt his superiority not only in matters of religion, he didn't hide it. This must have been the reason why a group of missionaries sent letters of complaint to Rome (Justino particularly picked out Father Dionizio da Piachentsa) and this letter also shows that he was not liked in Rome as well.

According to its theme the article is divided into the following parts: 1. "Your Excellence and Dear Patrons" (The translation of Justino's letter); 2. Inevitability of the knowledge of the Georgian language for the missionaries activity in Georgia; 3. On the Ethnicity of Catholics; 4. About King Giorgi XI Catholicism.

**Key words:** *Georgia, missionary, catholic, orthodox, Armenian, Giorgi XI, Justino, Capuchin Order.*

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## АННОТАЦИЯ

Предметом рассмотрения является отправленное в 1687 году в Рим письмо миссионера ордена капуцинов Джустино ди Ливерно.

Джустино прибыл в Грузию во II половине 60-ых годов XVII века (1666 или 1667 г.). Благодаря хорошему знанию грузинского языка он снискал большой авторитет среди местного населения. В 1667 году он основал миссию капуцинов в Гори, которой руководил в течении 7 лет. В 1675 году, после кончины префекта Тбилисской миссии Серафимо да Меликока он стал вице префектом Тбилисского миссиона, которым руководил до 29 октября 1687 года. В этот день в Тбилиси прибыл новый префект миссии брат Бартоломео да Милано. Несмотря на то, что для Джустино было известно желание римского руководства об его возвращение в Рим, им было принято решение не подчиниться ни желанию и не приказу и остаться под руководством нового префекта. Быть может его решение было подкреплено с близостью царем Картли Георгием XI-ым, характеристику которого он приводит в своем письме.

После знакомства с письмом создается впечатление, что он был амбициозной личностью с тяжелым характером, с трудом находил общий язык с коллегами, в отношениях с ними чувствовал свое превосходство не только в вопросах религии да и не скрывал этого. Все это и должно было стать причиной того, что одна группа миссионеров отправляла в Рим жалобные письма (Джустино особо выделял отца Дионизио да Пьяченца) и представленном письме отчетливо просматривается и то, что и в Риме смотрели на него недоброжелательно.

Статья разделена на следующие темы: 1. “Ваше превосходство и дорогие покровители” (перевод письма Джустино); 2. Необходимость знания грузинского языка для миссионеров, активированных в Грузии; 3. Об этнической принадлежности католиков в Грузии; 4. Царь Георгий XI и католицизм.

**Ключевые слова:** *Грузия, миссионеры, католики, ортодоксальность, армяне, Георги XI, Джустино, орден капуцинов.*

## ÖZ

Makalede 1687'de Kapuçin misyonu üyesi Custino Di Livorno tarafından Roma'ya gönderilen bir mektup irdelemekte ve bildirilmektedir.

Custino Gürcistan'a XVII. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında gelmiştir (1666 veya 1667). Kendisi Gürcüce iyi bildiği için yerli halk arasında geniş bir sempati ve şöhet kazanmıştı. 1667'de Gori'de bir Kapuçin Misyonu Merkezi'ni kurmuş ve 7 yıl boyunca bu öerkezi yönetmiştir. 1675'de Kapuçinlerin Tiflis Merkezi'nin yöneticisi (Prefekt) Serafimo da Melikok vefat ettikten sonra adı geçen merkeze yardımcı olarak görevlendirilmiş ve burayı 29 Ekim 1687'e kadar yönetmiştir.

Bu tarihte Tiflis'e, Kapuçin merkezini yönetmek için rahip Bartlomeo da Milano adında yeni bir yönetici gelir. Custino, Roma niyetini, yani onun Roma'ya geri çağırılması kararını bilmesine rağmen gelen emre ilgi göstermemiş ve yeni yönetici ile çalışmaya karar vermiştir. Belki de bu kararında Custino'nun kendi mektubunda da ifade ettiği gibi Kartli Kralı XI. Giorgi ile yakın arkadaş olması etkiliydi.

