

Level of Independence in Georgia Throughout the 14th Century

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In 1329-1334, George the Brilliant took advantage of the situation created in the Ilkhanate, eliminated his political opponents and restored the territorial integrity of Georgia. He created a solid legal basis for the country and regulated the ecclesiastic area. He was in West Georgia in 1329-1332/1333. The Ilkhanid coin was not minted in Georgia during that period; yet, soon the king of Georgia, which had already been united by that time, restored relations with Ilkhanids and returned to Tbilisi, which implied making the already united Georgia subject to Mongols. Ilkhanid coins and later, coins of Chobanids, the Golden Horde and Jalayirids circulated during the reign of George the Brilliant. In 1338-1339 George the Brilliant conquered Ossetia and Ilkhanid coins were disseminated on the territory of the Golden Horde after that. Formally, Georgia remained under the control of Ilkhanids, which was replaced by Chobanids in 1338 and the governors of the Golden Horde in 757/1356; and in parallel and afterwards by Jalayirids, which is evidenced by written sources as well as numismatic data; Despite formal dependence on the foreign power, which is evidenced by the deployment of 10,000 troops at the border of Georgia as well, the country enjoyed a rather wide internal autonomy. Participation of George the Brilliant in sending envoys for the purpose of the redemption of the Jvari (Cross) Monastery in Palestine in 1316/7, 1320 cannot be assumed. It seems that in those years envoys were sent by Constantine, the king of West Georgia. All the above do not diminish the merits of George V to the Georgian nation and his historic role in terms of the political unification of the country, the creation of a legal basis for it and the regulation of ecclesiastic affairs—the accomplishments of the king, who deservedly bears the name “the Brilliant”.

Keywords: George the Brilliant, Mongols, the Ilkhanate, Georgia

Introduction

Merits of King George V the Brilliant in gaining the independence of Georgia are exaggerated in Georgian historiography to a certain extent. Lack of sources complicates the clarification of the issue. The Ilkhanate collapsed in the reign of George the Brilliant and as a result, the Near East and the entire Caucasus were involved in feuds and confrontations. When George the Brilliant died in 1346, there was an outbreak of plague in the region. It was not an appropriate time to write history in the country.

In the relevant period, in the 30s-40s of the 14th century Hassan the Big (Bozorg) Jalayirid, Hassan the Little Chobanid and his brother Ashraf stood behind the marionette khans in the Ilkhanate. The Jalayirid tribe played a significant role after the death of Abu Sa'id (1317-1336). Hassan the Big (Jalayirid) declared himself as a king, conquered Iraq and declared Bagdad as the capital. Hassan the Great enthroned the first three khans after Abu Sa'id (Stanley, 2004. p. 177). The Jalayirid Dynasty existed until 1410 and their state encompassed a large part of Persian Iraq, with Hamadan, Qazvin and Sultanate and also, Kurdistan, South Azerbaijan,

Karabakh, Arabian Iraq, Armenia, Shirvan and Georgia in different times. After Hassan the Big (Bozorg) (1336-1356), his sons Sultan Hussein and Uwais were dividing Jalayirid lands. Hussein was replaced by his brother, Sheikh Uwais (1356-1374), then there was Jalal Ad-Din Hussein (1374-81) and finally, Sultan Ahmed (1382-1410). The Chobanids, Jalayirids and governors of the Golden Horde fought for territorial redistribution. After Ilkhanid Abu Sa'id, Chobanid Hassan the Little deprived his Jalayirid rival of Tabriz in 1338 and expanded his kingdom to the northwest with Azerbaijan and the Persian Iraq and possessed them until his death (1343) (Rene, 1982, p. 465).

There is a controversy about the duration of the Mongol rule in Georgia. Some scholars associate the complete independence of Georgia with George the Brilliant, while others do not share this opinion.

Vakhushti Bagrationi About George the Brilliant

The old edition of “Kartlis Tskhovreba”—“History of Georgia” ends with the enthronement of George the Brilliant. The chronicler limits himself only to several words about the years in question. Later, this gap was partially filled by the continuers of “Kartlis Tskhovreba” and later still by Vakhushti Bagrationi. As mentioned by M. Brosset, he must have had the chronicles which were not included in the text created on the initiative of his father, Vakhtang VI.¹

Vakhushti's text is more complete as compared to other sources and all scholars who have ever addressed the reign of George the Brilliant mainly refer to it.

Several points draw attention in Vakhushti's information. First of all, the dates are noteworthy. According to Vakhushti, George the Brilliant was enthroned in 1318 and died in 1346. During his reign, George V “conquered Georgias, Armenia (Somkhiti), Hers and Kakhs, Kartli, Meskhs, Tao, Shavsh-Klarjs up to Speri and the sea” (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 255); “entered the Caucasus and devastated those staying there, subdued the disobeying and brought them under tribute”, “freed Kartli from Ossetians, as he conquered all the roads”, “gathered troops again and entered Ran; nobody could confront him and from there he entered Shirvan and subordinated them too; and he brought under tribute those staying up to Derbent, including Kurds and Leks. Then he returned to Tbilisi with power” (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 257). Vakhushti informs us how George gained independence for the country: “That time George the Brilliant took advantage, expelled Tatars from Georgia—some by struggle and power and eliminated them within his borders. Then he gathered all aristocrats and nobles of the country at the royal gathering on Tsivi of Hereti and liquidated all who disobeyed him and appointed aristocrats obeying him in all places, with which he subdued the majority” (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 256). The unification of the country, the situation in West Georgia after the death of David Narin, a confrontation in the royal family, the loyalty of nobles of West Georgia to George, the way King George approached Kutaisi with an army where Michael's son Bagrat was sheltered are also described here:

He pleaded King George not to punish him by death, i.e. imprisonment, and to give an estate in Imereti and he would come before him and give all fortresses of Imereti to the king, as the Lord gave him power. (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 257)

When Dadiani Mamia and Gurieli and the aristocrat of Svans and Abkhazeti Sharvashidze saw this, they came to him with numerous gifts and blessed his kingship in Imereti and All Georgia. Then he entered Odishi, from there—Abkhazeti, administered affairs there, conquered the fortresses and gave the principality of Tskhumi to Bedieli; he inspected Guria, administered affairs there and came to Samtskhe... (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 258)

¹ Histoire de la Georgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIX siècle traduite du Géorgien par M. Brosset, I-re partie, Histoire ancienne, jusqu'en 1469 de J. C. (S. Petersbourg, 1849), p. 644.

