

KING VAKHTANG THE THIRD AND IERUSALEM ST. GROSS MONASTERY

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მეფე ვახტანგ III იერუსალიმსა და წმინდა  
ჯვრის მონასტერში (1300 წ. იანვარი)

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**Abstract.** There have been various scientific studies on Georgians, striving to make names for themselves in Jerusalem. Since Muslims had dominated the holy land, Georgian politicians and religious leaders constantly raised a subject on liberation of Jerusalem with European countries and promised allies their support. Georgia's effort especially was apparent during the ruling of king Lasha Giorgi the IV (1213-1223), when he intended to participate in the fifth crusade and even had the route for the attack to allies of Egypt drawn up. Alas, his plans had to be altered because of the Mongolian invasion in Georgia. He died after he had been wounded gravely in the battle. After the Mongolian occupation, Georgian rulers tried to take advantage of Mongolian and Egyptian war and free the holy land ( they had been trying to return Jerusalem to its rightful Christian owners for twenty years with Armenian kings of Cilicia). The article claims that the St. Cross Monastery book recording of funeral prayers ( Aghapi) gives us the information on King Vakhtang the third ( 1298 or 1302-1308) and Mongolian army were in Jerusalem and at St. Cross monastery, near Jerusalem in December, 1299 and in January 1300. The recording tells us that the king gave significant donation to monks, who used the income to do some renovations of the monastery. Thus, this claim elucidates quite remarkable facts that Georgian and Armenian kings among Mongols were in Jerusalem in January 1300. (although, some European and Georgian scholars show skepticism to the information).

**Key words:** Jerusalem, Mongols, Vakhtang the third, Aghapi, Egypt.

ელდარ მამისთვალიშვილი

ისტორიის მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი, გორის სახელმწიფო სასწავლო  
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**აბსტრაქტი.** ქართულ ისტორიოგრაფიაში მეცნიერულად არის შეწავლილი წმინდა მიწის, კერძოდ იერუსალიმისაკენ ქართველთა მისწრაფების მიზნებისა და შედეგების შესახებ. მას შემდეგ რაც წმინდა მიწაზე მუსლიმანები გაბატონდნენ ქართველი პოლიტიკური და რელიგიური მესვეურნი ევროპის სახელმწიფოებთან დიპლომატიური ურთიერთობის დროს მუდმივად აყენებენ წმინდა მიწის განთავისუფლების საკითხს და სავარაუდო მოკავშირეებს თვითონაც აქტიურ სამხედრო მონაწილეობას პირდებოდნენ. ქართული სახელმწიფოს აქტიურობა ამ მხრივ რელიეფურად გამოჩნდა მეფე ლაშა გიორგის IV-ის დროს (1213-1223), როდესაც ის მეხუთე ჯვაროსნულ ლაშქრობაში მონაწილეობას აპირებდა და მოკავშირეებთან ის მარშრუტიც ჰქონდა შეთანხმებული საიდანაც უნდა დაერთყა ეგვიპტის მომხრეებისათვის. მაგრამ მონღოლთა საქართველოზე თავდასხმებმა შეცვალა მეფის გეგმები, თვითონაც მათთან ბრძოლაში დაიჭრა და გარდაიცვალა. მონღოლების მიერ დაპყრობის შემდეგ ქართველი მეფეები ცდილობდნენ მონღოლების ეგვიპტის მამლუქთა სახელმწიფოს წინააღმდეგ ბრძოლა გამოეყენებინათ (ამას ცდილობდნენ კილიკიის სომეხ მაფეებთან ერთად თითქმის ორმოცი წლის განმავლობაში). მათი სურვილი იყო წმინდა ქალაქი იერუსალიმი ქრისტიანების განკარგულებაში გადასულიყო.

სტატიაში არის მტკიცება, რომ იერუსალიმის ქართულ წმინდა ჯვრის მონასტერში დაწერილი აღაპის ინფორმაცია ნათელს ხდის, რომ მეფე ვახტანგ III (1298 ან 1299 და 1302-1308) მონღოლთა ჯართან ერთად 1299 წლის დეკემბერსა და 1300 წლის იანვარში იერუსალიმსა და მის მახლობლად მდებარე ჯვრის მონასტერში იმყოფებოდა. აღაპიდან ჩანს, რომ მეფემ მონასტრის ბერებს მნიშვნელოვანი შესაწირი გადასცა, რომლითაც მათ გარკვეული სარესტავრაციო სამუშაო ჩაატარეს. ამგვარად, აღაპი სარწმუნოს ხდის ზოგიერთი თანამედროვე ევროპელი მემატიაანებისა და ისტორიკოსების ცნობებს (მათ მიმართ არსებობს, როგორც ევროპელი ისე ქართველი მკვლევრების სკეპტიციზმი) მონღოლებთან ერთად ქართველი და სომეხი მეფეების იერუსალიმში ყოფნას 1300 წლის იანვარში, რაც მნიშვნელოვანი ისტორიული ფაქტია.

