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THE IMPACT OF THE CRIMEAN QUESTION ON GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS (1783—1784)*

This paper considers the reasons for drafting an additional article to the Treaty of Georgievsk, which concerns the issue of consecrating Georgian monarchs as kings. As it is evidenced from archive materials, in May-June 1783, King Erekle II of Kartl-Kakheti (Eastern Georgia) suspended the process of signing the Russian-Georgian agreement for almost a month and a half. He gave his consent to formalize the treaty at the end of June, although at the same time, he requested that the right of coronation of Georgian monarchs be reflected in the treaty. Prior to signing the treaty, Georgian ambassadors also made the same proposal, but it was turned down by Russia. Erekle II soon sent his representative to the imperial court and again insisted on having his conditions taken into consideration. The Russian empress finally approved the Georgian king's proposition in September 1783.

Erekle II's appeals make it clear that he linked the right to the coronation of the king in the treaty with the factor of the inviolability of the existence of the kingdom. With this request, he wanted to receive an additional guarantee from the empire that his kingdom would not be abolished in the future. Such a proposition has never been made by the king of Georgia. In our opinion, the developments taking place in the Crimean Khanate had an impact on Erekle II's cautious policy. He put forward this new demand at a time when the news about the annexation of Crimea was widely spread.

Key words: Georgia, Crimea, Erekle II, Catherine II, Treaty of Georgievsk, coronation.

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ВЛИЯНИЕ КРЫМСКОГО ВОПРОСА НА ГРУЗИНО-РОССИЙСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ (1783—1784 ГГ.)

В статье рассматриваются причины составления дополнительной статьи (артикуля) Георгиевского трактата, касающейся вопроса посвящения грузинских монархов в цари. Согласно архивным материалам, царь Картли-Кахети (Восточной Грузии) Ираклий II почти на полтора месяца, в мае—июне 1783 г., приостановил процесс оформления русско-грузинского договора. В конце июня он согласился на его подписание, хотя в то же самое время запросил отразить в договоре право коронации грузинских монархов. Перед подписанием договора такое же предложение было выдвинуто послами Грузии, однако российская сторона не удовлетворила их запрос. Вскоре Ираклий II отправил своего представителя к императорскому двору и еще раз четко потребовал уссмотрения своего запроса. Наконец, в сентябре 1783 г. предложение грузинского царя было удовлетворено российским императором.

Из обращений Ираклия II отчетливо видно, что право на коронацию царя в трактате он связывал с фактором неприкосновенности существования царства. Этим запросом он желал получить от империи дополнительную гарантию того, что в будущем его царство не будет упразднено. Грузинский царь никогда раньше не делал подобного предложения. На наш взгляд, осторожная политика Ираклия II была связана с

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происходящими в Крымском ханстве процессами. Он выдвинул свое новое требование как раз в тот момент, когда широко распространились известия об аннексии Крыма.

Ключевые слова: Грузия, Крым, Ираклий II, Екатерина II, Георгиевский трактат, коронация.

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Numerous publications have been devoted to studying the Treaty of Georgievsk by virtue of which Kartli-Kakheti (Eastern Georgia) came under the protection of the Russian Empire. However, some aspects of the agreement still require further research. This time our attention will be focused on an additional article of the treaty concerning the coronation of Georgian monarchs.

As is known, the treaty was concluded on July 24, 1783, in the fortress of Georgievsk (in the North Caucasus). On behalf of Russia, it was signed by the commander-in-chief of the Caucasian Corps, General Pavel Potemkin, and on behalf of Georgia — by princes Ivane Bagrationi (Mukhranbatoni) and Garsevan Chavchavadze. In particular, three documents were signed: I. The body of the treaty; II. Separate Articles; III. “An oath of fealty”. As for the additional article, it was drafted later (Macharadze 1983: 19, 21, 45, 47).

The additional article states that since there was a long-standing tradition of being crowned and anointed the kings of Kartli and Kakheti, the Russian emperor allowed them to be anointed in the same way, but the Georgian monarchs had to follow this rule after taking the oath of allegiance to the emperor. In addition, the Russian emperor sent the Georgian king the investiture specified in the treaty and the usual royal crown, which the king would receive and wear (Macharadze 1983: 72—73, 78).

As revealed from one of the letters sent by Pavel Potemkin to King of Kartl-Kakheti Erekle II (King of Kakheti in 1744—1762; King of Kartl-Kakheti in 1762—1798), he signed the additional article in December 1783 after which the document was sent to Tbilisi (NCM. H-2300: 33—35, Figs. 1—3). Ioane Bagrationi and Garsevan Chavchavadze signed the document on January 24, 1784, the day of ratification of a treaty scheduled in Tbilisi. It is due to this circumstance that the Georgian version of the document is dated January 24, 1784, rather than June 24, 1783, and Tbilisi is indicated as the place of signing. In the Russian version of the additional article, however, neither the date nor the place of drafting is specified (Macharadze 1983: 72—73, 78).

To put it briefly, the additional article is an essencial component of the Treaty of Georgievsk, though it was neither approved at the Georgievsk fortress nor signed by the parties at the time the treaty was adopted. Obviously, it is interesting to investigate all the circumstances that led to the drafting of the additional article. At the same time, it is important to find out the reason the document was executed later than expected.