Mektuptan, onun zorlu bir karaktere sahip hırslı bir insan olduğu, meslektaşları ile nadiren ortak bir dil bulan, onlarla ilişkilerde üstünlüğünü sadece din meselelerinde değil de diğer konularda da belli edip gizlemediği anlaşılıyor. Bütün bunlar, bir grup misyonerin Roma'ya şikayet mektuplarının gönderilmesine sebep olur (Bu hususta Custino kendi mektubunda, en fazla rahip Dionizio da Piaçentsa'dan şikayet eder). Bunun dışında aynı Custino'nun mektubundan Roma'da ona karşı düşmanca niyetlerin var olduğu da açıkça bellidir.

Makale ařağıdaki bařlıklara gre ele alınmıřtır: 1. ‘‘Ekselansları ve Sevgili İdareciler’’ (Custino’nun mektubunun evirisi); 2. Grcistan’da faaliyet gsteren misyonerler iin Grcce dil bilgisi ihtiyaı; 3. Grcistan’daki Katoliklerin etnik kkeni hakkında; 4. Kal XI. Giorgi ve Katoliklik.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Grcistan, misyonerler, katolikler, ortodoksluk, Ermeniler, XI. Giorgi Cusyino, Kapuin Misyonu.*

### **Preface**

A new dynamic process started in the traditional two-sided religious-diplomatic relationship of Georgia and the Holy throne in the 60s of the 17<sup>th</sup> century which lasted with more or less intensity till the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among the characteristics of this relationship process, we must first identify the missionaries’ attempt to convert Georgia’s political and religious leaders to Catholicism which practical result might have been the unification of churches. In all cases, the Holy throne’s relations with Georgia were focused on this. It is obvious that the Catholic community of Georgia was gaining its role in this matter and naturally, the primary concern of the missionaries was expending of Catholicism among the population of Georgia.

Initially, Capuchin padres were established in Tbilisi. They continued Theatine Fathers’ activities which were ceased in 1638 year in the East of Georgia. Now, Capuchin missionaries turned into a diplomatic channel with the West like the Theatine Fathers, as they except the Holy throne, could help Georgian politicians to have diplomatic relations with the other European countries. This was of vital importance for Georgian kingdoms which were separated from the west European countries and had very limited links with western states. It was possible only with the missionaries’ help to destroy the political isolation and to establish advanced western scientific-technical ideas in the country.

Despite the great financial hardship, with the help of the afore-mentioned facts, the first steps of the Capuchins were impressive.

Father Capuchins’ ten year activity in Georgia was a kind of reporting period for the Holy Congregation ‘‘De Propaganda’’. According to written sources, they were rather active for that period of time and achieved some results. The Catholic fathers had two houses and one church in Tbilisi which they built in 1670 year. They also had a house and a church in Gori. They learned the Georgian language, they compiled a book on seven secrets in Georgian, opened a school near the Catholic church in Tbilisi and trained children in religion and obedience. The Latin and Italian languages were taught there, they were engaged in unselfish healing activities and had a rather large parish.

### **Method**

Empirical and pure theoretical methodologies such as comparative, critical and systematic methodologies are used while working on the article.

### **Outcomes**

1. As the result of studying the missionary Justino de Lavorno’s letter, we almost received a complete view of activities of the Capuchin missionaries during King Giorgi XI’s rule in Kartli in the 80s of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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2. It appeared that the effective missionary activities required knowledge of the Georgian language.
3. It appears that the great majority of the parish converted to Catholicism by missionaries were ethnic Armenians.
4. Justino da Livorno's relation assures us of King Giorgi XI's religious tolerance.

