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RUSSIA'S IMPERIAL POLICY AND THE GEORGIAN CHURCH AUTOCEPHALY IN 1801-1811

In the late half of the 19th century Tsarist Russia waged consistent fight for trapping the Georgian Church into her ideological grips.

In September 12, 1801 the Emperor signed a manifest by force of which on April 12th of the next year, in the Tbilisi Sioni Cathedral surrounded by Russian troops, Russia imposed the representatives of the Georgian nobility to sign the document of abolishing Bagrationi House prerogatives. David who had been proclaimed the heir of Giorgi XII by Russia when the king was still alive was sent in exile. The same fate shared Mariam, the last queen of Georgia, wife of Giorgi XII. Some eight years later the lot of Kartlo-Kakheti kingdom extended on Imereti kingdom that accomplished Russia's footing in Georgia.

The establishment of the Tsarist government in Georgia would not complete only with the abolishment of the Georgian statehood. Now Russia began to interfere in the affairs of the Georgian Church for its subjugation. The government issued a reform anticipating organization of religious diskateria which would be entitled to lead Religious-educational activities. The primary task of the diskateria was to count and register the property of the Georgian Church to figure out all incomes and determine the number of clergy and make order in the parishes. The government appointed General Tormasov with personal responsibilities for the implementation of the reform.

Earlier to these events, in February 1801, Russian Emperor issued the order obliging Catholicos Anton II to draw up the complete data of the real situation of the Georgian Church and its clergy. The latter did not carry out the task. In November 3, 1810 Tormasov sent Catholicos Anton II in exile and in February 10, 1811 he presented Golitsin new project of organizing the Georgian Church. According to the project the bishop of Mtskheta and Kartli should be at the head of the Georgian Church who would be given a title of Metropolitan of Mtskheta and Kartli and the Exarches of the Synod.

In 1811 the institution of Catholicos was replaced by Exarches, subordinated to diskateria. The first exarches of Georgia became Bishop Varlam Eristavi, a man educated in Russia. The abolishment of autocephaly of the Georgian Church marked the new and different stage of Georgia's occupation by Russia.