This fact is quite well known in historiography, although this issue has never been the subject of special research. For instance, Russian historian P. Butkov, who studied the period of Russian Empire, notes that since Erekle was not consecrated upon his accession to the throne, the emperor permitted the ritual of coronation to be performed at his request (Butkov 1869: 129). Like Butkov, N. Dubrovin also regards the issue of consecration as unimportant (Dubrovin 1886: 11—12). There is a similar approach in the works of other researchers from the subsequent era (Tsintsadze 1960: 123—131; Macharadze 1983, etc.).

Specific information on the issue can be found in documentary sources, the combination of which allows us to draw interesting conclusions. As is known, in early April 1783, the favorite of Russia’s Empress Catherine II (1762—1796) and the great statesman of the empire, general-in-chief Grigory Potemkin personally sent a draft treaty to Georgia by the hand of Lieutenant Colonel Vasily Tamara. At the same time, Grigory Potemkin notified Erekle II that the affairs related to Georgia were under his direct jurisdiction, and the right to sign the treaty was granted to Pavel Potemkin, a commander-in-chief of the Caucasian Line. Grigory Potemkin also emphasized that the

Russian Empress not only satisfied all the demands of the Georgian king, but also made the terms of the treaty even more favorable for the Georgian side. Accordingly, he expressed his confidence that Erekle II would not raise any objections and that the Georgian ambassadors would soon depart for the Caucasian Line in the shortest possible time to finalize an agreement. (Dubrovin 1886: 4).

In his correspondence from the Caucasian Line dated already 9—10 May, Pavel Potemkin informed Erekle II that Tamara would deliver the draft treaty. The Russian general also called Erekle to select two representatives (ambassadors) upon Tamara's arrival in Tbilisi and send them to the Caucasian Line to facilitate a quick signing of the treaty (NCM. H-2300: 14—20).

In spite of the appeals, Erekle II postponed the procedure for almost a month and a half. The king delayed the appointment of two representatives. The Russian side could not tolerate the procedure being delayed, so the Russian authorities persistently insisted Erekle II to appoint plenipotentiary representatives and dispatch them right away to the Caucasian Line (Dubrovin 1886: 5—6). The Georgian king discussed the text of the treaty in detail for more than a month (Macharadze 1983: 18, 43). It was obvious that he was concerned about specific contract-related conditions.

On June 28, Erekle II ufinally consented to sign the treaty (NAG. F. 1449. No. 2802). However, one of the correspondences dated the very same day makes evident the reasons behind the Georgian king's reluctance and worries. The mentioned document is an appeal addressed by Erekle II to Grigory Potemkin.

At the beginning of the document, Erekle II noted that according to the decision of Catherine II, all of his requests prior to approval had to be forwarded to Grigory Potemkin. He then stated that in light of the mentioned recommendation, he was sending him a letter in which his wish was voiced. The king emphasized that historically, monarchs of the united Georgia were always consecrated as kings upon their ascension to the throne. The same tradition continued after the disintegration of the country into three independent kingdoms. The only exception occurred during the reign of Shah Abbas I, when the future rulers of Kartli and Kakheti were forced into converting to Islam by the Persian shahs. However, this practice ceased under Nadir Shah, who no longer required his father Teimuraz, to convert to Islam. Consequently, Teimuraz was also consecrated as king. However, when Erekle himself ascended to the throne, he could not arrange the consecration ceremony due to his busy schedule, despite requests from both the clergy and the populace. This time, he urged the Russian side to append in the treaty the right to consecrate Georgian monarchs as kings (through anointment and coronation). The king also brought up the issue of the Catholicos, although he did not impose any specific conditions in this regard. Rather, he emphasized the rights of the Catholicos of Mtskheta (East Georgia) as the archpriest of the autocephalous church and insisted that this circumstance be taken into account (NAG. F. 1449. No. 2803).

On June 28, Erekle II sent a renewed request to Grigory Potemkin and shortly thereafter dispatched, ambassadors (Ioane Mukhtanbatoni and Garsevan Chavchavadze) who arrived in the town of Mozdok on July 15 (Macharadze 1983: 19, 44)[1]. By that time, Potemkin, the king's addressee, was in Kherson[2], not far from the Caucasus region. The message sent in advance to Grigory Potemkin indicates that the king of Kartl-Kakheti hoped that his request would be reflected in the treaty. It is also important to note that Russian officials constantly emphasized the generosity of the empress and reminded Erekle that every request made by the Georgian king had been taken into account. Against this background, Erekle probably believed that the appeal sent to Grigory Potemkin would be sufficient to resolve the issue.

As is known, on July 18, the representatives of the Kingdom of Kartl-Kakheti left Mozdok for the fortress of Georgievsk. After a ceremonial reception of the Georgian delegation that evening, discussions on the agreement's specifics were conducted during meetings from July 19 to 23 (Macharadze 1983: 19, 44).

At the meeting on July 21, the Georgian ambassadors presented Erekle II's demands. The key request, as recorded in the meeting minutes, was the issue of consecration as king. The ambassadors highlighted that, aside from Muslim rulers, Georgian monarchs were traditionally consecrated, and

[1] As the journey from Tbilisi to Mozdok took less than ten days at that time, the ambassadors had to leave Tbilisi after July 5.

[2] Grigory Potemkin's presence in Kherson in June 1783 is confirmed by documentary evidence. For instance, on June 16, 1783, from Kherson he issued a secret order addressed to Colonel Stepan Burnashev (Burnashev 1901: 4).