**საძიებო სიტყვები:** იერუსალიმი, მონღოლები, ვახტანგ III, აღაპი, ეგვიპტე.

**Introduction:**

Political entities created by the Crusaders had never-ending problems with Muslim population of Syria- Palestine and Muslim countries of near east. Muslim leaders, who fought against Crusaders were - country of Aiban and later, Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, that obviously didn't complement to European Latins in terms of military and economic standpoint. Crusaders and European countries anticipated that the auxiliary force would come from the east to help Christians, led by Ioane Khutsesi and king David. At the beginning of XIII century, Mongols arrived, and Christians considered them their savior in vain, Georgians were also deceived and had to involuntarily participate in Mongolian military invasions in Caucasus, near east and especially against Egypt.

**Methods:**

This article is based on following research methods: empirical analyses, comparative-historical methods, reason-result analyses, syntheses, abstraction, content-analyses, systemic analyses.

**Results:**

Georgian chronicle knows about Mongol army capturing Jerusalem but says nothing about Georgians' participation in the crusade. We can presume that Chronicle is not thorough on Kazan-Kain crusade, as eight years later (at this time, king Vakhtang and queen Ripsime had already been dead) Aghapi, a prayer book, created in the Cross Monastery for the diseased king and queen tells us that Georgians were in Jerusalem and Vakhtang the third visited the monastery.

Based on Georgian and French sources, we can presume that, in 1299-1300 king Vakhtang the third's visit to Jerusalem and his donation to the monastery is a historically infallible fact.

**Discussion:**

Georgian chronicles hold abundant information on Georgia's interest and special bond with holy land<sup>1</sup>. We can only add that, from the XIII to the XVIII century, Georgian diplomats were adamant to raise the subject of freeing Jerusalem and help European countries in the crusade. First and foremost, we must assert the truth of this historical facts and what additional passages the monastery document discloses, it's crucial to compare the information given by the document to other European sources, which doubts the truthfulness of Georgian king's visit to Jerusalem in 1300. Christian chroniclers and historians have given us various information on Georgian and Armenian kings' efforts to somehow make Mongol khans to start crusade and free the holy land, this effort was not without its own merit or regard for reason, it was quite beneficial for Ilkhanate's political and military concerns. They intended to find an alliance with western countries against Egypt, use their military forces and for their part, if they had succeeded, they would have given Jerusalem to Christian rulers. The subject first was raised by the pope, Aleksander the IV (1254-1261), in 1260, when he sent his representatives to Hulagu khan (Jeckson, 2014:452). The answer would be declared by Rihardus, secretary of Abaqa khan, during the second council in Lion, that Abaqa khan pledged himself to transfer the power over

Jerusalem to Frenks. i.e. Latins. Armenian scholar, Hetum tells us that, when Mongol army seized Damask in 1259, Armenian and Georgian kings presented a petition to Arghun-khan to free Jerusalem. Arghun-khan, a shaman ruler, was hostile towards Muslims and wished to maintain amicable relationship with Christians. He tried to fight against Egypt, a competitor country in near East, with Christian kings' support and considered Georgia and Armenia his allies. Arghun-khan promised those countries to keep his words (Het'um, 2004:32-33).

Another Armenian scholar, Gregor Aknerts tells us about Mongol invasions of Syria in 1260, how Hulagu decided to attack Jerusalem, the city and Holly sepulcher were owned by Tajiks, he took the city, entered into the church, and prayed in front of the tomb. After returning to the east, he found out that the leader of Tatars, Kit-Bugha, had not kept precautionary measures and went further deep into the enemy territory, 10-day trip from Jerusalem, Egyptians attacked Tatars and slathered half of the army, took Aleppo, Damask and Jerusalem with the help from French knights, who were not allies to Tatars back then (Aknertsi, 1871:39-40). This source is unfounded by other historical sources in Europe or in the East. However, we would like to accentuate on the tendency of Christian historians and scholars, when they demonstrate Mongols as Christian allies against Muslims, especially freeing Jerusalem from them. As it seems, Armenian scholar confused events of 1299-1300 and 1260.