Sargis died (1334), (Giorgi) granted the title of Atabeg to his son Qvarqvare and appointed his *eristavis* in Klarjeti, Speri, Kalmakhi, Artanuj and Samtskhe of Artaniand Tsuni and granted some of these principalities to uncles and cousins of Qvarqvare Atabeg... (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 258)

Here we have information on the legislative activities and ecclesiastic affairs of George:

The King considered the cases of mountaineers and Caucasians again, as many of them “were disobedient”, gathered troops, entered the Caucasus and subordinated most people there. From there he went to Tskhradzma, he came to Mukhrani and brought with him the leaders of Christians in the Caucasus and Khevisberis; together with them he entered Tbilisi, administered justice for them and codified rules for them to follow. Catholicos Epvtime died and Basil replaced him. (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 258)

Vakhushiti provides information about the external achievements of George, which will be discussed later. Finally, the years of reign of George are summarized:

He dominated over All Georgia and Caucasians were subordinated to him from Nikofsis to Derbent; Ran, Movakan and Sharvan again paid tribute to him and nobody was against him or disobeyed him, he gathered catholicoses and bishops of Iveria and they renewed the rules and order of church and clergy, called to order believers and excommunicated those who were disobedient... (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 259)

Lastly, Vakhushiti compares George to David the Builder. He talks about his construction and development activities and adds: “He made Ran, Sharvansh and Movakan pay tribute to him” (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 259).

Opinions About George the Brilliant in Scholarly Literature

All the data about George the Brilliant provided above are repeated in textbooks and researches with slight differences. At the same time, sending an envoy for the redemption of the Jvari Monastery twice (1316/1317 and 1320), information on the termination of the tribute payment to Mongols and minting a new coin—Giorgauli—by the king are added to the merits of George described by Vakhushiti. There is a controversy in scholarly literature regarding all the information presented here.

In one commentary, M. Brosset provided a list of Ilkhanids, some information on commanders of the Mongolian army deployed in Georgia and the Ilkhanid Öljeitü and the great vizier of Abu Sa'id Choban, the renunciation of one of his sons, the order to kill him, the rebellion of Choban in response to it, his escape to Hereti and his murder by the governor by the order of Abu Sa'id, as well as the torturous murder of the governor of Georgia and Armenia—the fourth son of Choban, Sheikh Mahmud in Karabakh; the enthronement of Arpa Khan, one of the descendants of Tolui, one of the sons of Genghis Khan in Karabakh after the death of Abu Sa'id on November 30, 1336 and the nomination of another candidate, Musa, in a short period.

According to M. Brosset, Arpa was murdered and replaced by another successor of Hulagu, Muhammad, who relied on troops of Rums and Georgians but was defeated in the fight of July 24, 1336 (Beradze & Sanadze, 2003, p. 646). As it appears, M. Brosset made an inaccuracy which was later repeated in the work of N. Urbneli “George the Brilliant”.

Urbneli mentioned that “as Muhammad, a descendant of Ulo Khan commanded our troops in the battle of 1336, it means that Georgia was a vassal to Mongols in that period and was freed later” (Urbneli, 1889, p. 74). However the same researcher does not share the opinion of the scholars who “do not believe in the autocracy of the king and argue that till the end George the Brilliant was a vassal and not somebody else” (Urbneli, 1889, p. 80). To substantiate that Georgia gained independence in the reign of George the Brilliant, N. Urbneli refers to data from “Dzeglisdeba” (the law issued by George the Brilliant)—available to M. Brosset as well—where the

expansion of power of George the Brilliant to the entire kingdom is addressed (We had power “over our entire kingdom and possessed the throne and the scepter” (Javakhishvili, 1966, p. 263)). “Although initially he was a vassal, yet ... gradually he freed himself from being a vassal and absolute independence was established”, writes N. Urbneli. He assumes that this happened during the unrest with Ilkhanids (Urbneli, 1889, p. 82).

We would like to note that information of M. Brosset seems to be derived from the composition of Hafiz-iAbru. However this information is irrelevant and inaccurate in this case. In the Persian source, the information actually addresses the period when relations between Abu Sa'id and the Chobanid family became strained before repressions against Emir Choban and his family were carried out. In connection with this, the family members gathered and discussed the situation. They expressed an opinion that they could easily defeat Abu Sa'id. Afterwards they listed their forces and finally mentioned: “When our brothers, Timur-Tash and Mahmud know about our rebellion, they will gather the troops of Georgia and Rum, rebel against the central power and this will be a perfect solution to stop the royal army from each side” (Hafiz-i Abru, 1936, p. 101). As we can see, this information addresses an absolutely different time and other events. At the same time, Mahmud, who is Choban's son, is not mentioned alone and Timur-Tash, the other son of Choban is mentioned along with him. Thus, the provided information cannot be used to substantiate the dependence of Georgia on Mongols after 1327.

British scholar David Lang starts the reign of George the Brilliant from 1314 and divides it into two periods: before 1327, i.e. before the death of his patron—Emir Choban, and further, before death of the Georgian king in 1346. We can agree with such a division. In the opinion of D. Lang, although Choban restored George's control over Meskheta, Samtskhe-Saatabago, Southwest Georgia, which had been earlier transformed into a province directly dependent on Ilkhanids Ilkhan Abagha, after the defeat of Choban he lost control over East Georgia and Tbilisi, which was compensated by the unification of West Georgia under his scepter, after forced resettlement to West Georgia. Due to the weakening of his control over East Georgia, Hassan the Little intruded there in 1338 (Lang, 1955, p. 84).