Erekle's father, Teimuraz, continued this tradition. Nadir Shah not only prohibited this ceremony to be conducted but even sent high-ranking officials to attend it. The ambassadors expressed uncertainty about whether the Georgian monarchs would receive the investiture specified in Article III of the treaty during their coronation or upon their ascension to the throne.

Georgian ambassadors also demanded that the rights of the Catholicos of Mtskheta be protected and the royal title be enshrined in the treaty in the form that had been developed at the Georgian royal court and the epithet "Highness" be awarded to Erekle. Finally, Ioane Bagrationi and Garsevan Chavchavadze specially underline the empress's pledge to maintain the royal title and the structure of the Georgian kingdom (Zaitsev 2014: 203—204).

All of the proposals made by the Georgians were turned down by Pavel Potemkin (Zaitsev 2014: 205—206). Consequently, the text of the treaty approved by Catherine II remained practically unchanged and, it did not reflect the demands presented by Erekle II in June.

A few days after the treaty was signed, the generously rewarded Georgian ambassadors returned to their homeland. In a letter dated July 30, Pavel Potemkin congratulated Erekle II on signing the treaty. He lavished praise on the ambassadors, Ioane Bagrationi and Garsevan Chavchavadze, along with their assistant, Archimandrite Gaioz, and the secretary, Zaza Gabashvili (NCM. H-2300: 28—30).

Archival materials reveal that soon after the return of the Georgian ambassadors to Tbilisi, Erekle II renewed his demands for consideration of his terms. For this purpose, at the end of August 1783, he sent Georgian Prince Sulkhan Tumanishvili to the imperial court in St. Petersburg. This time, the king ignored Catherine II's recommendation and, in addition to addressing Grigory Potemkin, sent a separate report directly to the empress.

Following diplomatic etiquette, the Georgian king reported to Catherine II on August 25, 1783, that he had twice made an important request to General-anshef Grigory Potemkin. He urged the empress to append additional article to the treaty which would reflect the longstanding tradition adhered to by his ancestors (NAG. F. 1449. No. 2800. Fig. 4).

The report sent to Grigory Potemkin is undated, although it must have been written in August 1783. In this appeal, Erekle II once again asked the General-anshef to grant the right to anoint and crown Georgian monarchs with myrrh. The king emphasized the fact that at the treaty level he had received the empress's promise not to abolish the kingdom, and this time he strongly demanded that the right to consecrate the king be included in the treaty (NAG. F. 1449. No. 2801. Figs. 5—6).

It is obvious that this time Erekle II strongly demanded the inclusion of the right of consecration in the treaty. The content of his appeals also indicates that he was displeased after the treaty was signed due to the neglect of his proposal. Interestingly, this is confirmed in a letter from Pavel Potemkin, who informed Stefan Burnashev, the official representative of the Russian Empire, in September 1783, that after the signing the treaty, Erekle did not write a single word to him about the treaty, which seemed very strange to him (Burnashev 1901: 9—10).

We think that the motive of the Georgian king is evident from the report sent to Grigory Potemkin in August 1783. He linked up the reflection of right of king's consecration in the treaty with the maintenance of the kingdom's integrity. With this demand, he hoped to get an additional guarantee from the empress that his kingdom would not be abolished in the future.

The letter from Grigory Potemkin to the Emperor, dated August 5, 1783, reveals that after the signing of the Treaty of Georgievsk, the Russian side did not even consider the fulfillment of the terms set forth by Irakli II. General-anshef, from the Karasbazar camp in Crimea, informed the empress about the signing and forwarded the signed agreement. In his letter, Grigory Potemkin emphasized that only one article concerning the Catholicos was yet to be drafted, which he himself would submit to the empress for approval (Ryzhenkov 1983: 117). The content of this additional article was outlined in the draft of the treaty itself (Zaitsev 2014: 144).

After Erekle II sent his representative prince to St. Petersburg at the end of August and strongly demanded that his proposal be considered, the Russian side changed its position. Soon after the ratification of the Treaty of Georgievsk (September 21, 1783), Catherine II approved an additional article

on September 30, 1783. By virtue of the mentioned article, the Georgian monarch was granted the right of coronation and anointing at the level of the treaty. In the article regarding king's consecration, Erekle was already mentioned with the epithet "Highness" (Complete Collection of Laws 1830: 1025).

It is noteworthy that Erekle II never attempted to exercise the right he gained after tremendous efforts. He was not crowned king upon approval of the additional article. This specific fact clearly shows that the Georgian monarch's main goal was not to have a coronation ceremony, but rather to have this right included in the Russian-Georgian treaty.

This time, we will try to find out the reasons that made the king take this step.

Generally, until June 1783, Erekle II had not made such a request either in the course of negotiations to join the Russian protectorate or at any other point in their relationship with the empire. Furthermore, Georgians considered Russia to be an ally in their conflict with Muslim countries in the 16th — 18th centuries. Georgian political leaders did not expect any threat from Russia, but considered close political ties with the empire as a way to maintain their independence. As it is evidenced from the archival material discussed above, this attitude changed to some extent immediately before the signing of the Treaty of Georgievsk.