### Discussion

#### 1. Your superior clergy and dear protectors

Gracious Signors, I feel how my heart squeezes because I lost your kind attitude and nothing calms me down as I bear a heavy crown of a person who lost trust. May Lord reward father Dionisio da Piacenza for criticism of my behaviour, whatever they say, my mission, its worthy success will be rewarded by peacefulness and unfairness and this mission will be show worth. If I ever received even one warning, condemning or threat from your highness clergy and from its lordship [bishop] of from Heads of my order what I was observing towards other missionaries when condolence power of saint congregation was revealed. I would never abuse myself in your large-heartedness for 20 years tireless service for welfare and protection of the mission. Neither my knowledge of languages nor my service in devotion of spreading religion defend me from humiliation and neither does the mission as they abase me. I know gracious sirs how bitterly you were disappointed concerning connected with me hopes; as I supposed over-fulfilled kindness in some missionaries, I did not mean to send a short response about their norms of life, though I knew doubtlessly that your highness clergy appreciate a missionary who knows languages, who actively preaches kindness<sup>†</sup>. I always had disposition to oriental languages but I never had any inclination to compose lies about people. I do not regret on this account. May Lord defends me from this and may he gratifies, with your great kindness, everybody who described and represented in his own way my actions and persuaded [others]. I overthrow the most devotedly at the feet of your Highness priesthood and address to your tender-heartedness towards me as I know that the worst my actions will be presented the more your Highness clergy's sympathy to me will be revealed on which I will always be depended in every way, in which [is not read] I wish to find calm, for which [is not read] I want to live and die. I have learnt your Highness priesthood's desire concerning my leaving the mission. If I even see that this desire became an order, I prefer to stay under the direction of father Prefect who arrived four days ago together with Fra Bartolomeo da Milano. He is for the first time in this country and does not know the language at all. Father Silvestre also is not able to [is not read], provide with spiritual nutritive local pitiful souls now. I am very afraid if I leave our church's child desolately, I will deserve disfavour of Georgian king Giorgi XI. I know that a great attention will be paid to [is not read] the criticism of my behaviour. That is why it will be my last big consolation. When a plot was organized in order to humiliate me before your Highness clergy, before all-merciful sirs' large-heartedness. Father of all kind of condolences brought and ascended me to your saint throne, he made me worthy to offer you a precious, divine present, he made me able to

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<sup>†</sup> Giustino's addressee is not known neither here nor in his other letters.

convert to our faith [is not read] as father Angelo da Filine will tell you about this. Having known about my great misfortune I will find calmness in Lord, more over, I will find it in your Highness priesthood's kind attitude with whose lips Lord himself speaks. I hope to get forgiveness from God and the Holy mission. After father Angelo's setting off, I steadily [is not read] carried out my duty. I am sending a letter with the list of surnames and families who were converted into Catholic religion, people who lead a Catholic way of life; the name of missionary who rebaptize them into our faith in order each of them to be venerated for spreading religion and for personal merits. Besides [is not read] I have renewed a new asylum, I have arranged several well-equipped rooms there, a workshop. It is obvious that here will live a noble signor and a monk-missionary. Later [letter].