D. Lang does not trust the Georgian sources, according to which George joined not only West Georgia, Samegrelo, Abkhazeti and other Black Sea coast regions, but also, Azerbaijan, Shirvan and the Caspian Sea coast up to Derbent and Mongolian noyons left Georgia and there were no Tatars in Georgia; entire Georgia and the Caucasus from Nikofisto Derbent fell under the scepter of George the Brilliant (Lang, 1955, p. 83; Beradze & Sanadze, 2003, pp. 646-648; Batonishvili, 1973, pp. 277-280). Based on numismatic data, D. Lang expresses an opinion that the Mongol rule in Georgia continued during the first half of the 14th century.

To substantiate his opinion, D. Lang uses various sources to offer various arguments which are not shared in Georgian historiography. D. Lang's judgment and conclusions received different responses at different times.

We would like to state in advance that we do not share the opinion of D. Lang according to which George the Brilliant lost control over East Georgia in 1327 and that Georgia significantly weakened since then. At the same time, we will focus our attention on some data provided by sources, the unreliability of which, in our opinion, is improperly substantiated in scientific literature.

The first person to question the basic opinion of D. Lang on Georgia gaining absolute independence from Mongols only in the second half of the 14th century was V. Gabashvili (Gabashvili, 1960, pp. 121-146). According to the judgment of V. Gabashvili, a necessary condition to gain independence is to quit paying tribute. The opinion sometimes expressed in the form of a careful assumption—“Certainly, George the Brilliant would not find it difficult to expel and eliminate the Mongolian army and all of their officials staying in

Georgia” (Javakhishvili, 1966, p. 261), and sometimes more categorically, that payment of tribute to Mongols as well as withdrawal of troops of conquerors was stopped in the late 1320s accepted in historiography earlier is shared here as well (Berdzenishvili, Dondua, Dumbadze, Melikishvili, Meskhia, & Ratiani, 1958, p. 251).

At the same time, in his work V. Gabashvili reviews Persian sources and considers numismatic data where a different situation is presented. Despite this, according to the conclusion of V. Gabashvili, due to the fact that “a rather difficult situation was created in the neighboring countries of Georgia in 1335-1350 ...” and the Ilkhanate was involved in feuds,

...the main field of battle was Azerbaijan, but it was also expanded to the farthest southeastern parts of Georgia. Tatar tribute and coin must have appeared in such a situation ... but ... the dependence of Mongols must have been only of a formal nature now. (Gabashvili, 1960, p. 141)

Date of Termination of Payment of Tribute to Mongols

Information of Hamdallah of Qazwinis reviewed in the abovementioned work of V. Gabashvili. According to his composition written in 1339-1340, 120 tumans (1,202,000 dinars or 7,212,000 dirhams) were received from Georgia in 1336. In this source “On Georgia and Abkhazia” we read:

There are five cities there and the climate is cold. It borders the lands of Aran, Armenia and Asia Minor; in the reign of their kings the income reached about five million dinars according to the current exchange rate and in present times, the government receives only 1,202,999 dinars. The capital of regions of Georgia and Abkhazia is Tbilisi. (Hamd-Allah of Qazwin, 1919, p. 94)

The fact that the author seems to be describing the situation of his time is also noteworthy. He knows well that Georgia is united (Hamd-Allah of Qazwin, 1919, p. 94).

Apart from Hamdallah of Qazwin, V. Gabashvili also addresses the composition of Abdullah bin Mohamedbin Kiya Al-Mazandarani “Resalay-e Falaqia”, whose information, as assumed in literature, mainly belongs to 1333-1363; the earliest information to 1333 and the latest to 1430-1466 (Ashurbeili, 1979, pp. 38-46). According to this composition, in 1350 Georgia paid tribute in the amount of 40 tumans—400,000 dinars, Aran—82 tumans—820,000 dinars; Armenia—54 tumans—540,000 dinars. According to this data, 120 tumans were changed to 40 tumans in a short time and 120 tumans were reduced twice as compared to the years of rule of Kazan-Khan. However, tribute was not abolished.

Researchers have made different comments in respect to the information of these two sources. In the opinion of V. Gabashvili, the information of Hamdallah of Qazwin is trustworthy; however the payment of tribute must have been an episodic occurrence rather than the rule of Mongolian tribute payment system in Georgia (Gabashvili, 1960, p. 141). In the opinion of R. Kiknadze, the data of Hamdallah of Qazwin are provided from the book of the preliminary distribution of taxes (according to “Davtare Kanun”) and corresponds to the income of the period of Öljeitü (1304-1317) and not the 1330s (Kiknadze, 1992, pp. 169-184). Therefore, R. Kiknadze concluded:

As we know that in 1336-1340, in the era of feudal feuds and rebellions, even half of the amount collected during the rule of Kazan-Khan was not accumulated in the treasury, it can be said that Georgia was not paying tribute to Mongols in that period ... Abu-Sa’id died without an heir in 1335 and his distant relative Arpa-Khan was enthroned. A violent struggle broke out in the state between those who wanted to be enthroned. The confronting feudal groups elevated their marionettes (Musa-Khan, Mohammed-Khan, Sati-Beg, Suleiman-Khan, etc.) to the Ilkhanid throne. However these marionettes did not have the actual power. Certainly, Georgia would not pay tribute to Mongols in such a situation. (Kiknadze, 1992, p. 180)

It is not indicated when exactly Georgia stopped paying tribute to Mongols.

The information of Hamdallah was considered to be untrustworthy by V. Kiknadze as well. In the opinion of the scholar, one of the reasons for “the twofold reduction” of the income of Ilkhanids was the withdrawal of several regions and among them, first of all, Georgia in the 1330s (Kiknadze, 1989, p. 85). If the information of Hamdallah, as assumed by R. Kiknadze and agreed by V. Kiknadze, corresponds to the era of Öljeitü, it appears that in the period of Öljeitü, i.e. before the enthronement of Abu-Sa'id, Georgia was independent.