In our view, Erekle II's cautious policy towards the Russian Empire was determined by the events taking place in the region, particularly the the processes developed in the Crimean Khanate. As is known, according to Catherine II's manifesto of April 8, 1783, the former Khanate was officially incorporated into the Russian Empire (Complete Collection of Laws 1830: 897—898). During the early months of 1783 the negotiations with the Crimean Khan were held behind closed doors and no manifesto was issued (Smirnov 1889: 228). However, in May-June of the same year, the information about the liquidation of the Khanate and joining the Russian Empire became widespread. It was at the end of June 1783 that the process of swearing the loyalty of the local population to the Russian Empire was completed (Butkov 1869: 69—70).

It should be noted that Georgians had close trade relations with Crimea (Tabuashvili 2017: 284—289), and the royal court of Kartl-Kakheti always received information about the state of affairs there (Tabuashvili 2018: 331). Thus, it seems impossible that Erekle II was unaware of the developments in Crimea in May—June o1783. Apparently, this fact was also known to the Russian officials, and they did not even hide the information about the ongoing processes in Crimea from the Georgian king. For instance, in June 1783, the commander-in-chief of the Caucasus Line delivered Stefan Burnashev the text of the manifesto issued by the emperor, which was made public at that time in Crimea. Pavel Potemkin stated that he had no mandate to make the manifesto public in Georgia, though his information should have been reported at least to the king (Burnashev 1901: 5).

There is no doubt the developments in Crimea gave Erekle II reason for concern. The thing is that during in the second half of the 18th century this was the first time when the Russian Empire abolished a political entity in the region and directly established Russian rule in the region. It is true that in the 70s of the 18th century Kabarda and some areas of the North Caucasus were declared part of the empire, but this was completely different from the issue of Crimea. As is known, there was no state entity in Kabarda or the surrounding area. At the same time, Russian rule was not enforced in the majority of the aforementioned regions.

The fact that the Russian Empire abolished the Crimean Khanate when the Khan's throne was occupied by Shahin-Giray, who was considered an ally of the empire, did not go unnoticed by the King of Kartli-Kakheti.

It seems that the developments unfolding in the region in May—June of 1783, caused Erekle II to delay the process of signing the treaty for over a month. Against the backdrop of the annexation of the Crimean Khanate, the Georgian king began to pursue a cautious policy. Under the current circumstances, he considered the terms stipulated in the draft treaty to be inadequate and demanded additional guarantees from the empire to preserve his kingdom. Accepting the right to be consecrated at the level of the treaty represented such a guarantee, because anointment and coronation were considered the main source of legitimacy of monarchs even at that time. It was these factors that determined the king's adherence to his principles.

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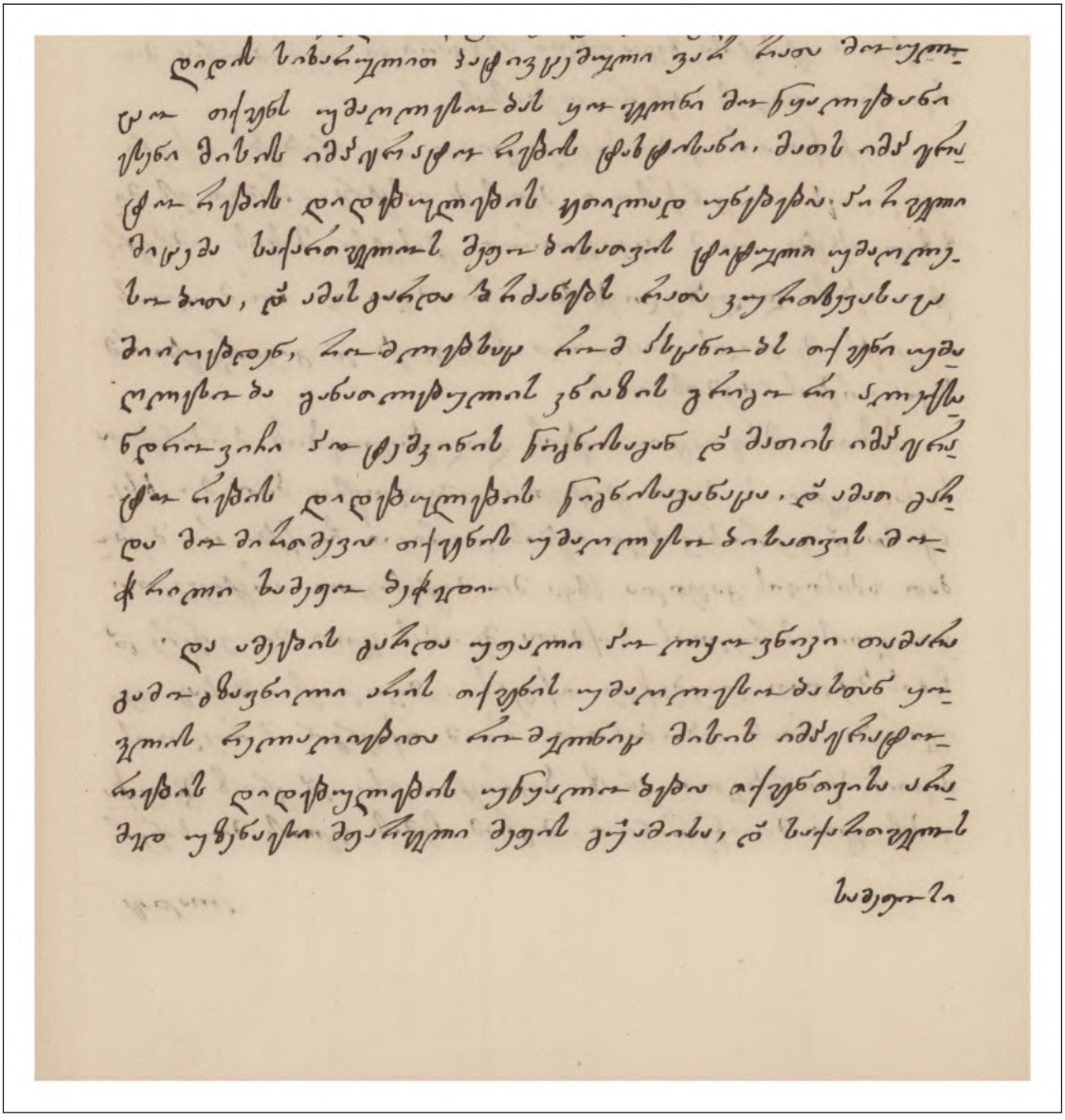