Ghazan-khan's first crusade in Syria-Palestine was successful, ended with conquering Jerusalem. Among Mongols, there were Georgians and Armenians and based on some other sources, Cyprus king Lusianin from the French dynasty (1285-1324), though this fact remains to be dubious. Khan gave Georgians and Armenians big privileges. Egyptian sultan Nasir Ad-din Muhamed scolded the khan: you came with your army to fight against Muslims, the army consists of people with different religions. They trample down our relics, and violate our holy places, the second one after Medina" (Amitai-Preiss, 1987:246, Japaridze, 2016:52). Ghazan-khan gave Jerusalem to Christians, Silvia Shane wrote that modern European scholars gave us detailed, although peculiarly similar information on liberation of the holy city. As it seems from numerous letters, from February, 1300 through September, the west part of the world considered that, the holy land was given to Christians by Mongol khan, to be more precise, the land and relics were returned to its rightful owner-Christians. Schein asks: where did this news come from, the news, excepted in the western Europe. Fortunately, abundance of published documents, give us chance to explore and explain the fact. The reason of this "news" was that, Mongols were successful in the north Syria, so the notion developed among Christians as Mongols were saviors and people, who gave them the holy land back. She explains, based on the narratives and well-known sources: most of the authors believed that Mongols freed Jerusalem with the help from Armenian and Georgian kings and in some version Cyprus king (Schein, 1979:805). Barherbauss also confirmed that, Lusianin accompanied Ghazan-khan on his first crusade (see bel.).

Georgian chronicler tells us that after the Mameluke's defeat, Tatars spread, took prisoners, approached to Jerusalem, where many Christians and Persians were killed" (qaukhchishvili, 1959:316). It is interesting that, chronicler knows about the Mongol army and taking the city by force, but does not mention participation of Georgian kings in the

process, obviously this fact is more important to take into account when rejecting the idea of Georgians participation in the crusade. Less likely Georgian chronicler had not known Georgians fight for Jerusalem and did not mentioned it into his chronicle. It is also hard to believe that, Vakhtang the third and his army would return to home and never talked about the journey. however, Aghapi, discovered 8 years later in the monastery, casts a shadow of doubt on above mentioned issue, we read: in March we king Vakhtang and queen Ripsime ordered a funeral mass and gave donation to monks, when the cross monastery was taken by Persians (1273), 8 Lahri and 1000 Tetri father Solomon and Sameon gave to the monastery” (met'reveli, 1962:42, 97-98, 164).

According to Josef Hammer-Purgstall, Mongols took Hems/Homs and Jerusalem in 1299 (Hammer-Purgstall, 1842:86-96, 106-129), Rashid Ad-din tells us that emir Mulay returned to Damask on January 23, according to R.Amitai Baibar Al-Mansur, Mulay attacked Palestine, raided Safadi and when he reached to Jerusalem, captured women and children, slaughter Muslims and Christians (Amitai Preiss, 1987:244). Aghapi was written on March 25, Annunciation day, 23 years later after invasion, Beibars, Egyptian sultan accused monks of spying for Mongols, thus they ransacked the monastery, killed Luka Mukhaisdze, senior monk, remove Georgians from ownership and rebuild the church as a mosque. (japaridze, 1995:14) based on Georgian and Arabic sources, Gocholeishvili thinks that it happened in the 70s, XIII c. no later than July 27, 1272 (gocholeishvili, 1978:32).

Georgian scholars think that, Georgian monks were exiled before the monastery was not liberated from Muslims until the first quarter of XIV c. (met'reveli, 1962:42). G.Japaridze writes: as it seems, the monastery was functioning as a mosque at that time and monks had been living in another monasteries” (japaridze, 1916:54) we think otherwise. We need to consider various factors to paint the picture more clearly. It is well-known fact that, Sheikh Khidr pillaged the monastery, banned monks and made the place as mosque. According to Aghapi, we must presume that monks returned there later, although the place was functioning as a mosque, but Muslims did not bother or harass them much as one document claims (Hujat) the mosque was located at the entrance of the monastery (Salam, 1991:11-13). The monastery existed and was functioning in 1300, when king Vakhtang donated 8 Lahri and 1000 Tetri to monks. It's obvious the Aghapi, recording of funeral prayer, was written after king's death. i.e. after 1308. However, exact date is not known.

We presume, King Vakhtang must have been in Jerusalem, and moved around the city, while the holy place was ransacked and half of the population slaughtered, without Egyptian guards and solders, would have been quite easy even with small number of bodyguards. There is another interesting document by Jan De S Victor, who says that Ghazan gave Armenian king back the territories, which had been taken away by Egyptian Sultan, according to the source, Abaqa khan handed Syria over to his brother, and Jerusalem to Georgians, Armenian king stayed to Jerusalem for 15 days in January and restored Church services, later, he accompanied Ghazan to Damask and spent the winter there. When the pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) heard the news, he wrote exiting letter to Eduard the first and hoped the city would be free soon.

