

HAYTON OF KORIKOS'S WESTERN ORIENTATION AND GEORGIA

Abstract

Emergence of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century changed the configuration of the political forces of the time and started a new stage in the development of west-east relations. Interest of the crusaders towards Mongols is apparent. Crusaders hoped to establish alliance with the new forces from Asia against the Muslims to reconquer the Holy Land. The Mongols were more tolerant of Christians than Muslims; Tolerant to different religions including Christianity, some khans are converts to Christianity, so, the European Crusaders thought of allying with the Mongols to strengthen their positions in the Middle East. The texts of Jean de Plan Carpin, Guillaume de Rubrouck, Marco Polo provide us information on the Mongols and the relations between Europeans and Tartars. The chronicler of Armenian origin, Prince Hethoum of Korikos or Hayton, (circa 1230-1308), the author of *Flower of the Histories of the East* also describes the history of the Mongols and the relations between Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, the principality of Antioch and the Tartars.

Hayton has a very interesting biography. He was the son of Oshin I, lord of Korikos and nephew of King Hethum I of Armenia of Cilicia (1213-1270). Hayton was forced to be exiled from his country because in 1294 he conspired against King Hethum II (1289-1307). In 1305 he became a monk of the Premonstratensian order at the Abbey of Ballapais, on the island of Cyprus. Hayton was an ally of Amaury de Lusignan, lord of Tire (1284-1291) who usurped the throne of Cyprus by becoming regent of Cyprus (against the unpopular Henry II, king of Cyprus). As Amaury's ambassador in 1307 Hayton visited Pope Clement V (1264-1314) in Avignon. He pleaded for a new crusade, which would regain the Holy Land with the help of the Mongols. Hayton himself was a strong supporter of the Mongolian alliance. In 1308 he returned to Cyprus and afterwards to the Arminian Kingdom of Cilicia.

In his book Hayton mentions the Kingdom of Georgia and Georgians several times, therefore, *Flower of the Histories of the East* is a very important text to study the history of medieval Georgia, and more precisely to understand how the kingdom of Georgia was represented in the political context of the time as well as in the perception of foreign chroniclers.

In the first part of *Flower of the Histories of the East* Hayton describes 14 kingdoms of Asia, the kingdom of Georgia among them. The country is considered from two perspectives. The first part gives us the information about the location of Georgia: "Towards the east, the kingdom of Georgia begins at a great mountain called Elbrus. Various nations live there and this country is called Alania. From there, the kingdom of Georgia extends west and north to one of the provinces of Turkey. In

length, Georgia stretches along the shores of the Maggiore Sea. To the south, it is close to Greater Armenia". The second part concerns the political situation of the Kingdom of Georgia which was divided into two parts at that time: "This kingdom of Georgia includes two kingdoms called Georgia and Abkhazia. Georgia is under the sovereignty of the emperor of Asia, while Abkhazia, powerful by its population and its fortified castles, has never been subject to the emperor of Asia or to Tartars".

So, what was the political situation of the kingdom of Georgia in the middle of the 13th century? The domination of the Mongols in Georgia began as early in 1240s. In 1243 the queen of Georgia – Rouosoudan (1223-1245) officially recognized the great Khan as suzerain and Georgia began paying an annual tribute (50,000 gold coins) to the Mongol, as well as supplied them with troops if needed. The Mongols appreciated the warrior qualities of the Georgians and demanded their participation in the multiple expeditions or military campaigns (in the battles of Alamut in 1256, Baghdad in 1258 and many others). After the death of queen Rousoudan in 1245, the rather complicated question of succession to the throne created problems the political situation of Georgia; there were two candidates for the throne: the illegitimate son of Lasha-Giorgi IV (David VII Oulou (1247-1270), eldest in Mongolian) and the son of Rousoudan (David VI Narin (1247-1293), younger in Mongolian). According to Mongol law, in 1247 the both Davids was recognized as the kings of Georgia. This of course, was very dangerous for the political unity of Georgia. At one time the two Davids jointly ruled then country. However, in 1259 David Narin revolted against the Mongols and moved to the west of Georgia, Imereti region; while, Mongols did not dare to enter in this part of Georgia. Soon David Narin formed the independent kingdom in West Georgia. So, from the 50s of the XIII century Georgia was divided into two - Eastern and Western parts.

Returning to our chronicler, under "Georgia" Hayton implies eastern Georgia which was subject to the Mongols (to the emperor of Asia, to the great khan seated in Karakorum) and Abkhazia-western Georgia, which was free from the domination of the Mongols. It is interesting that the same information is provided about the political situation in the western part of Georgia in the accounts of Marco Polo, William of Rubruck and Marino Sanuto (1260-1334). Marino Sanuto's text almost literally repeats the seat of Hayton. As for Marco Polo, he writes: "The province (Georgia) is full of great mountains, of paths so narrow and so short, that I tell you, the Tartars did not manage conquer it completely. "

As for the second part of the text on the kingdom of Georgia, Hayton gives us information on a great marvel that took place in a province Hampasi/Hamsin (Hamshin in Armenian, one can think that it was a province of Lazeti or Chaneti located on the shores of the Black Sea, northern Turkey): "Over the whole extent of this province, there reigns such great darkness that no one can see anything and no one dares to enter this land , because he cannot then retrace his steps. The inhabitants of this land say that they hear voices of men, crowing of roosters, whinnying of horses and, near a river which comes out of the province, one sees signs proving that men really live there".