Fig. 1. The letter of Pavel Potemkin, Commander-in-chief of the Caucasus Line, to King Erekle II of Kartl-Kakheti. December 24, 1783 (in Georgian). Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts (NCM). H-2300. P. 33.

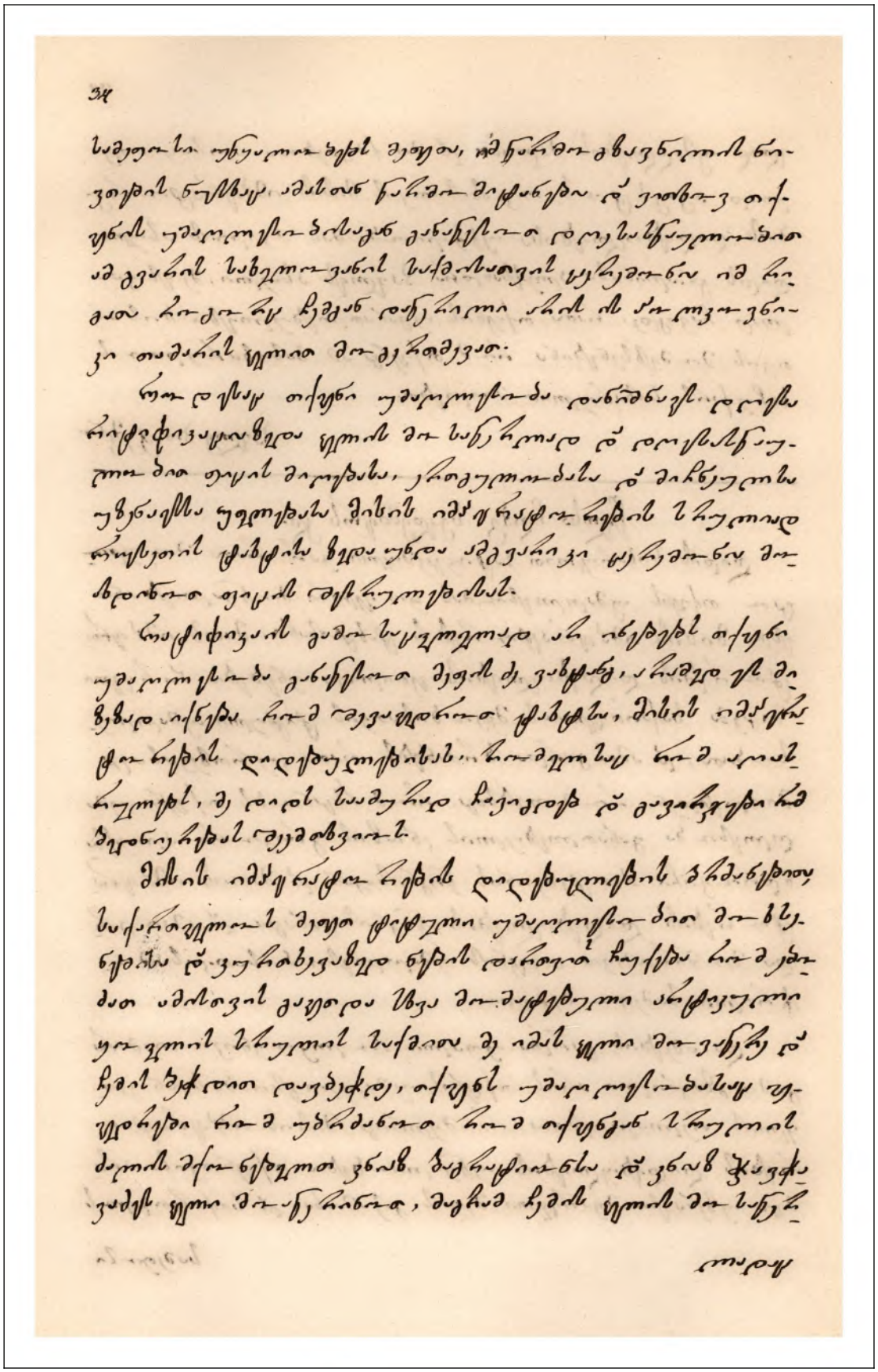

Fig. 2. The letter of Pavel Potemkin, Commander-in-chief of the Caucasus Line, to King Erekle II of Kartl-Kakheti. December 24, 1783 (in Georgian). Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts (NCM). H-2300. P. 34.

