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SOCIAL STATUS OF CHURCH FIGURES OF IMERETI EPARCHY AND MONASTIC ECONOMY IN 1871-1917

Since the very beginning of establishment of autocratic regime in Georgia the government has regularly approached the church and tried to use any details of ecclesiastical life in order to improve prestige of the Russian throne and autocratic regime. In order to win church figures over and earn their favor the low clergy were liberated from serfdom under the Emperor's order of July 7, 1808. The government explained this fact by their respectful attitudes towards God and church. In Imereti and Racha the low clergy consisted of 414 households which included 1282 church figures; 387 households (273 and 114 households in Imereti and Racha, respectively) were liberated from serfdom during 1821-1832.

The government especially strived for improving material conditions of the clergy.

The exarchate of Georgia had large gains from real estate. Churches and monasteries owned mills, fishing spots, dye-works, etc. They used to receive quite generous donations. Such amounts by 1882 totaled to 19,572 rubles and 44 kopeks.

Despite the above-mentioned statistical data the clergy of Imereti eparchy lived in rather unenviable conditions according to the archival materials obtained by us. In most cases, churches enjoyed neither arable lands nor donations that were supposed to be the source of income for church figures.