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**FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DATE OF DEATH OF  
JOHN (TORNIKE) SYNGELOS**

Georgian as well as foreign written records have preserved considerable information about the life and the last years of John born Tornike or John Syngelos, the founder of the Georgian monastery on Mount Athos, known as Iveron. However, the year of the death of this celebrated commander as a layman and later the renowned church father has not yet been established and scholars propose various dates.

Before the start of the 1940s, this date was believed to be 987, while Korneli Kekelidze suggested 985 with regard to the information on John Syngelos' death in *The Life or Our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymos* by George the Hariogite (1, 225).

This passage contains a list of offerings donated by the Georgian Iveron Monastery to the Protat (the governing council of inter-monastery affairs on Athos) to be distributed to all the monasteries on the Holy Mountain: 'And after the death of Tornike, on the Thirteenth Indiction 28 litrai were distributed to the whole Mountain. They gave to the monastery in Ierissos houses with fences to the value of 7 litrai, as a shelter for traveling brothers, and also, in the same place, the finest vineyards to the value of 5 litrai' (2, 8, p. 62).

Since the text mentions the Thirteenth Indiction, which corresponds to 984-985, as the period following the death of John Syngelos, the scholar concluded that 'Tornike's death must have taken place before and not in the 13<sup>th</sup> Indiction, i. e. at least in 985' (1, 225).

H. Metreveli is of the same opinion (3, 60), although more frequently she mentions the period between 984-985 (3, 59, 72, 112). Eventually, the year 985 was established in the scholarly literature and was indicated in

the encyclopedic entry devoted to John Syngelos as the date of his death (4, 695).

To determine the date of death of John Syngelos, J. Lefort and D. Papachrissanthou referred in their work *Les premiess georgiens a J'Athos, Bedi Kartlisa* to a Byzantine document so far unknown to Georgian scholarly community. The document, which is an act of offering made to the Iveron Protat, was published as early as 1903 in Athens in G. Smirnitski's work *The Holy Mount*. It had been issued by Father Superior John the Iberian and his son Euthymos in January 985, which marks its importance.

Bearing in mind that John did not take part in composing this document, J. Lefort and D. Papachrissanthou concluded that the holy father must not have been alive by that time. Consequently, they considered the year 984 as the upper boundary of the plausible time range for the hypothetical date of John Syngelos' death. As concerns the lower boundary, the scholars associated it with three Iveron documents dated by 982, which, along with John the Iberian, bears the signature of John Syngelos too. Hence, as the documents were dated by an indiction year, J. Lefort and D. Papachrissanthou considered 1<sup>st</sup> September 982 as the lower chronological limit for the holy father's death and anchored the hypothetical date within this range (5, 13).

The above-considered sources reveal that the date of John Syngelos' death is known only in chronographical terms (i. e. in terms of years). I believe that some sources facilitate specification of the calendar date (i. e. month, day and year). In this respect we should consider an interesting finding by H. Metreveli, concerning the famous list of offerings in the name of John Angelos, included in the Athos book of offerings for the repose of souls. The researcher's attention was attracted by the date of the list, which is December 15<sup>th</sup>. In fact, the date is not connected with either of the Great Feasts, nor does it commemorate St. John, i. e. is not the name day of the Holy Father. In H. Metreveli's opinion, inobservance of this rule may point to the fact that John Syngelos died on December 15<sup>th</sup>, and that the date was included among the offering days established in the Iveron monastery (3, 59).

Identification of the day of John's death facilitates precise identification of the death year, i. e. the full date of the event. It is 15<sup>th</sup> December 984, which falls within the mentioned 13<sup>th</sup> Indiction (1<sup>st</sup> September 984 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 985). The date of the above-mentioned document issued by John the Iberian and Euthymos the Athonite, January 985, belongs to the same period. Hence, the words of George the Athonite, 'After the death of Tornike, on the Thirteenth Indiction 28 litrai were distributed to the whole

Mountain' precisely locate the death of John Syngelos (i. e. 15 December 984), as well as the donation of offerings by the Iveron monastery for the repose of John Syngelos' soul, in the following month (i. e. January 985) within the 13<sup>th</sup> indiction.

The reliability of the mentioned date is also attested by another fact that brings us back to the above-cited passage from *The Life of Our Blessed Fathers John and Euthymos*. According to the second part of this passage, apart from money, the fathers 'Gave to the monastery in Ierissos houses with fences to the value of 7 litrai (litra is a measure of wealth, an equivalent to a pound), as a shelter for traveling brothers, and also, in the same place, the finest vineyards to the value of 5 litrai' (2, 8, p. 62).

The same facilities (with an insignificant variation) are mentioned in the documents issued by John the Iberian and Euthymos in January 985: 'A court with beautiful houses bought at eight litrai of gold so that brothers travelling to Ierissos on business could find a shelter here. Also, a fertile vineyard costing 5 litrai' (5, 13).

Factual conformity between the sources is very important and confirms the assumption that they refer to the same act of offering which, as implied by the Georgian source, was given out for the repose of the soul of late John Syngelos and which, according to the Greek source, was carried out in January 985. Since this offering was intended to commemorate late John Syngelos, the fact of holding it in January unquestionably points to the reliability of December 15<sup>th</sup> as the date of the father's death.

Besides, the parallelism of the above-mentioned information attested in the Georgian and Greek sources may serve as a proof to the fact that when describing the lives and activities of fathers of the Georgian monastery, George the Athonite regularly consulted records and documents kept in the archive of the monastery. This is also confirmed by the statement which he specially cites after mentioning the offering of houses and a vineyard in Ierissos: 'And these details too we found in the records of our fathers' (2, 8, h. 62).

George the Athonite likewise referred to the archived records when indicating the Thirteenth Indiction in connection with the death of John Syngelos and with giving out the offerings. This precise date, together with December 15<sup>th</sup> mentioned in the offering document, enables us to date the death of John (Tornike) Syngelos by 15<sup>th</sup> December 984.

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