I add a trustworthy list: lady Laline, niece of Giorgi XI tablecompanion, Armenian [was baptized] on June 1, 1687 year; Iakundina - Lord Shitandari's niece, Armenian, on July 6 of the same year; Giorgi – son of Bagdina and Shavibana was publicly baptized in our church by me on June 22 of the same year, Armenian, godfather was Naskida – Georgian; Lady Tinatin – niece of Petre Vaktabikti [was baptized] on June 28 of the same year; Sir Khoja Mhirtiki – from Jupla [was baptized] on July 1, 1687; Sir Tamaza, military leader and the chief's uncle, of noble origin, Georgian from the Kapelaniarty<sup>‡</sup> family [was baptized] on July 25 of the same year; Shasada – daughter of Sir Shain on July 27 of the same year. I baptized in our church Maria – daughter of Catholics Estate and Alamsultani on August 1 of the same year, Armenian, godmother Nadia, Georgian; Hanum – daughter of Shain, Armenian [was baptized], on August 4 of the same year; Sir Sul Khan – son of great chancellor, cousin of the chief from Kapelianiari<sup>§</sup> family, the noblest Georgian family: He showed his good knowledge concerning Christian faith, according to composed by me questionnaire, was baptized on August 25 of the same year (compare Tamarashvili 1902: 262-263); father Khachatura, Armenian priest from Ganja [was baptized], on September 23 of the same year; Armenian priest Arakel from Shamakha [was baptized] on September 22 of the same year; I blessed publicly [Giorgi] and with ceremonial mass connected with a saint knot, a servant of our mission who complies a Catholic rule and Shasada – Shain's daughter [was baptized] with witnesses presence and comply with a Catholic rule; Khoja Safara – son of Nadzuale Keriuta, Armenian [was baptized] on October 29 of the same year; on November 2 father Giulio da Cremona arrived happily, as well as a new prefect of this mission Fra Bartolomeo da Milano; Simone Khoja – Armenian from Julpa [was baptized] on November 2 of the same year.

Houses and families of Catholic confession who are in the guardianship of our mission:

1. Baianduri's sons, the first ones of our mission who were anew converted: Stefano, Giuseppe, Francesco and Nino [their] are under care of father Serafino and father Giuseppe, soul --

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<sup>‡</sup> Probably Kaplaniant

<sup>§</sup> Kaplaniant

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2. David, son of Adamo, Pole by origin, Catholic, with his mother Maria, soul ---  
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3. Mateo with wife Khansad and son Paolo, Armenians, under father Serafino's care -----
4. Sir Estate, the chief's copyist, his wife Gulkhan, with mother and brother Gaspak\*\*, his servants Titia and Vartan, father Giuseppe's [care of] house, Armenians, soul -----
5. Naskida with his mother Daujan, brother Martiros, sister-in-law Daujan, house of father Justino [care of], Armenians, soul -----
6. Asatura, with wife Khansad, with children: Papua, Giuseppe, Nerses, Gabriel, Maria and Anna, Armenians, father Giustino's house [care of], soul -----
7. Zalina with wife Maia, mother Astandar, son Andrea, brother Mamajan, Armenians, house of father Giuseppe and father Giustino [care of]; soul ----- Don Giovanni is in Rome now; after his wife's death 3 years ago a house was returned to the Armenian rule; I think it is not Don Giovanni's fault as he has not seen any his letter there.
8. Sir Elya with wife Khadunsad and son Iremia, Armenians, father Giustino's house [care of], soul -----
9. Giorgi Didebashvili with wife Eteri and mother Minguli, Georgians, father Justino's house [care of], soul -----
10. Khustes with mother Tamar, sisters – Ana, Khanum, Shanuban and Maria, Georgians, father Giustino's house [care of], soul -----
11. Giorgi Madlishivali with wife and wife's sister, Armenians, father Giustino's house [care of], soul -----
12. Pirvas, Armenian, father Giustino's house [care of], soul -----

The mission was in such a dignified, flourished state hitherto under my guardianship. I will give it, with great pleasure, to a worthy father Giulio da Cremona – a new prefect. As to me, during all the time till I am here, at worst till receiving the answer from your Highness clergy through a local ruler's envoy father Angelo. I will try not to detain loungingly ability which was given to me by all-merciful God and which was used thanks to your mercifulness. I will send a letter via Moscow; my beloved son Giorgi, king of Georgia, purposely sends his brother Archil, king of Kakheti, who lived at the court of Moscow duke. I should also let you know about the death of a dignified Father Jesuit, missionary in Shamaha. He was killed treacherously at night by Turks and Persian Armenians in order to take possession of his property; the crime investigation is undergoing and I wrote about this to Persia to king's counselor Parsadan Beg and to his brother Alef Beg, a minter of a big sum of [money] in the kingdom, my great friends; I also wrote to his Highness clergy bishop. I will continue my efforts persistently for establishing the mission in Shamakha. By the way I bend on my knees before your Highness clergy feet pejoratively and I beg for mercy as a divine virtue for a dignified Apostolic brotherhood.