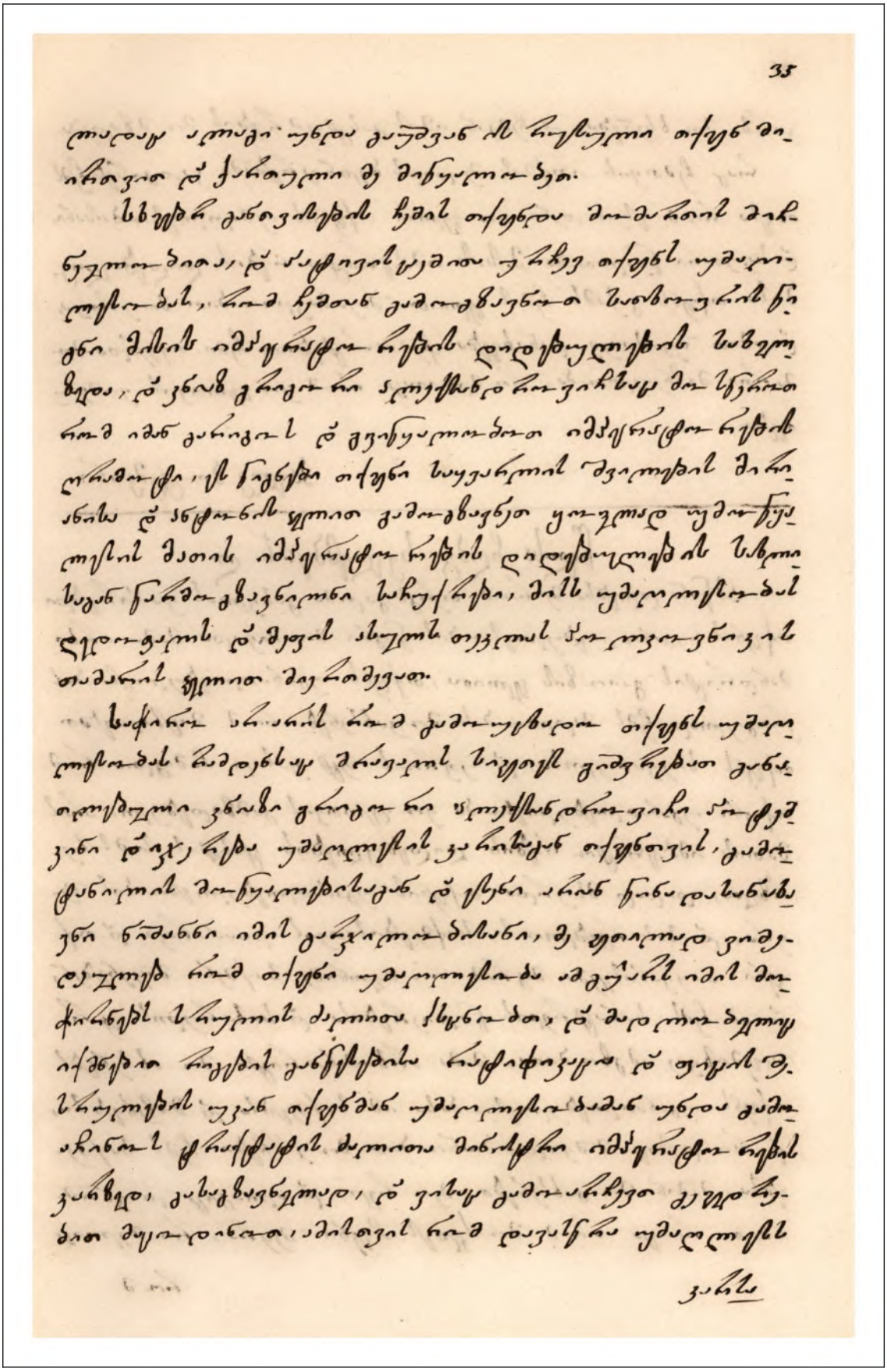

Fig. 3. The letter of Pavel Potemkin, Commander-in-chief of the Caucasus Line, to King Erekle II of Kartl-Kakheti. December 24, 1783 (in Georgian). Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts (NCM). H-2300. P. 35.