W. Hinz moved the information of Al-Mazandarani to the period of Abu-Sa'id (1316-1335). In his opinion, Gilan, Shirvan, Georgia and Asia Minor could not have paid tribute to Sheikh Hassan Jalayirid, the predecessor of Uwais 757-776 (1356-1374) in 1349-1350, because it was Uwais who deprived the Golden Horde of Azerbaijan and Tabriz in 759/1357/1358, joined Mosul and Diyarbakir to his possessions and established control over Georgia (Kiknadze, 1989, p. 88).

D. Lang considered the information of Al-Mazandarani to be trustworthy, disagreed with the doubts of W. Hinz and mentioned that Al-Mazandarani had to use the books of Al-Ashraf which must have fallen into the hands of Jalayirids in 1358 when they conquered Tabriz (Lang, 1955, p. 89).

V. Gabashvili considered the information of Al-Mazandarani as well as that of Hamdallah of Qazwin to be trustworthy and like in the first case, assumed that the payment of tribute was episodic in this case as well (Gabashvili, 1960, p. 143). S. Ashurbeyli changed the date of the composition of Al-Mazandarani, which was dated 1363 by W. Hinz, and assigned the year 1467. The researcher considered the information of Hamdallah of Qazwin to be completely trustworthy and considered the 40 tumans of Al-Mazandarani to be doubtful as compared to it. In his opinion, such an amount is possible for the late 14th century (Ashurbeyli, 1979, pp. 45-46).

V. Kiknadze totally agreed with this doubt and on his part, assumed that 40 tumans mentioned by Al-Mazandarani reflect the situation of a much later era, namely, it is the tax collected in the reign of Jahan Shah (1438-67) (Kiknadze, 1979, p. 91).

Persian Sources on Georgia in the Reign of George the Brilliant and the Following Years

V. Gabashvili refers to historic compositions of continuers of the work of Rashid Ad-Din (Hapiz-iAbru, AbdAr-Razzak Samarqandi, who relies on Hapiz-i Abru in the section of interest to us), according to which Azerbaijan and Georgia are under the control of Chobanids and Jalayirid in the 1340s and the 1350s.

After the collapse of Choban and the disintegration of the Ilkhanate following the death of Abu-Sa'id (1336), Georgia was still under the control of Ilkhanids. This is confirmed by the composition of Abu Bakr Al-Qutbi Al-Ahar “History of Sheikh Uwais”, according to which Mongols appointed the son of Kutlug-Shah, Ikbāl-Shah as the governor of Georgia instead of Muhammad, the murdered son of murdered Choban and in 1334 this title was given to Sheikh Hassan Jalayirid, who was known as “the Big” 734/12.IX.1333-31.VIII, 1334 (Abu Bakr al-Kutbi al-Axari, 1984, pp. 13-14).

In winter the Sultan went to Bagdad, sent ayarliqto Emir Sheikh Hassan so that he could move to Georgia. The emir went there ... Kurak Maliq (supposedly George the Brilliant-G.A.) arrived to His Majesty Emir Taj Ad-Duniya Va-d-Din Sheikh Hassan and devotedly served him. Ordinance of the Padishah was issued again stating that entire Rum belongs to Taj Ad-Din Sheikh Hassan and so he must arrive there. (Abu Bakr al-Kutbi al-Axari, 1984, pp. 14)

Despite rather detailed information, the data of Abu Bakr Al-Ahar Al-Kutbiis not considered to be trustworthy in Georgian historiography. According to the commentary of T. Beradze and M. Sanadze,

In 1333-1334 Ilkhanid Khan Abu Sa'id appointed Hassan Jalayiridas *Shihna* or deputy (substitute) of Khan in Georgia. George the Brilliant did not let him enter Georgia. Hassan Jalayirid was the last *Shihna* appointed by Mongols in Georgia. Thus, Georgia became free from Mongol yoke formally as well. (Beradze & Sanadze, 2003, p. 209)

As we can see, the situation presented in the above commentary does not correspond to the information provided by Abu Bakr Al-Kutbi Al-Ahar. The only reason why researchers made such a conclusion is that it is not clear from the source who was appointed instead of Sheikh Hassan in Georgia after he was moved to Rum. However, Hassan appointed in Georgia earlier arrived there and was accompanied by Kurak Maliq (supposedly George the Brilliant) who devotedly served him.

The events of these years are addressed by V. Kiknadze, who mentions that George V expelled Mongols not only from the territory "of" Georgia, but held a campaign to former vassal countries, Ran and Shirvan and "brought them under tribute" (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 257; Kiknadze, 1979, p. 70). One of the sources, "Testament" by Cyril Donauri (dated March 5, 1333) is provided to confirm the above fact, on the basis of which "it becomes indisputable that George V held a campaign to Ran (Gandza) and Shirvanas early as the lifetime of Abu Sa'id" (Kiknadze, 1979, p. 71). Though the document mentioned here is dated, it is not clear from the data provided in it when the relevant fact happened. It is not excluded that the battle mentioned there happened in the period of Emir Choban or even after the restoration of relations of George the Brilliant with Ilkhanids against Uzbek Khan, while George the Brilliant might have been protecting the interests of Ilkhanids against forces invading from the north in this case. We will refer to the document:

When King George defeated Agarians in Ganja and Shirvan, our people from Shaki and Kurmukhi fought and defeated the enemy and therefore, the undefeatable George gave us commendation and granted us the lands of Kishel-Kurmukhi... Christianity strengthened with the help of King George the Brilliant among mountaineers and the unity of Georgia strengthened again. This was described: in choroniconka (25), the month of March, the 5th. (Janashvili, 1894, p. 206)

The "Agarians" mentioned in the information might have been the forces of the Golden Horde.