Then Hayton tells the story he found in Armenian and Georgian sources, the story of a cruel emperor who persecuted Christians: "[...] He once ordered all the inhabitants of Asia to come and sacrifice to idols; anyone who does not come should be burned. Some faithful Christians suffered martyrdom even before they wanted to sacrifice to idols; others sacrificed for fear of death and loss of property; part fled to the mountains. Christians then lived in a region called Moghan; they abandoned all their possessions and wanted to flee to Greece. The emperor met them in this area of Hampasi and ordered to slaughter all Christians. They implored our Lord Jesus Christ to have mercy

on them. Immediately came this great darkness which blinded the emperor and all his retinue. The Christians escaped him and remained in this darkness and will remain there, according to what is believed and told, until the end of time“.

It is interesting that John de Mandeville (*The Book of Jean de Mandeville*) as well as Johannes von Hildesheim and Marino Sanuto (1270–1343) tell almost the same story about this great marvel. In the other edition of Hayton's book the name of Emperor - Sapore/Somes is mentioned. So it was, probably Shapur II (309-379), King of Iran. In fact, Shapur II persecuted Caucasian Christians to convert them to Zoroastrianism from 339 until the end of his reign. According to A.-D. Den Brincken this legend about a great wonder is closely linked with the stories of Plan Carpin and Marco Polo, in which people hid in the dark to escape the cruelty of Chingiz Khan. In general, in the stories of travelers and pilgrims, there are very often mystical or fabulous stories to provoke the interest of the readers and to give food for their fantasies; but, in fact, these multiple stories are based on the real political or social situation.

In his book Hayton mentions the Georgians when speaking about the Syrian campaign, near Damascus (the battle of Marj as-Suffar or battle of Chaqhab that took place in April of 1303) in the confrontation between the Ilkhanid Mongols and the Mamelukes. The Armenians of Cilicia and the Georgians took part in this battle under the orders of Qutlugh Châh. According to Hayton, this fight was ended by the defeat of the Mongols and in his opinion, the main cause of this defeat was the reckless action of the Mongol commander Qutlugh Châh. Information about this campaign is also provided by the Persian chronicler Rashid al-din as well as the XIV century Georgian historian – Jamtaaghmtsereli who mentions participation of the king of Georgia Vakhtang III (1299-1308) and the governor of a province of Samckhé – Beka with his troops in this battle. The accounts of these three chroniclers complete the details of this battle; therefore, Hayton's contribution enriches our knowledge of this historical event.

Finally, in the last part of his work while discussing the practical questions of the organization of the next crusade, the Armenian prince asks the pope to write not only to Armenians, but to the king of the Georgians as well as because of the valor of this people: “Pardon me, Your Holiness, if I dare to say two more things. Would Your Holiness would be so kind to write to the King of Georgians, who are Christians and more than any other nation devout to the pilgrimages and to the shrines of the Holy Land, so that they help the pilgrims to reconquer. I firmly believe that, for the honor of God and respect for Your Holiness, they would welcome your request, because they are devout Christians, numerous, powerful and valiant in arms and they are almost neighbors of the Kingdom of Armenia “.

In this passage the Kingdom of Georgia was included in the project of the Europeans in the context of confrontation with the Muslims. We can also mention the other moment in the history of Georgia when the Georgians were considered an ally of Europeans and Mongols (Ilkhans) against the Sultanate of Egypt. Later, in the 30s of the XIV century by the initiative of the King of France, Philippe VI le Valois (1328-1350) European kings and nobility planned the crusade against Muslims, in particular against the Sultan of Egypt Muhamed An - Nasir (1293-1340). We have a response letter from George V addressed to the King of France his agreement to participate in this crusade. Philip VI the Valois chose the Khan of Ilkhan - Abu Said (1317-1335) and the king of Georgia - George V as allies in the East. This late crusade was not carried out because of the beginning of Hundred years' war. In this regard, J. Richard wrote: “The Georgians, very attached to the pilgrimage to the

Holy Places, showed great zeal for the crusade, but were surprised by the ease with which the kings of the West announced their approaching departure never left". Therefore, the kingdom of Georgia as well as the Ilkhans were considered by Europeans as one of the allies against the Turks-Muslims.

In this regard Hayton's *Flower of the Histories of the East*, provides the very valuable information about Georgian Kingdom of the time of the Mongols as well as portrays Georgians as; the valiant Christians who are included in ongoing political processes from XIII-XIV centuries; being the part of the Christian world together with Armenians, they were considered allies of Europeans.

დამოწმებანი

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