From Tbilisi, Georgia, on November 1 (by old style) 1687 year.

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\*\* Gaspara

The most devoted servant brother of your Highness clergy Giustino da Livorno Capuchinian monk of Apostolic faith and a missionary.

## **2. It was Inevitable for the missionaries who activated in Georgia to know the Georgian language**

Knowledge of languages had a great importance in the missionaries' activities. They couldn't do anything with the population of the country without knowing their native language. Naturally, this requirement also existed in Georgia. The missionaries who arrived in our country often knew Turkish or Persian, but they were not fluent in the Georgian language which area of extension was limited. That's why the knowledge of Georgian was considered a great luxury among the missionaries and it was greatly valued. Justino da Livorno knew some languages, among them the Georgian language as well. He always focuses on his priority in relation to senior or junior colleagues.

Justino demanded to pay great attention to the knowledge of the Georgian language in selecting the candidates to be sent to Georgia. It is shown in the letter how he assessed the negative results of the lack of the Georgian language. He wrote: *Among the missionaries who activate in Georgia, 'the Prefects father Seraphino and father Juzepe couldn't learn [Georgian] the language and they didn't do any benefits for the mission; Of those who have been with me and are after me, it is only father Bernardo who knows the [Georgian] language but he was too confused ; I can't say that father Rafael and father Bonaventura knew the [Georgian] language as they only know what was necessary for being a doctor; They are there, next to you and you can ask them if they got a confession even from one person; Others didn't even think of learning the Georgian language, they don't love the mission and are wandering in the mountains now''* (Papashvili, 2016: 234).

Attention must be drawn to the fact that in 80s of the 17<sup>th</sup> century for 50 years the Armenian language changed into Georgian for the missionaries' relations. We have to remember the letter sent to Rome in 1635 by Don Pietro Avitabile who was the Head of Gori Teatinian mission, where he asked for: *'Those people who are going to arrive in Georgia (for their missionary activities-E.M.), must stay in Rome for a short time after finishing their studying in order to master either Armenian or Turkish. They will be able to do it easily, as there are a lot of Armenians in that part (Italy-E.M.)... If they don't want to wait and will start studying (the languages) after arriving in the mentioned mission (in Gori-E.M.), it will be harmful for me personally and they will not be able to serve these people's (Armenians'-E.M.) requirements as well.'* (Avitabile, 1974: 41)

It is worthy noting that the majority of the people who were converted to Catholics and their families who are named in Justino's letters, as he mentioned himself, were Armenians. The question arises here: Why did he prefer the Georgian language for relations with Armenians? Why didn't he demand Armenian or Armenian and Georgian at the same time?

I'd like to respond to the both questions carefully: the Armenians whom Avitabile talks about might be emigrants from the neighbouring countries who arrived in Georgia as already Catholics and relations with them was possible through the

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Armenian language. But they needed the Armenian language not only at churches and for relations with the missionaries, it was important to have relations with the Georgian Orthodox locals and the government representatives. That's why they had suffered so much from the linguistic assimilation for 50 years, the arrival of the Armenian-language missionaries in Georgia was no longer needed. My point of view is enhanced with lots of written sources of the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> cc centuries which will be analyzed in the other paper.

### 3. On the Ethnicity of Catholics

In his letters Justino talks much about baptizing of non-catholics according to the catholic rules. He had baptized Armenian priests Minas Vastabieto Kisistanelo and Avetikh Erzerumeli since September 6th-October 7th in 1686. Georgian Catholics-a priest father Abram and Mr Estate, -King Giorgi XI's rewriter attended their baptizing. They all received Eucharist from father Abram and after that Justino introduced the truth of catholic church and sacred secrets to them. It is particularly important what Justino says after that: 'the newly-baptized people intend to go to Europe in order to avoid a terrible pursuing from the local enemies, who, it's difficult for me to say that they are vaktana vakt (it can't be read) disciples'. Justino da Livorno's remarks about the newly-Catholics were followed by those who were converted to Catholicism in XVII-XVIII centuries.

