



Additional information №5

King Giorgi VIII: the legitimate heir of the eastern and western royal dynasties of the Bagrationis

Through King (Queen) Tamar's second marriage two children were born: the elder son Giorgi Lasha and the younger daughter Rusudan. Later on these became King Giorgi IV Lasha (1210/13-1223) and King (Queen) Rusudan I (1223-1245).



King Giorgi IV Lasha
(1210/13-1223)

In a period of about two hundred years the descendants of King Giorgi IV and King (Queen) Rusudan I laid the foundations for two important royal branches: that of David VI "Narini" (eastern Georgia) and that of David VII "Ulu" (western Georgia).

King Giorgi IV Lasha had established that his sister Rusudan would be his immediate successor. In the meantime, Rusudan had to bring up her brother's illegitimate son, Prince David, who upon reaching his adulthood had to become King of Georgia. King (Queen) Rusudan partially fulfilled her brother's wish, because instead she proclaimed her own son, David, as co-ruler. In 1245 her son was anointed as King David VI "Narini" of united Georgia (*Essays on Georgian History. Volume 3, edited by Z. An-chabadze, F.Guchua, Tbilisi, 1979, p. 570*).

Through time, this led to direct confrontation between the two parties: the supporters of David (Queen Rusudan I's son) and the other David (King Giorgi IV's son). The supporters of the former asserted that, according to the Georgian law of royal succession ("Zedsidzeoba"), King David had the right to become king since he was the legitimate son of Queen Rusudan, while the other David was the illegitimate son of King Giorgi (*The History of Georgia from Ancient Times to the end of the XIX Century Vol. 1, edited by A. Apakidze, N. Berdzenishvili, M. Dumbadze, G. Melikishvili, Sh. Meskhia, P. Ratiani; Tbilisi, 1958, p. 229-230*).

On the other hand, the supporters of David (the son of King Giorgi) argued that the Queen had failed to comply with the King's request. Because of the strong position taken by the supporters of Rusudan's son, those of his rival demanded that the dispute be solved by the Mongols, because at that time Georgia was still under Mongolian domination. Finally, the dispute was examined by the Great Khan. According to Mongolian law there was no difference between legitimate and illegitimate children, therefore the Mongols decided that both of them had to reign together, but priority



King (Queen) Rusudan I
(1223-1245)



King David VII “Ulu” (1247-1270).
Illustration made by Marco Polo

was to be based on their age. That is the reason why the son of King Giorgi, David, was named “Ulu”, which in Mongolian means the elder, and the son of Queen Rusudan was named “Narini”, which means the younger. The two kings ruled together between 1247 and 1259. Later on, Georgia was divided into two parts: King David VI “Narini” reigned over western Georgia, while King David VII “Ulu” ruled over eastern Georgia (*Essays on Georgian History. Volume 3, edited by Z. Anchabadze, F.Guchua, Tbilisi, 1979, p. 573*).



King David VI “Narini”
(1245-1293)

Despite the fact that in following centuries the descendants of King David VII “Ulu” continued to rule over Georgia, historians continued to argue that the royal line of King David VI “Narini” had more legal rights than the descendants of the illegitimate King David VII “Ulu”. This controversy was solved by the second marriage of King Alexander I “the Great” (1412-1442), who married a direct descendant of King David VI “Narini”, Princess Tamar (the daughter of the western provincial King Alexander (I) (1372-1389)). From this marriage was born their son Giorgi, who later on became the last king of united Georgia. Giorgi VIII, who united the western and eastern royal houses, ruled between 1446 and 1466.