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Georgia and Western Europe at the Beginning of the 14th Century (The Later Crusades)

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Relations between Georgia and Europe had become especially interesting in the high Middle Ages when Christian Georgia and Western Europe united in the fight against the Muslim East. On the one hand, Georgia, oppressed by Muslims, sought assistance in Western European countries while Christian Europe also considered Georgia an ally against the Islamic East.

Crusades initiated by Western European countries in the Near East at the end of the 11th century had ended by the turn of the 13th century. Later, in the 14th-15th centuries, European Christians made efforts to establish coalitions against Muslims and organise Crusades; these were subsequently referred to as the later Crusades.

One of such coalitions was discussed in the letter (a reply) by the Georgian King, George V the Brilliant (1314-1346) to the King of France, Philippe VI de Valois (1328-1350). Georgian scholars learnt of this letter from the publication by Vaja Kiknadze [Kiknadze 1983:158-163], in which the author presents the letter by George V the Brilliant discovered while exploring a Franciscan archive and published by J. Golubovich [Golubovich 1919:414-415]. A distinguished scholar of the Crusade epoch, Jean Richard, also refers to the same source [Richard 1998:54].

Which historical fact does this letter by George V the Brilliant refer to? The fact discussed in the letter is the decision of Philippe de Valois regarding the organisation of a Crusade against the Egyptian Sultan Mohammed An-Nasir (1292-1340).¹ Philippe considered Abu Sa'id (1317-1335)², Khan of the Ilkhanate and the King of Georgia, George V to be his allies in the East.

1 Mameluke Sultan of Egypt who had ascended the throne of Egypt three times: in 1293-1294; 1299-1309; 1309-1334.

2 He was the representative of the Hulagu dynasty.

He sent a French missionary to Tabriz to get into contact with the Franciscan Prior and Latin merchants to hand over the King's letters and gifts to him. The Franciscans decided to exclude Abu Sa'id from this campaign due to the fact that in 1323 the Ilkhanate made a truce with the Sultan of Egypt to unite against the Golden Horde aggressors. Therefore only the Georgian king remained to fight on the side of the Crusaders. The French missionaries Richard (Ricardo) Mercier (Mercher) and Alexander the English merchant arrived in Tbilisi in 1332-1333. They spent two months at the Georgian court although it is still unknown whether the Georgian King's reply reached the addressee or not [Golubovich 1919:415].

Having studied this important document (the letter by George V), the present author decided to explore the historical context of this period. Specifically, to determine the significance of the Crusade campaign initiated by Philippe de Valois: Why was it planned, when, who took part in this venture and how was it prepared? Why did the King of France decide to involve Georgia in this undertaking and what was the Georgian interest in this campaign?

In order to find answers to these questions I made a study of European sources and scholarly literature regarding the issue.

The Ideology of the Crusades: From a Just War to a Holy War

The Crusades united two traditions and two ideas: the idea of pilgrims and that of the 'holy war'. A Christian idea regarding the fact that a human being is a pilgrim (*'peregrinus'*) was reflected in the philosophy of the Crusades, which replaced the *'votum peregrinationis'* with the *'votum crucis'*. The Crusades were armed pilgrimages, and Papal Legates and clerics always accompanied the Crusaders. The Crusades were announced by the Pope's special order.

Although initially the Church opposed violence of all types, gradually this attitude changed and the theory about the 'just war' appeared, based on St. Augustine's theory about just and unjust wars. Augustine developed this theory in his well-known work *'The City of God'*, written in 413-426 [Augustine 1955]. As claimed by this theory, just wars were conducted in the name of God in order to defend Christianity while unjust wars were unleashed between Christians. Christians considered war against pagans or Muslims (also considered as pagans) to be just and fair [Flori 1999:35].

The idea of a holly war developed gradually in Europe. This is indicated by the cults of St. Martin, St. Dmitri and St. George. Even the Reconquista in Spain was considered to be a holly war. The Cluniac movement in the 10th-11th centuries aimed at Church reformation in order to strengthen the power

of the Papacy and of the Catholic Church. As believed by the reformists, the main goals of the wars conducted by Christians were to return old Christian lands, which had once been owned by St. Peter, to the Catholic Church. For this purpose the so-called 'Peter's Army' was established which united abbots, monks, and bishops. The flag of St. Peter was also created. It was a military flag, used as a symbol of the fight against the enemies of the Church. The soldiers slain on the battlefield were considered saints who would certainly get to Paradise, while the survivors would be released from their sins. The ideology of the Crusades was based on this philosophy [Gurevich 2003:235-236].

Thus, a *'bellum justum'* was replaced by a *'bellum sacrum'*. The culmination of the idea was to organise a Crusade in Palestine – Christians had to redeem Christ's legacy from the Muslims who claimed it as their own property.