According to Barhebraei, Mongol khan went to war with Egypt in 1299 with help from Armenian king (Hetum) Georgian king (David- must have been Vakhtang) and Cypress king (Barhebraei, 189; peradze, 1995:35). Another interesting story, concerning

the matter, is a letter, written to Rashid ad-Din to his son Fir-Sultan, a governor (Hackim) of Georgia. He had an order from Ghazan Khan to take care of Raits (serfs), he, Ghazan, himself was going to Syria-Egypt, and Mongol emirs headed to Georgia with 120 000 warriors. They went to conquer over rebellious people in the remote mountains of Samsun, Abkhazia, Trabzon (t'abat'adze, 1968:82).

Rashid ad-Din knew drastic situation in Syria-Palestine and foresaw the importance and essence of Georgian force for Ilkhanate, Georgians discontent and warned his son to tread lightly and not behave unjustly towards Tbilisi vilayet population. If they do, the son must report to his father and eradicate such behavior. "as the emirs cross the vilayet, immediately they have to head toward Rahi fortress with Georgian army, use the route of Mardini and join Hasan Qaip and Farsi legion, they will wait for us, governor of Georgia will be a naib (deputy) who will uphold the law there (t'abat'adze, 1968:82-83).

As Barhebraei explains, he heard from Byzantine historian and writer, Georgi Pakhimer, Ghazan khan had Iberian Christians in his army with their flag (the cross engraved on it) (peradze, 1995:35) this fact is as interesting as it depicts Khan, a new convert to Islam, tolerating Christians and their Christian symbolic. In 1300 Christians had success in Jerusalem, according to Oktav Epiphanius and Ian de s. Victor's recall, cited by Gr. Peradze:" in 1300, Christians were able to celebrate the Ester in Jerusalem, Ghazan gave the land back to Armenian kings, gave his brother Syria and Jerusalem to Georgians" (peradze, 1995:35).

The XIV century chronicler Nerse Palientsi tells us as if Armenian and Georgian victory in Jerusalem was for only Armenian course, as Ghazan gave everything to Hetum, Armenian king (Ghalsian, 1962:96), - misinterpretation of French and Georgian sources. Gocholeishvili explains: as there is no mention of this fact in Arabic sources, it is scientifically unbiased not to prefer one source to another (gocholeishvili, 1978:109).

We strongly believe, in 1300 Vakhtang the III with his cortege was in Jerusalem and visited the Cross monastery and monks there. We consider this information a historical fact. In the end, Ghazan khan's campaign against Egypt was doomed and Jerusalem stayed conquered by Mamelukes for a long time.

As the chronicler describes, in the fall of 1300, Ghazan khan started preparation for the new crusade against Egypt, met with commander-in-chief Khutlubugha, king Vakhtang, Georgian nobels and ordered them to start a crusade against sultan of Egypt. The crusade was unsuccessful due to harsh weather conditions and lack of food. Khan's army had to get back. In 1303 Ilkhanate army invaded Syria one more time. On March 31, Mamelukes, led by Georgian born Asandamur Kurdg, defeated 4000 army of Ilkhanate. Most of the solders, among them was Vakhtang the III, somehow managed to reach to Damask, but were defeated in two-day fierce fight with Mardgan As-Sufar (20-22 of April (japaridze, 2016:56-57) Mamelukes were better skilled and quite sly. A lot of Georgians and Tatars were killed in this fight, but Vakhtang and Nnoinn survived and went to Ghazan (qaukhchishvili, 1959:317-318). The khan was going to start a new fight against Egypt but became sick and died on May 11, 1304. His life was praised by his chronicler (qaukhchishvili, 1959:319) as the khan left his country free of pirates, villains and sinful men and died of stomach disease. After the death of Ghazan khan, Muhamed Khudabanda Oljeitum (1304-1317) were enthroned and decided to invade Gilan and called for the help

from King Vakhtang and Georgians and Beka with his people from Samtskhe. Beka sent his army but decided not to go himself. King Vakhtang with his men and soldiers from Samtskhe fought to the end, many of his men lost their lives. Gilanians succeeded but Khan appreciated King Vakhtang's devotion and rewarded them nicely (vakhust'i, 1973:252).

Devotion and sacrifice of King Vakhtang the Third were paid with his exile and murder by Oljeitir Khan after he had refused to convert to Islam (vakhust'i, 1973:253).

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