Justino da Livorno kept the list of the people or their families who were converted to the Catholic faith, which he calls "a trustworthy list":

1. Mrs Lalinati, Giorgi XI's tablecompanion's nephew/niece, Armenian, was baptized on the 1st of June, 1687;
2. Iakundina, Mr Shitandar's nephew/niece, Armenian, baptized on the 6th of July, the same year; Justino publicly baptized Giorgi, -the son of Bagdina and Shavibana at the Catholic church on the 22nd of June, the same year, whose godfather was Georgian Naskida;
3. Mrs Tinatin, Peter Vaktabikti's nephew.miece, [was baptized] on the 8th of June, the same year;
4. Mr Khoja Mkhirtiki from Julpha, was baptized on the 1st of July, the same year;
5. Mr Tamaza, military chief and the Head's uncle, Georgian of noble origin, from the Kapelaniarti's<sup>1</sup> family, was baptized on the 25th July, the same year;
6. Shasada, Mr Sphain's daughter, was baptized on the 27th of July, the same year;
7. Justino baptized Maria, the daughter of the Catholics Mr Estate and Alamsultam at the Catholic church on the 1st of August, the same year, Armenian, godmother Nadia, Georgian;
8. Hanum, Mr Shain's daughter, Armenian, was baptized on the 4th of August the same year;



9. `Mr Sul Khan (comp.Tamarashvili 1902: 262-263), the famous great Canceledor's son, the Head's cousin, from the noblest family of Kapelianiar<sup>1</sup> HHe showed himself worthy of his knowledge of the Christian faith according to my questionnaire, was baptized on the 25th of August, the same year““;

10. Father Khachatura, an Armenian priest from Ganja, was baptized on the 23rd of September, the same year;

11. Arakeli, an Armenian priest from Shamakhi, was baptized on the 22nd of September, the same year;

12. On the 22nd of October, the same year, Justino blessed Giorgi, an inferior of the mission, who kept the Catholic rules and Shasada and made them one publicly and at the solemn mess, with the attendance of witnesses and protection of the Catholic rule;

13. Mr Khoja Saphara, the son of Nadzualé Keriuta, Armenian, [was baptized] on the 29th of October, the same year;

14. Mr Simone Khoja, an Armenian from Julpha, was baptized on the 2nd of November, the same year.

Then Justino enumerates those Catholics and their families (the number of persons is not shown) who had been under the care of Tbilisi mission missionaries:

1. Baindura's sons, the first ones who were newly-converted to Catholicism: Stephano, Juzepe, Phranchesko and Nini. Their family was under the care of Father Juzepe.

2. Davit, Mr Adamo's son, Polish, catholic, with his mother Maria;

3. Mateo with his wife Khansad and son Paolo, Armenians, house-under Father Seraphino's care;

4. Mr Estate, the Head's rewriter, his wife Gulkhana, with her mother and brother Gaspaka<sup>1</sup>, a servant Titiat and a servant Vartana; the house under Father Juzepe's care, Armenians;

5. Naskida with his mother Daujana, brother Martirosi, daughter-in-law Daujana, Armenians, Father Justino cared the house;

6. Asatura with his wife Khasand and kids: Papua, Juzepe, Nerses, Gabriel, Maria and Ana, Armenians, Father Justino cared the house;

7. Zalina with his wife Maria, mother Astandara, son Andrea, brother Mamajana, Armenians: Father Juzepe and Father Justino cared the house; Among them Don Jiovani is in Rome nowadays. This family returned to the Armenian rule after his wife's death three years ago, but they converted to Catholicism again in 1687;