In the composition of Hapiz-iAbru (died in 1430/31), the events of spring, 1339 are preceded by information that after conquering the Persian Iraq, Azerbaijan, Aran, Maragha and Georgian regions, Sheikh Hassan Choban triumphantly entered the Sultanate and stayed there until the end of winter (Hafiz-i Abru, 1936, p. 131), i.e. Georgia was conquered by Hassan the Little—the son of Emir Choban's son, Timur-Tash (who first stayed in Rum during repressions and later found an asylum in Egypt and was killed by the Sultan of Mamluks in 1328. His head was sent to Ujanin February 1328 (Hafiz-i Abru, 1936, p. 107). In a part about the events of 1347, the same chronicler provides information that after an unsuccessful attack on Bagdad, Maliq Ashraf returned to Tabriz and governed what remained in his possession from there. Among the units listed here: Azerbaijan, Persian Iraq, Aran, Mughan, Kurdistan, the chronicler mentions Gurjistan (Georgia) again. According to him, loyal persons were appointed as the emirs (Hafiz-i Abru, 1936, p. 148). According to Hapiz-iAbru, various subjects rebelled against Hassan the Little in 1342. Some of them sheltered themselves in the possessions of Hassan Bozorg (the Big) Jalayirid and Hassan Choban had to handle them. In this period Hassan's brother Maliq Ashraf defeated Pir-Hussein who escaped to the Sultanate (Hafiz-i Abru, 1936, p. 136). After that, Maliq Ashraf, afraid of his brother, sheltered himself in the province of Georgia (Hafiz-i Abru, 1936, p. 136), which is considered to be an argument for the independence of Georgia by V. Kiknadze (Kiknadze, 1989, p. 94), unlike D. Lang, who considers this fact to be the conquering of Georgia by Ashraf (Lang, 1955, p. 91). We think that neither opinion is true. Ashraf, who had not openly confronted his brother yet, could also

have escaped to the province under Chobanid control, namely to Georgia which is mentioned among provinces under Chobanid control where emirs, loyal to Chobanids, were appointed during the events of 1347. However, V. Kiknadze also considers the above information dated 1347 provided by the same chronicler to be doubtful (Lang, 1955, pp. 89-95), as the chronicler does not mention a specific battle. The researcher argues with D. Lang and V. Gabashvili who base their assumptions on the information of Hafiz-i Abru and consider that only East Georgia was conquered. However, it is not important to specify which part of Georgia was conquered to clarify the issue. The only fact that Georgia is mentioned in the information of the source and researchers mention only East Georgia, cannot be enough to cast doubt on the information of the source. Rather, mentioning Gurjistanin general by Hapiz-i Abru during the years when Georgia was a unified kingdom is absolutely expectable, while the clarification of D. Lang and V. Gabashvili, unjustifiable.

While questioning the above excerpt from the composition of Hafiz-i Abru regarding the conquest of Georgia by Hassan the Little in 1338, V. Kiknadze refers to the information of Vakhushti Bagrationi—"the noyon who conquered Adrabagan, began to conquer Somkhiti (Armenia), Ran and Movakan and approached Ganja to subdue King George as well" (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 258). "There was a fierce struggle; with the help of the God, the king's warriors eliminated the troops of the enemy by sword repelled and he returned victorious with trophies" (Batonishvili, 1973, pp. 258-259). The researcher concludes that information of Vakhushti "on the victory of Georgians in the battle must be correct", as he assumes that Vakhushti must have used trustworthy contemporary sources, "the struggle between Georgia and Ilkhanid heirs had an episodic nature and had variable success" (Kiknadze, 1979, pp. 501-503). In another case, the same researcher mentions that "Georgian King George V could not have failed to take advantage of the situation created in the Ilkhanate to finally end Mongol rule in Georgia" (Kiknadze, 1989, p. 70).

Numismatic Data

According to the opinion substantiated in scientific literature, George the Brilliant never minted a national coin (Dundua & Dundua, 2011, p. 46).

An assumption was made several times that Georgia was still subordinated to Ilkhanids in the period of Ilkhanid collapse. Apart from the above information of Abu-Bakr al-Ahar, coins minted in Georgia in the name of Ilkhanids represent a solid basis for the above assumption: coins of Arpa Khan 736/1335-1336, Muhammad Khan 738/1337-1338, Sati Beg Khatun 739/1338-1339, Suleiman Khan 740/1339-1340, 741/1340-1341, 743/1342-1343, Anushirvan 745/1344-1345, 748, 750-756/1349-1355. As we can see, minting coins in the name of Ilkhanids continued in Georgia even after 1336 (Ghvaberidze, 1986, pp. 42-43). Despite the fact that there is often a controversy in literature regarding numismatic data used to define the years of rule of George the Brilliant, it is by using numismatic materials that Bartholomew, Frea, Stanley Lane-Pool, Markov, Pakhomov, Lang, Jalaghania and Ghvaberidze make a conclusion that Georgia was under the control of various external forces even during the 14th century.

After Abu Sa'id, as we have already mentioned, Persian Iraq, Azerbaijan, Aran, Maragha as well as Georgia were occupied by Chobanids, whom Jalayirids as well as the governor of the Golden Horde, Uzbek Khan had been unsuccessfully trying to defeat by for a certain while. The border between the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanid state passed through Derbent.

Sources do not provide information on the way Georgians were dependent on Chobanids. There is a hint at their relations in the composition of Al-'Umar (written after 1340), where Georgian warriors are mentioned:

They represent the force and wealth of the Hulaguid army, and Hulaguids trust and rely on them, especially Juban's children, grandsons and other descendants because of the past kindness and good deeds of Juban towards Georgians, who was a sincere friend of their king, Bartilma, made kindness with him and called on to protect the (entrusted) treasure. (Gocholeishvili, 1988, p. 51)

True, after Suleiman power was seized by Chobanids in the Ilkhanate, yet despite their military success, neither Hassan nor his brother Ashraf dared to declare themselves as sultans. Therefore, coins minted in their name are not known either (Ghvaberidze, 1986, p. 40). At the same time, coins with the title of "Fair Sultan", without the name of the sultan, have been found. E. Pakhomov associates these coins with Chobanid Ashraf. As mentioned by T. Ghvaberidze, a coin of this type minted in Tbilisi has also been discovered in the collection of E. Pakhomov. It is now saved in the main Georgian depository of the numismatic section of the State Museum of Georgia (Ghvaberidze, 1986, p. 40). Thus, both written sources and numismatic data confirm the dependence of Georgia on Chobanids.

