

= David III of Tao =

David III Kuropalates ( Georgian : ????? III ??????????? , Davit ? III Kuropalati ) or David III the Great ( ????? III ???? , Davit ? III Didi ) , also known as David II , ( c . 930s ? 1000 or 1001 ) was a Georgian prince of the Bagratid family of Tao , a historic region in the Georgian ? Armenian marchlands , from 966 until his murder in 1000 . Kuropalates was a Byzantine courtier title bestowed upon him in 978 and again in 990 .

David is best known for his crucial assistance to the Byzantine Macedonian dynasty in the 976 ? 9 civil war and his unique role in the political unification of various Georgian polities as well as his patronage of Christian culture and learning . Between 987 and 989 , David joined his friend Bardas Phocas in a revolt against the Byzantine emperor Basil II , but was defeated and agreed to cede his lands to the empire on his death . Yet he was able to secure for his heir , Bagrat III , an opportunity to become the first ruler of a unified Georgian kingdom .

= = History = =

David was the younger son of Adarnase V , a representative of the Second House of Tao , a branch of the Kartli line of the Georgian Bagrationi ( Bagratid ) dynasty which held sway over Tao ( a province on the historic Georgian @-@ Armenian border known to the Armenians as Tayk ; now part of Turkey ) since the extinction of the original Tao line in the 940s .

= = = Alliance with the Byzantine Empire = = =

He succeeded his brother , Bagrat II , as a duke of Tao in 966 , and through his expansionist policy and flexible diplomacy began assembling a larger state . In order to enact his ambitious plans , David had to secure his independence from the Byzantine Empire , which would reach its greatest height under the emperor Basil II ( r . 976 @-@ 1025 ) .

The Byzantines ' eastern neighbors ? the fragmented Armenian and Georgian principalities ? rarely threatened the empire directly , but were of particular interest to Constantinople as they controlled strategic international trade routes that ran through their domains . The Byzantines had already annexed the Armenian principalities of Taron ( 966 ) and Manzikert ( 968 ) and posed a potential danger to the constellation of several Georgian Bagratid principalities known as Tao @-@ Klarjeti . However , the integrity of the empire itself was under serious threat after a full @-@ scale rebellion , led by Bardas Skleros , broke out in 976 . Following a series of successful battles the rebels swept across Asia Minor and threatened Constantinople itself . In the urgency of a situation , the young emperor Basil requested aid from David of Tao , who promptly responded and sent 12 @, @ 000 first @-@ rate cavalry troops under the command of Tornikios to reinforce the recently defeated loyal Byzantine general Bardas Phokas , thereby contributing to the decisive loyalist victory at the Battle of Pankalia near Caesarea on 24 March 979 .

David 's reward was the lifetime rule of key imperial territories in eastern Asia Minor , known to the contemporary Georgian sources as the " Upper Lands of Greece " ( ?????? ?????????? ??????????????? ) , consisting chiefly of northwestern Armenian lands : the city of Theodosiopolis or Karin ( Geo . Karnu @-@ kalaki , present @-@ day Erzurum , Turkey ) , Phasiane , Hark ( now Mu? Province ) , Apahunik , Mardali ( Mardaghi ) , Khaldoyarich , and Chormayri . On this occasion , he was granted the high Byzantine court title of kouropalates . Basil II also rewarded the valor of David ' s commander Tornikios by funding a Georgian Orthodox monastery on Mount Athos . Although populated now chiefly with Greek monks , it is to this day known as Iviron , " of the Iberians ( i.e. Georgians ) " .

These formidable acquisitions made David the most influential ruler in the Caucasus , enabling him to interfere in and arbitrate dynastic disputes in both Georgia and Armenia . The medieval Georgian authors call him " greatest of all the kings of Tao " and the eleventh @-@ century Armenian chronicler Aristakes Lastivertsi describes him as :

a mighty man , a builder of the world , very honorable , a lover of the poor , indeed , the definition of

peace . For in his day it was as the prophecy states : everyone reposed under his vine and his fig tree .

Being in control of highly important commercial centers , his principality profited from taxing the major trading routes running through southwestern Caucasus and eastern Anatolia . David invested these revenues in extensive building projects : constructing towns , forts and churches , and promoting Georgian monastic communities and cultural activities both in Georgia and abroad .

