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ATANASE TBILELI (AMILAKHVARI)

Because of the grave political situation in the country in 1752 Teimuraz II and Erekle II the Kings of the east Georgia sent a group of envoys in Russia to ask for the assistance to their kingdoms. The head of the group was Atanase Tbileli, a representative of the feudal nobility of Amilakhvari Family. Atanase enjoyed confidence of both Kings and they gave him "official letters and oral messages" to deliver to the Russian's emperor's royal court.

Atanase's date of birth is unknown. The document merely informs that he followed king Vakhtang VI and his people together with his family. Atanase earned a title of Archimandrite, and in 1733 he became the bishop of Mrovi. In 1740 he is metropolitan bishop of Mrovi where he worked for twelve years and devoted himself for the good of the eparchy.

Atanase distinguished himself as a diplomat during Abdul-Begi rebellion that served the reason why the kings of Kartli and Kakheti entrusted him the above-mentioned mission in Russia. History books give quite a broad evidence about this mission.

The aim of this paper is to put emphasis of Atanase's personal exploits in the development of the Georgian culture. In this respect one of the most conspicuous events is the establishment of the Georgian printing-press. From the very day of his arrival in Moscow he also enjoys support from his nephews. Atanase began publishing religious books in Georgia.

Atanase was a highly respected man not only among Georgians living in Russia but also among the Russian people. He spent the last years of his life in the Ascension Jonastery, where he died in 1774. He is burried in Donsky Sobor (monastery) in Moscow.