Due to the strict Chobanid regime, local feudal lords of Azerbaijan applied to the governor of the Golden Horde, Uzbek Khan (1318-1342) for assistance. Uzbek Khan failed to achieve the goal despite numerous attempts. Struggles continued in the period of Janibek (1342-1357) who defeated Chobanid Maliq Ashraf, seized Tabriz and joined the Ilkhanate only in 758/1356-1357. Written sources mentioned the year 758, while coins-757, the latter being considered more precise (Dundua & Dundua, 2011, p. 52). According to the opinion expressed in historiography, governors of the Golden Horde must have seized the capital of Georgia for a short period, as in 757 Tbilisi Mint also had the monetary regalia in the name of Janibek and Muhammad Berdibek between 756-759 (Pakhomov, 1970, p. 190; Dundua & Dundua, 2011, p. 52; Ghvaberidze, 1986, pp. 44-45), while the name of Sheikh Uwais was imprinted on Tbilisi silver coin in 759 (Pakhomov, 1970, p. 190). As it is known, the son of Sheikh Hassan the Big (Bozorg), Uwais (757-776) conquered Azerbaijan and the territories adjoining Georgia from the south and the southeast. As mentioned by E. Pakhomov, due to the fact that chroniclers do not mention the dependence of Georgian Kings on Jalayirids, the evidence of coins is especially important (Pakhomov, 1970, p. 191).

In the second half of the 14th century, in addition to Ilkhanid coins, Golden Horde and Jalayirid coins also circulated in East Georgia. According to a substantiated assumption, in the late 1330s North Ossetia became subordinate to Georgian kings (Ghvaberidze, 1986, p. 45) and because of that the coins which circulated in Georgia appeared on the territory of the Golden Horde. According to T. Ghvaberidze, the coins minted in the name of the final Ilkhanids and Jalayirids appeared in the North Caucasus, on the territory of the Golden Horde after George the Brilliant joined Ossetia to Georgia. Coins were minted in the name of Ilkhanids in Alagir Mint in 739-759/1338-1339 – 1357-1358. During the Chobanid rule in Transcaucasia, the Jalayirid coin was also minted in parallel to the 757/1356 coin of the governor of the Northern Horde, Janibek. In 757 monetary regalia was exercised in the name of Jalayirid Hassan Bozorg (the Big). T. Ghvaberidze explains the appearance of coins in the name of Jalayirids at the time when the Golden Horde overthrew the Chobanid rule in the Ilkhanid Iran by the fact that Chobanid Maliq Ashraf was forced to recognize himself as the vassal of Jalayirid Hassan the Big (Bozorg) after being defeated by the latter.

Chobanid Maliq Ashraf regained the position the same year, and the locals applied to the north for assistance again (Ghvaberidze, 1986, p. 46). Soon after the conquest of Azerbaijan, the governor of the Golden Horde, Janibek goes back and leaves his son, Berdibek in Azerbaijan. Berdibek leaves the country due to his father's illness and leaves his vizier Akhichuk, who declares independence. In 759/1357-58 Persian Iraq and

South Azerbaijan were conquered by Muzaffarids who (like Akhichuk) were defeated the same year by the son of Jalayirid Sheikh Hassan Bozorg, Sheikh Uwais (Ghvaberidze, 1986, pp. 46-47). In the opinion of E. Pakhomov, it was Akhichuk who minted anonymous Jalayirid coins (Pakhomov, 1956, p. 48). Thus, monetary emission in Georgia was subjected to Jalayirids. Considering numismatic data, it is concluded that Georgia was still subject to Mongols in the reign of the son of George the Brilliant—David IX and Bagrat V (Ghvaberidze, 1986, p. 48).

All data reviewed here were known earlier. However, they were explained differently. Unlike the researchers who think that the political dependence of Georgia was not achieved during the 14th century despite unification (“Statement of the chronicler that Kartli it totally cleansed from Tatars in the reign of George V is an apparent exaggeration”) (Pakhomov, 1970, p. 201), a part of researchers consider that “coins are minted in the name of Jalayirids and the Golden Horde Khans by the Georgian Royal Court, which is guided only by economic considerations”. This is the opinion of V. Kiknadze (Kiknadze, 1989, p. 81). The same opinion was earlier expressed by some numismatists, for example, D. Kapanadze (Kapanadze, 1964, pp. 63-78).

The Second Half of the Reign of George the Brilliant (Since 1327)

Let’s go back to the era of George the Brilliant, namely, what happened to the king of East Georgia in the years of repressions carried out against Emir Choban and his family and in the following years? D. Lang refers to precedents from the history of Georgia, namely the relocation of Rusudan to West Georgia during the invasion of Jalal ad-Din, the relocation of Rusudan’s son, David Narin to West Georgia due to confrontation with Mongols. Afterwards the scholar assumes that George the Brilliant acted the same way and to survive sheltered himself in West Georgia (Lang, 1955, pp. 86-87).

We consider that this is not excluded and numismatic data support this again.