8. Mr Elia with his wife Khandusadi and son Ieremia, Armenians, the house was under Father Justino's care;

9. Giorgi Didebashvili with his wife Eteri and mother Minguli, Georgians. Their house was under Father Justino's care;

10. Khustesi (Khutsesi?) with his mother Tamar, sisters-Ana, Khanum, Shanuban and Maria, Georgians, the house was under Father Justino's care;

11. Giorgi Madlishivali with his wife and sister-in-law, Armenians, the house was under Father Justino's care;

12. Pirvas, one person, Armenian, the house was under Father Justino's care.

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Ethnicity of the people who were converted to Catholics in 1686-1687 attracts attention. Among 79 people 11 were Georgians, Armenians-68. There is a great chance that those who adopted Catholicism within the jurisdiction of the state of Georgia, both themselves and the Catholic Padres kept the identities of proselytes in secret.

### **4. About Giorgi XI's Catholicism**

We have abundant information from the 17<sup>th</sup> century in letters sent from Georgia to Rome concerning converting of Georgian kings, princes, senior clerics, etc. into Catholicism. But observation of letters sent to Rome by missionaries convinces me that they are not true. The information about king Giorgi XI's interrelation with Rome is especially much. It is stated that in the time when he corresponded with Pope of Rome, he officially confessed Islam from 1677 year.

The mentioned letters inform that king Giorgi got acquainted with Catholicism through Giustino da Livorno and he "immediately wished to join it by means of Hamadan Bishop Pike. This bishop often wrote this about your (Pope of Rome Innocent XI – E.M.) kindheartedness." King Giorgi sent a man twice to Hamadan and invited Pike to Tbilisi but it was not realized. Pike intended arriving for the second time but he passed away. According to the letter written on December 7, 1686 year "the king delivered a religious confession and swore an oath to subordinate his kingdom to your Holiness" – writes padre Justino da Livorno. According to the same padre king Giorgi admitted Islam during more than nine years, but only outwardly, falsely, in order to preserve his kingship. Catholic religion was recognized by king's brother Levan on December 19 of the same year and archbishop Ekvtime Ratisvili on December 20. It is noteworthy that as Justino informed Rome, king Giorgi's principal counselor was his brother Levan (Tamarashvili, 1902: 264).

Giorgi XI had great wish to fight against Muslims but he was waiting for Pope's order. Giustino requests Pope: "Let this order be such that it will not offend king of Iran as during several years (Giorgi XI – E.M.) he is not in good relations with him". Padre Angelo, whom the king sent as his ambassador, had to take Giustino's letter to Rome. He had to inform Pope spaciouly about the king's all wishes. The king especially wanted Pope to announce him, like other Christian sovereigns and kings, a child of Rome's church (Tamarashvili, 1902: 264-265).

Padre Angelo took one of the best pupils of Giustino da Livorno, 19 years old Tbilisi nobleman's son Solomon Tumanishvili to Rome. The youth had to continue studying at Propaganda's collegium "as his origin comes from the tribe whose mission was defined by blissful respectable Cardinal Onoprios". It is known that Solomon after finishing studying became Capuchinian monk. There does not exist any information concerning his returning to Georgia (Tamarashvili, 1902: 266, 274).

Padre Angelo took king Giorgi's letter, which was written on April 29 of the same year to Pope Innocent XI. The king wanted to send his man to Rome "but we could not send on account of distance and innumerable troubles" – wrote he to Pope. Besides the information mentioned in Giustino da Livorno's letter, king Giorgi, from his side, let Pope know that he had a son Bagrat whom he wished to be a subject of the blessed from Lord Pope of Rome's throne. At the same time, he expressed readiness to fight

against unbelievers with his army at once at Pope's call when needed, in spite of the fact that "we and our kingdom are subordinated to Iranian king" – writes Giorgi XI, - "we are not able to do anything without his order but like your favourite children, crowned kings who always fight against unbelievers and win over them, we also will defeat them with your blessing... May God and the Virgin give us ability to harm your enemies, to serve you and to arm together with your submissive kings. You should know that our kingdom, the army which is under our command and the whole Georgia's army is ready and is waiting for your order. We are ready to fulfill whatever you order us with your blessings" (Tamarashvili, 1902: 267-268).