= = = Issue of succession = = =

Having no children of his own , David adopted his kinsman , the young prince Bagrat , heir to the Bagratid throne of Kartli ( Iberia ) . He did so at the request of the energetic Georgian nobleman Iovane Marushis @-@ dze . Through his fortunate bloodlines Bagrat was destined to sit upon two thrones . Furthermore , through his mother Gurandukht , sister of the childless Abkhazian king Theodosius III , Bagrat was a potential heir to the realm of Abkhazia . Making a plan for the creation of an all @-@ Georgian state , David occupied Kartli for his foster @-@ son in 976 and repulsed the troops from the easternmost Georgian kingdom of Kakheti , which had recently occupied the western sector of Kartli with its rock @-@ hewn city of Uplistsikhe . Two years later , in 978 , David and Marushis @-@ dze secured the crown of Abkhazia for Bagrat by displacing Theodosius III .

David ? s good fortunes changed in 987 when he , anxious to make his extensive possessions a hereditary Bagratid domain , joined his long @-@ time friend Bardas Phokas in a rebellion against the emperor Basil . Once the rebels were defeated by the Byzantine @-@ Rus ' forces in 989 , Basil dispatched a strong force under John of Chaldea to punish the Georgians , and David had to submit . Reconciled with the emperor , he was granted , in c . 990 , the title of kuropalates again in return for his promise that upon his death the lands previously placed under his sovereignty would revert to the Byzantine Empire .

Another problem arose around the same year , when Bagrat of Abkhazia planned a punitive expedition against the non @-@ submissive duke Rati of Kldekari in Lower Kartli . Persuaded that his foster @-@ son intended to attack Tao and kill him , David crushed the army led by Bagrat ? s natural father Gurgen on its march to Kldekari . As a medieval Georgian chronicler relates :

Bagrat then went [ to David ] alone , fell at his feet and swore that he was going against Rati . [ David ] believed that too and released him in peace .

= = = Last years and death = = =

After the reconciliation with the emperor and his kinsmen , David led a series of successful raids against the Muslim emirates of Lake Van and Azerbaijan . Bagrat II of Georgia ( grandfather of Bagrat , David ? s adoptee ) , and Gagik I of Armenia allied themselves with David , who recaptured Manzikert from the Marwanid emir of Diyar Bakr about 993 and raided Akhlat , another important stronghold of this Kurdish dynasty , in 997 . Mamlan , the Rawadid emir of Azerbaijan , was also twice defeated , the second time decisively , in 998 , near Archesh .

David was murdered by his nobles early in 1000 . According to Aristakes :

They had mixed poison into the communion on Good Thursday , and had given it to him [ Dawit ' ] to drink , causing that venerable man to choke to death . [ This was ] because they had wearied of him , and were interested in promises [ made to them ] earlier by the emperor .

Although the Georgian Chronicles maintain that David died in 1001 , several Armenian and Muslim accounts suggest he may have died in 1000 . Aristakes gives the date of David ? s death as March 28 , 1000 , which is closely corroborated by another Armenian chronicler Asoghik who says David died on the Easter day of the year 449 of the Armenian calendar , i.e. , March 31 , 1000 . Yet another Armenian , Samuel Anetsi , also puts the date as 1000 .

= = = Wars of the Kuropalates ? succession = = =

Basil II was at that time in the eastern provinces of his empire , wintering on the plain of Tarsus

following his campaign against the Fatimid dynasty in Syria . On hearing of David ' s death he marched north @-@ eastward to claim the lands David had promised to the emperor . The local Georgian and Armenian nobility submitted without any serious resistance . The only notable incident occurred when a quarrel between a Georgian soldier and a Varangian Guardsman over a bale of hay developed into a major fight , involving 6 @, @ 000 Varangians and taking the lives of thirty Georgian high @-@ ranking nobles .

King Bagrat , David ' s foster @-@ son , met with Basil but , unable to prevent the annexation of David ' s realm , had to recognize the new borders in reward of the imperial title of kouropalates . Despite this setback , Bagrat was able to become the first king of an all @-@ Georgian unified monarchy , a result made possible largely by the efforts of David of Tao , who , as the modern scholar Stephen Rapp puts in , " appropriately ranks high on any ' Top Ten ' list of Georgian history . "

There is some disagreement among modern scholars on whether David ceded to the Byzantines only those lands which had been granted to him as a reward for his assistance against the rebel Bardas Skleros , or if it had been the whole of his principality that was acquired by Basil II . As the former was endowed upon David for lifetime stewardship , it would be more reasonable to assume that he conceded his entire realm , i.e. , Thither Tao / Tayk and the adjacent Armenian counties up to Lake Van . Whatever the extent of David ' s domain , the Georgian kings would not so easily reconcile with the loss of those territories , leading to a series of conflicts with the Byzantine Empire in the eleventh century .