Interestingly, coins were not minted in Tbilisi from 729/1328-1329 to 1333. Ilkhanid Abu Sa’id introduced a new chronology on the coin of 733—the Ilkhanid period which starts from 701/1301-02. But a question is raised: what was happening in the meantime and where was George the Brilliant during that period? It is not excluded that the fact mentioned in several manuscripts (by Chalashvili, Machabeli and Janashvili) of “Kartlis Tskhovreba” occurred before the relocation of George to West Georgia:

In the reign of King George, they were confronted by Genghis Khan and sons of David Narin confronted each other in Imereti and King George got the upper hand, gathered the dukes of Heret-Kakheti and Somkhiti (Armenia) who supported Genghisat Tsivi in Kakheti and eliminated them. (*The Georgian Chronicles*, 1959, p. 325)

George moved to West Georgia where Constantine, son of David Narin died in 1327 and was replaced by his brother Michael. The latter, in his turn, died in 1329 and “left little son Bagrat”. However, according to Vakhushti, the process of Georgia’s unification was flowing peacefully, “Bagrat did not dare to become a king due to his early age and disobedience of dukes, as they did not support him” (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 257). At the same time, the same dukes “supported the reign” of George the Brilliant, “as he became more powerful” (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 257). Probably, this process was not painless and a lot of work preceded it. “He gathered his strong troops, passed the Lichi Range with his troops and the Imeretians who saw it, met him joyfully”,

Bagrat, son of King Michael was taken to Kutaisi by his mentors and loyal persons and placed in the fortress. King George, who was informed about that, approached Kutaisi. Bagrat could not oppose him and being in a difficult situation

pleaded King George while not to punish him by death, i.e. imprisonment, and to grant him an estate in Imereti and he would come before him and give all fortresses of Imereti to the king, as the Lord gave him power. The king was pleased to hear this and promised to fulfill his wishes. Hearing that, Bagrat appeared before King George and gave him all fortresses of Imereti. (Batonishvili, 1973, pp. 257-258)

The date is specified here—1330; “and he appointed his dukes there; and gave the Duchy of Shorapani to Bagrat and made him an *eristavi* there” (Batonishvili, 1973, pp. 257-258).

Information provided by Vakhushti makes it evident that the king was not in Tbilisi for a long period of time. During this period he inspected Odishi, Abkhazeti, “administered affairs there, seized fortresses and gave the principality of Tskhumi to the governor of Bedia”, “came to Samtskhe” and replaced the deceased Sargis Atabeg with his son Qvarqvare in 1334 (Batonishvili, 1973, p. 258).

The foundation of the Catholic mission in Tbilisi in this period draws attention. As it is known, a Catholic bishopric existed in Sukhumi as early as in 1318 and Bernard Morre was appointed as the bishop. Peter Gerald was appointed to the same position in 1330 (Kiknadze, 1962, pp. 156-160). It should be mentioned that Catholic John of Florence arrived in Georgia in 1318 and stayed there for 30 years (Tamarashvili, 1902, p. 39). Out of these 30 years, he was the bishop of the Catholic bishopric founded in Tbilisi for 18 years.

There are two letters sent to King George by the Pope. The first letter was sent to “George the Brilliant King of Georgians and his princes” from Avignon on October 15, 1321. In this letter they were called upon to join the Saint Roman Church. The reply of the Georgian King is unknown. The same letter is dated 1322 by I. Tabaghua (Tabaghua, 1984, p. 203). In 1328, the Pope abolished the Smyrna Bishopric oppressed by Turks and moved it to Tbilisi. By the bull issued in 1329, the Pope made Tbilisi the residence of the bishop and declared: “To be always called the name: Tbilisi Bishopric City in the future” (Tamarashvili, 1995, pp. 498, 501; Tamarashvili, 1902, pp. 30-35), where John of Florence was appointed as the bishop. The statement made by the Pope to the king of Georgia in 1329 with a call to join again is preserved, but neither the name of the king nor his location is indicated (Tamarashvili, 1995, p. 501). If we assume that George is not in Tbilisi in that period and shelters himself in West Georgia, the foundation of a bishopric in Tbilisi at exactly that time may have been a certain diplomatic step. The Pope subordinated the newly-founded Tbilisi bishopric to the bishopric founded in the Sultanate in 1318 (Tamarashvili, 1902, p. 39), as it appears also due to the fact that it considered Georgia to be under the Ilkhanid control politically as well. It is not excluded that during this challenging period, when repressions affected all relatives of the Great Vizier Choban, Catholics participated in negotiations between the Georgian King and Ilkhanid Abu Sa’id, as a result of which George was given an opportunity to return to Tbilisi soon. V. Kiknadze has studied some European sources, which (in one case) provide the response of George the Brilliant to Phillip VI de Valois, who offered the Georgian King to conduct a joint campaign to Egypt through his envoys, two Franciscans, Ricardo Marcher and Alexander of England in 1332/1333. It is noteworthy that George V honorably hosted the Franciscan envoys in Tbilisi for two months. The Pope made the same proposal to the Ilkhanid governor of Persia, but Abu Sa’id was not informed of this proposal due to the fact that he had already made peace with the Sultan of Egypt in 1323. In 1919 the document was published by I. J. Golubovich (Cardinal Hieronymus), who made the following comment regarding this fact: “His (George’s) residence was in Tbilisi and he was independent from Mongols of Persia”. Jean Richard shared the opinion of Golubovich on the independence of Georgia from Mongol control. According to the judgment of V. Kiknadze, “Would the king of France invite George V separately to conduct a campaign to the

‘Holy Lands’ if he had been a vassal of Abu Sa’id Khan?” (Kiknadze, 1983, pp. 158-164). V. Kiknadze provides two letters of Marino Sanuto, dated 1330 and 1334, where the same information on Georgia is provided (Kiknadze, 1983, pp. 161). According to Marino Sanuto, Georgians “are subject to Tatars to a certain extent, (but) on the other hand, they are not (subject to them) in fact”. Marino Sanuto mentions two kingdoms of Georgia. Seemingly, these letters reflect the situation of the period when the Georgian king was still in West Georgia and was not subject to Mongols.