Archbishop Ekvtime Patishvili sent the letter to Pope (Tamarashvili, 1902: 268-270). King Giorgi setn a letter to grand duke of Toscana too. Padre Angelo handed the letter to the addressee in Florence. M.Tamarashvili was not able to find this letter (Tamarashvili, 1902: 207). Thus, its content is unknown.

Pope and Propaganda de Fide sent letters to the king and archbishop through padre Angelo. They praised the efforts which were expressed for strengthening Catholic faith and gave instructions about working in this direction.

It is visible that Giorgi XI continued the 17<sup>th</sup> century Kartli kings politics in point of Rome. His and Giusto da Livorno's letters to Pope or to his court have almost the same content. The aim is also the only one: to know Pope's position towards Kartli, Iran and Ottoman Turkey; if there was any possibility to get any help for restoration of independence. King Giorgi's diplomatic attempt to have ties with Rome and West European countries, by the help of Catholic missionaries, looks like other kings tries.

In order to be sure in king Giorgi's sincerity, that he really intended to become a true Catholic, he for this purpose, as the king desired to acknowledge the new faith (for the third time: first Orthodoxy, then Islam, now Catholicism) with blessing of the person who mediated between Pope and king of Kartli. Apparently, the king took into account bishop Pike's health condition and was sure that he would not be able to arrive in Tbilisi. That is why he demanded (or did he?) on converting into Catholicism with his blessings. As the bishop could not visit the king and Giorgi XI would not be able to accomplish his "intention" for irrespective from his reason, he would always have possibility for self-justification before those who impatiently were waiting for that action from the king. The main religion of Giorgi XI became evident during a mourning ceremony on account of queen Mariam's decease when the king went to a church. His that behaviour displeased Kizilbashs (16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> cc Iranian invaders). Iranian shah sent his vizier Aji Alikhan as if for expressing the condolence. In reality he was entrusted with the task to clear up why Muslim Giorgi XI dared enter a Christian church. When that question was asked, the king answered: "As he was born as Georgian and lived in Georgia, it was improper to abandon his country's traditional customs. Becoming Iranian did not, at all, forbid him entering a church for bemoaning a wife". (Dionijo Karli, 1971: 171)<sup>††</sup>

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<sup>††</sup> Dionijo Karli kept in view queen Mariam's death in 1682 year. The missionary was mistaken as he considered

## Justino Da Livorno's Letter Dated Back To 1687 Year As The Source For The History ...

The motive of king Giorgi's converting into Islam, with its accompanying political results, was clear for Orthodox population. The fact of existing tradition of Moslem king governance was significant too. In that situation king Giorgi XI would not dare neglect Islam candidly as receiving Moslem religion was connected with gaining relations with Iranian shah. It should be also noted that the shah's court, though later, sometimes was Catholics defender, from political point of view, but Iran would never adjust a Catholic king on the throne of Kartli (see Papashvili's different consideration 2016: 220). Shah Suleiman I (1666-1694) had a tense relations with king of Kartli, he would never permit king Giorgi to subordinate his kingdom to Pope of Rome. Hence, it might be said convincingly that king of Kartli Giorgi XI did not intend seriously taking such steps. His promises, which were expressed in his letters, did not leave the king's court. They were kept in Vatican Archives without any result together with promises and letters sent by former Georgian kings.

King Giorgi XI's labour on behalf of Georgian Orthodox church is well-known not only in Georgia but in existing in Jerusalem Georgian temples too (Mamistvalishvili, 2019: 195-200).

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queen Mariam to be Giorgi XI's wife. In reality queen Mariam was king Giorgi's step-mother.