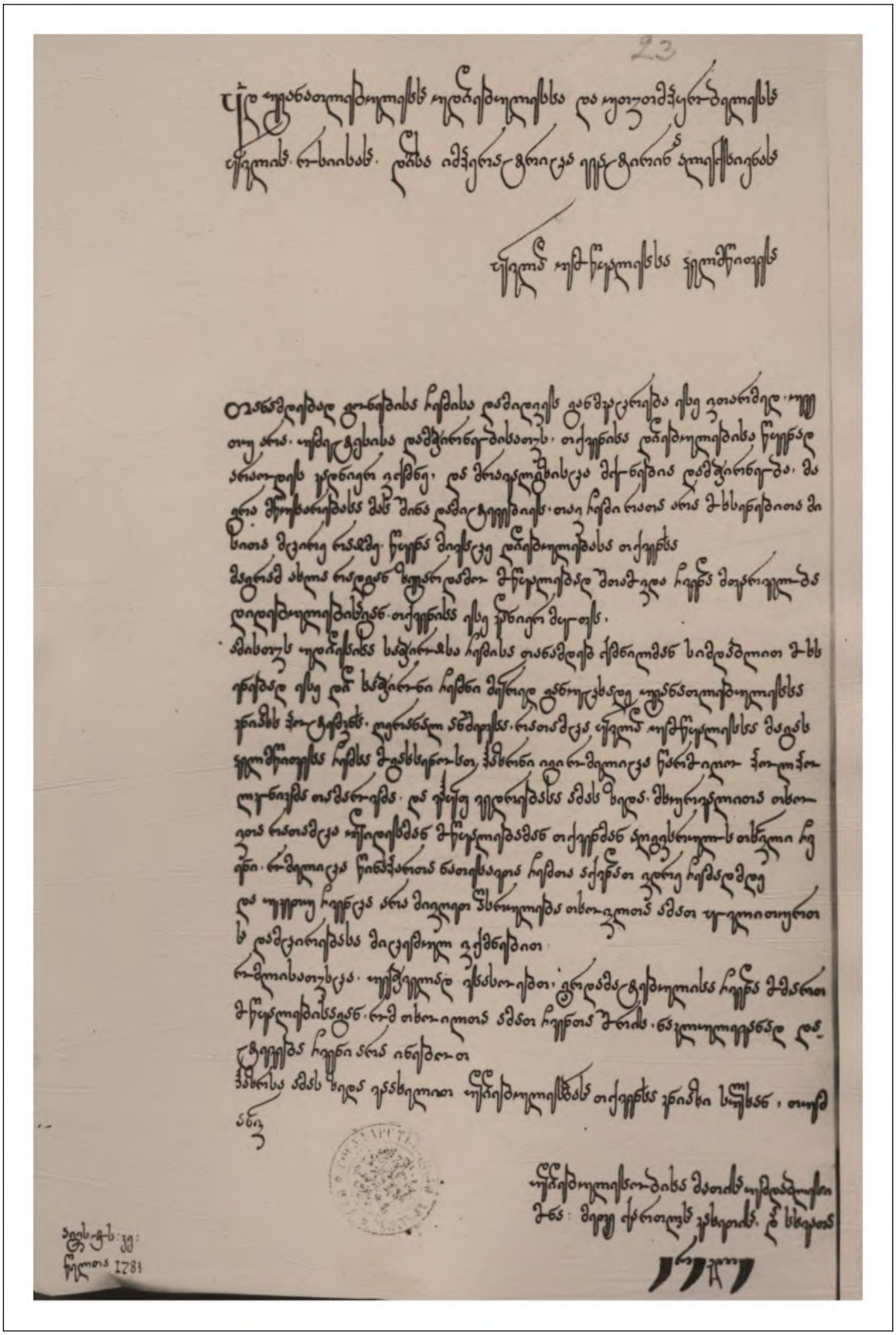

Fig. 4. Erekle II's appeal to Russian Empress Catherine II. August 25, 1783 (in Georgian). National Archives of Georgia (NAG). F. 1449. No. 2800 (photocopy).

