

Traditional and Innovative in the Ecclesiastical Geography of Tao-Klarjeti

SUMMARY

The paper deals with the problem of church organization of south-western Georgia under the early Bagratids. In the 9th-10th centuries five bishoprics were established or re-established in Tao-Klarjeti: Ishkhani (830s) and Bana (880s) in the province of Tao, Tbeti in Shavsheti (910s), Dadasheni in Kola (9th c.), and Valashkerti in Basiani (940s). The bishops were under the authority of the Mtskheta patriarchate. Foundation of the sees pursued very definite goals: bringing down any claims of the Greek Church for jurisdiction over the territories, which once had been parts of the Empire (Ajara, Tao and Basiani), clearing the monothysites out of the region, and converting Armenians to Orthodoxy and thus bringing them into the bosom of the Georgian Church. Rivalry among the various representatives of the Bagratid house was also one of the decisive factors for the bishoprics' creation.

The boundaries of the bishoprics were set up by the supreme lay authorities of Tao-Klarjeti. As a rule, the boundaries of the ecclesiastical provinces did not follow those of the greater fiefs, and instead of it geographical peculiarities and historical traditions were taken into consideration.