The above mentioned Arab author Al-‘Umar (1301-1349), whose composition was written after 1340, provides interesting information on Georgia in the period in question. Al-‘Umar’s composition was used and complemented by Syrian author Taqiad-Din ‘Abd Ar-Rahman al-Gaddafi al-Muhibbin (died in 1384) and well-known Egyptian encyclopaedist ShihabAd-din Abu L-‘Abbas Ahmad Ibn’ Ali al-Kalkashandi (1355-1418). According to Al-‘Umar,

The capital of the country of Georgians is Tbilisi ... It has a king and the reign of the king is permanent there. It is governed by the Sultan of the Hulaguids of the Kingdom of Iran, whose firmans are sent (to Georgia), but its rainfall does not flood its borders and its warriors do not wander in the country due to the unleashed war. He (the Sultan) has only a duman of troops there who are used for the protection of the borders of this country and management of its affairs. (Gocholeishvili, 1988, p. 51)

According to the commentary of D. Gocholeishvili, the information of Al-‘Umar that the Ilkhanids had only a duman of troops (10,000) in Georgia concerns the period of the late 1320s, as it is directly followed by narration about Sheikh Mahmud (the commander of the military force of Mongols in Georgia)—the son of Choban, the vizier of the governor of Ilkhanid Iran Abu Sa’id (Gocholeishvili, 1988, p. 51). The above commentary is not convincing, as in his narration Al-‘Umar does not absolutely observe the chronological sequence. Even if the provided information reflects the earlier situation, how shall we explain the following information where the author mentions the Georgian troops, which in his opinion, represent “the strength and wealth of the troops of Hulaguids, while Hulaguids rely on them and trust them, especially the sons, grandsons and other descendants of Juban” (Gocholeishvili, 1988, p. 51) and this information is about the period of many years after the elimination of Choban? The information that Tbilisi is the capital of the country of Georgians fully corresponds to the years of creation of the composition, as Georgia was united at that time. As mentioned by D. Gocholeishvili, due to the fact that the author held the position of the state secretary of the Egyptian Sultan, he was well informed about Iran and Georgia. We think that the information of Al-‘Umar is reliable and there are no grounds for any doubts. As it seems, the reason for doubt is the opinion dominating in Georgian historiography that George the Brilliant not only united Georgia, but also gained full independence in the late 1320s.

Finally, I will address the issue of the envoys sent from Georgia in 1316/1317 and 1320 for the purpose of the redemption of the Jvari Monastery. According to the information of Arab author Al-Makrizi, included in the events of 716/26.III.1316-15.III.1317:

This year came envoys of Uzbek, envoys of the king of Georgians and envoys of the Uzbek’s relative, Tughay with gifts. They were given a response and presents were sent to them. And this year 8 envoys gathered in Egypt. These are: envoys of Choban, Abu Sa’id, Uzbek, Tughay, envoys of the owner of Barcelona (*Sahib*), owner of Istanbul, owner of Nubia and the Georgian King. All of them expressed obedience. Nothing similar had happened in the state of Turks (*Ad-Dawla at-Turkia*, i. e., in the state of *BahrianMamluks* – G.A.). The biggest number of envoys (5) had been in the period of reign of Zahir (Az-Zahir Baibars, 1260-77 – G.A. is implied). (Al-Maqrizi, 1997, p. 517)

As Choban and Abu Sa'id are mentioned in the information, participation of King George is not excluded as well, but out of the total number of envoys—8, we can imply only one envoy from Georgia. This one envoy is mentioned in the information twice. In the first case, mentioning the Georgian King in a certain context allows to identify him. Mentioning the envoy of the Georgian king together with the envoy of Uzbek, the governor of the Golden Horde, and the envoy of his relative, Tughay, points to the fact that in this case, the king of West Georgia, and not of East Georgia is implied. The situation is the same in connection with sending envoys in 1320. According to Al-'Ain, envoys of Uzbek, envoys of the Georgian king and envoys of Laskaris appeared before the Sultan on May 8, 1320 (Tizengauzen, 1884, p. 520) (i.e. Arabic sources mistakenly consider Laskaris to be the ruling dynasty of Constantinople, which were replaced by Palaiologos from the 1260s). In the period when East Georgia and Samtskhe were allies of Ilkhanids, the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, the Sultanate of Rum and the Pope of Rome, West Georgia was naturally united with Ilkhanids and the force confronting the Pope of Rome—the Golden Horde, Egypt and Byzantium. This fact does not exclude the contribution of George the Brilliant in the redemption of the Jvari Monastery; yet this must have happened after peace was made between Ilkhanids and the Sultan of Egypt (Alasania, 2008, pp. 31-32).

All the above does not diminish the merits of George V to the Georgian nation and his historic role in terms of the political unification of the country, the creation of a legal basis for it and the regulation of ecclesiastic affairs—the accomplishments of the king, who deservedly bears the name “the Brilliant”.

Conclusion

Based on the above mentioned, the following conclusions can be made:

In 1329-1334, George the Brilliant took advantage of the situation created in the Ilkhanate, eliminated his political opponents and restored the territorial integrity of Georgia. He created a solid legal basis for the country and regulated the ecclesiastic area. He was in the West Georgia in 1329-1332/1333 and was not subject to Mongols. The Ilkhanid coin was not minted in Georgia during that period; yet, soon the king of Georgia, which had already been united by that time, restored relations with Ilkhanids and returned to Tbilisi, which implied making the already united Georgia subject to Mongols.

As shown by relevant researches, minting the national coin (“Giorgauli”) is not associated with George the Brilliant and Ilkhanid coins and later, coins of Chobanids, the Golden Horde and Jalayirids circulated during his reign.

In 1338-1339 George the Brilliant conquered Ossetia and Ilkhanid coins were disseminated on the territory of the Golden Horde after that.

Despite formal dependence on the foreign power, which is evidenced by the deployment of 10,000 troops at the border of Georgia, foreign coins circulated as well and Georgia enjoyed a rather wide internal autonomy.

Formally, Georgia still remained under the control of Ilkhanids, which were replaced by Chobanids in 1338 and the governors of the Golden Horde in 757/1356; and in parallel and afterwards by Jalayirids, which is evidenced by written sources as well as numismatic data.

As for the foreign policy, the possibilities of the country were limited there. According to the sources which have reached us, we cannot assume the participation of George the Brilliant in sending envoys for the purpose of the redemption of the Jvari Monastery in 1316/1317, 1320. It seems that in those years envoys were sent by Constantine, the king of the West Georgia.

All the above mentioned does not diminish the merits of George V to the Georgian nation and his historic role in terms of the political unification of the country, the creation of a legal basis for it and the regulation of ecclesiastic affairs—the accomplishments of the king, who deservedly bears the name “the Brilliant”.

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