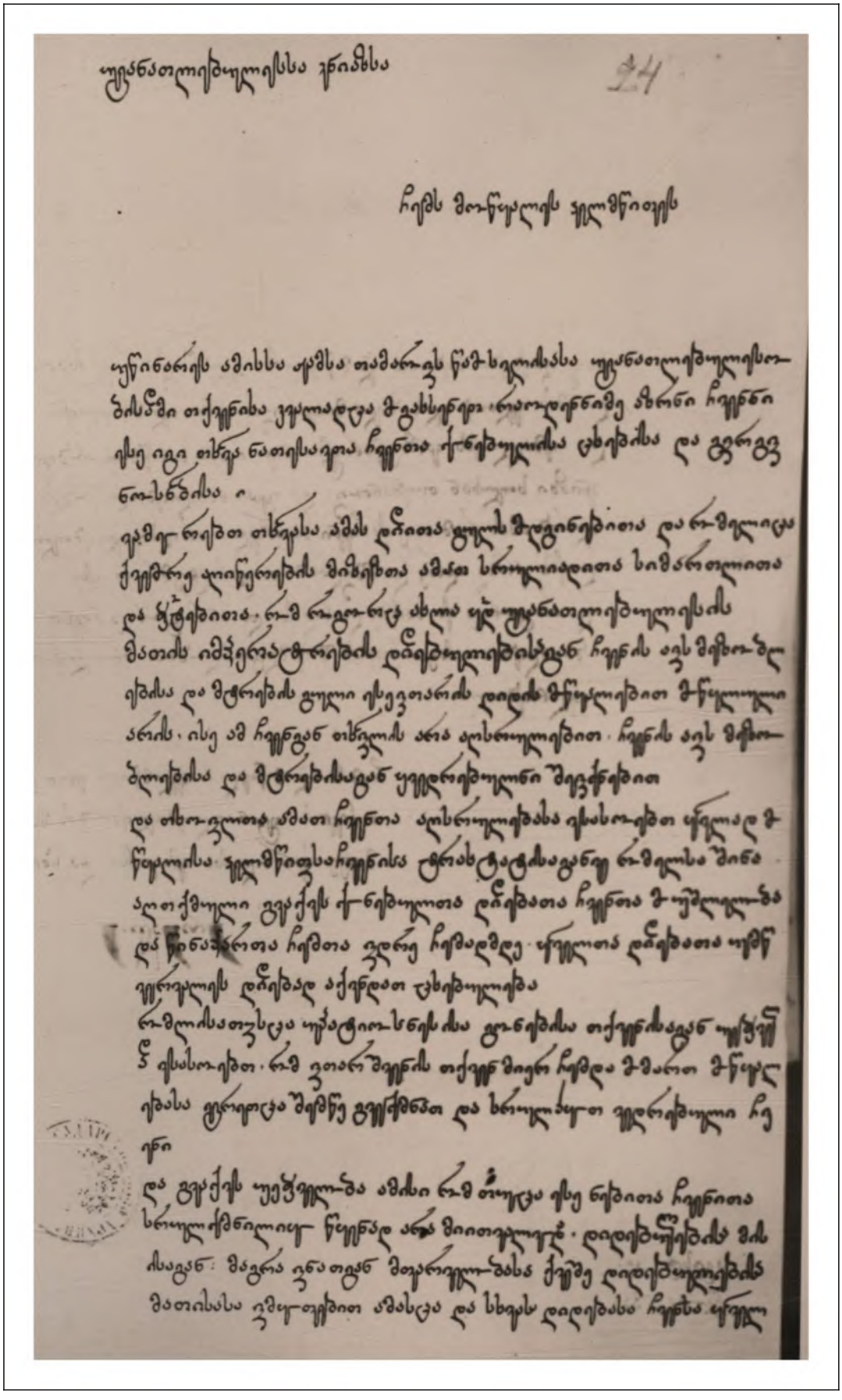

Fig. 5. An appeal of Erekle II to Grigory Potemkin [August 1783] (in Georgian). National Archives of Georgia (NAG). F. 1449. No. 2801 (photocopy).

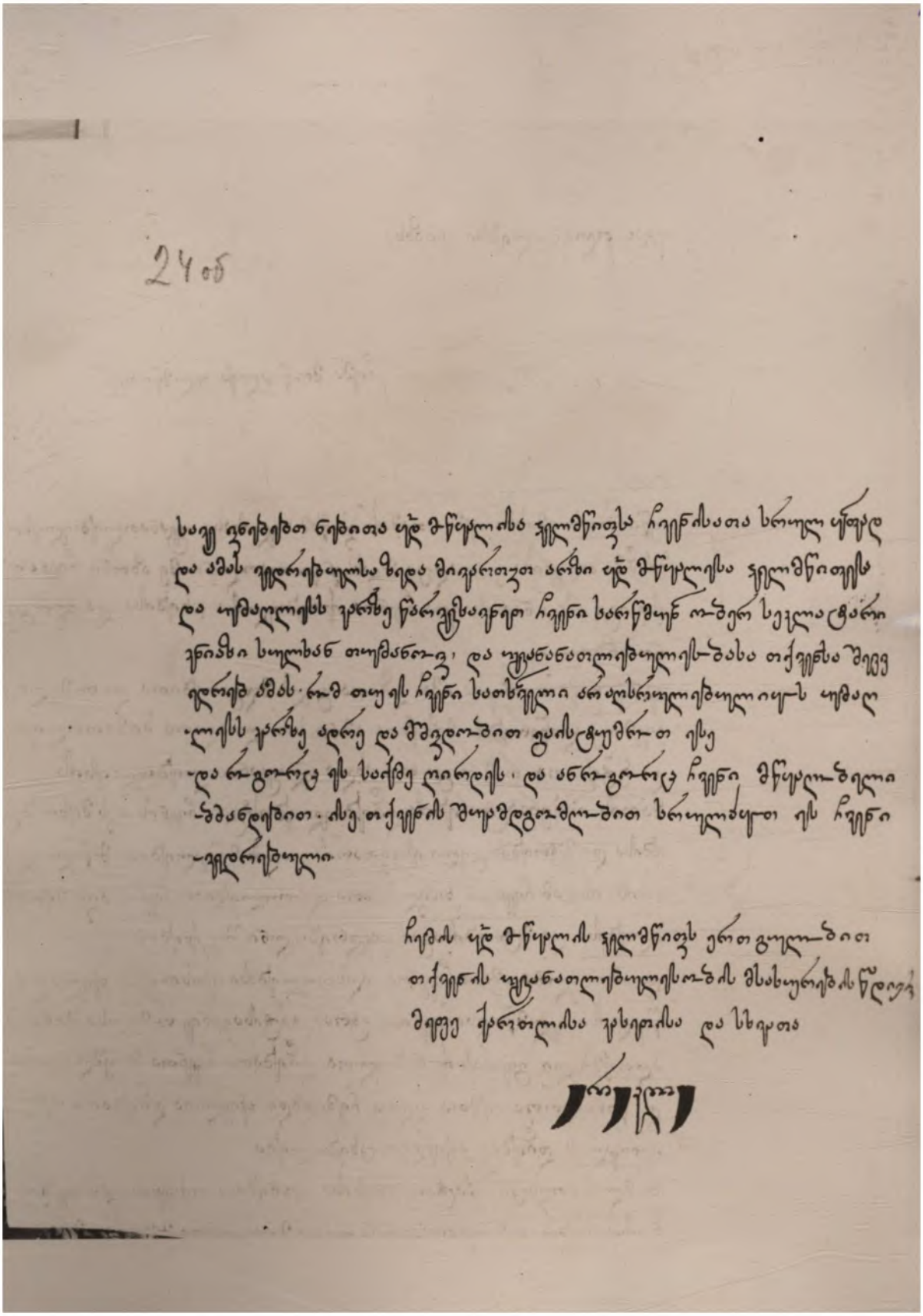

Fig. 6. An appeal of Erekle II to Grigory Potemkin [August 1783] (in Georgian). National Archives of Georgia (NAG). F. 1449. No. 2801 (photocopy).