Philippe de Valois and the Later Crusades

In the beginning of the 14th century the kings of Western Europe together with their aristocracy planned a Crusade against the Muslims under the initiative of the Pope and of the King of France, Philippe VI de Valois. Despite the fact that the Crusades had finished by the end of the 13th century, Europe had not yet said goodbye to the idea of the Crusade, even though planned crusades often remained unrealised. At the end of the 13th century, the situation became strained in the East. The Sultan of Egypt, Qalawun (1280-1290) took Tripoli in 1289, killed all the male population of the city and sold women and children as slaves. His son Halil (1290-1294) took the city of Accra in 1291, demolished the fortresses of Beirut, Tyre, Sidon and Haifa. After this, the last of the Crusaders fortresses fell [Richard 1995:885].

Redeeming the Holy Land from the Muslims became the ultimate goal for European Christians. On the Second World Ecumenical Council in Lyon, held in 1274, Pope Gregory X (1271-1276) talked about the necessity of organising a Crusade, which became an even more burning issue after losing Accra in 1291 [Richard 1995:883].

The idea of a Crusade was shared enthusiastically by the Avignon Popes. The increasing number of Seljuk pirates on the Aegean Sea, attacks of Syrian mamelukes on Cyprus and the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia made Pope John XII angry. The Italian Marino Sanudo dedicated a treatise (*'Secreta Fidelium Crucis'*) to Philippe VI de Valois, which expressed the necessity of organising a crusade. In the same period Roger de Stavin wrote *'Le conquest de la Terre Sainte'* in which he addressed the English King with a request to start a Crusade [Perroy 1945:124].

In 1309-1310, the first Avignon Pope, Clement V (1305-1314) raised the issue of organising a crusade, which was later taken up by Pope John XXII (1316-1334) [Richard 1995:884].

The French kings, Philippe V the Tall (1316-1322) and Charles IV the Fair (1322-1328) tried to help the Christians [Viard 1936:306]. For this reason Charles IV the Fair sent his ambassador Guillaume de Bonne-Mains to the Sultan of Egypt. In 1323, the King of France and John XXII planned the Crusade expedition. In 1328 the Pope sent Raymond Béguin, Patriarch of Jerusalem to Egypt to persuade the Mamelukes to return the Holy Land to the Christians [Favier 2006:491-493]. In 1328-1330 the Europeans continued negotiations with the Sultan of Egypt An-Nasir (1292-1340) regarding the status of Europeans in the Holy Land. An-Nasir apparently finally agreed with the King of Sicily to allow the Franciscan Order to found a monastery under his rule [Richard 2010:485]. The idea of a Crusade became important to the King of France, Philippe VI de Valois from the first day of accession to the throne. He started preparing for the expedition against Egypt together with Pope John XXII and later with Benedict XII (1334-1342).

What Information is Available in European Historical Sources Regarding the Campaign Organised by Philippe de Valois?

From this point of view, the information provided by the historiographer of the Hundred Years' War, Jean Froissart (approximately 1337-1404), acquires a special importance. Froissart was originally from the County of Hainaut³, which was part of the Holy Roman Empire. The knights from the county of Hainaut fought on the side of either France or England during the Hundred Years' War. Froissart was a historiographer and poet. He was a personal secretary to Philippa, the wife of Edward III and daughter of the count of Hainault. Froissart started writing chronicles in the 1370s. He interviewed eyewitnesses of the events and wrote his chronicles based on the collected data. The work consists of four books and embraces the events unfolding in 1325-1400, the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War [Froissart 2009].⁴

This issue is also described in '*Three Grand Chronicles of France*' [Viard 1937], the '*First Four Valois Chronicles*' [Luce 1862]⁵ and '*A Chronicle of*

3 Currently Hanagau.

4 There are three major redactions of the Chronicles by Froissart: the Amiens manuscript, the A/B family manuscript and the Rome manuscript. The Amiens manuscript describes the events of 1325-1378 and is distinguished by the pro-French attitude. The A/B manuscript starts with the events of 1350 and reveals a very pro-English attitude. The Roman manuscript is the latest one, written between 1400-1410. The expedition planned by Philippe de Valois is depicted in all three redactions by Froissart.

5 The author of the First Four Valois Chronicles which describes the historical events unfolding in the France of 1327 – 1393 is unknown.

Flanders' [Malinin 2005:131]. The latter, written by an anonymous author in French, describes French-Flandrian history in 1322-1340 and is also dedicated to Philippe.

Having studied the information provided by these sources, the following issues regarding the Crusade expedition organised by Philippe Valois emerged.

Initiators and Participants in the Crusade Campaigns

As at the beginning of the 14th century, the Popes of Rome were under the rule of the French Kings (the so-called period of the Avignon Papacy) and they were obliged to agree to all the important decisions of the monarchs. Pope John XXII presented the idea of the Crusade to the King of France, Philippe VI, who soon became the initiator of the venture [Luce 1862:124]⁶.

The French King addressed the senior nobles of France to take part in the campaign [Froissart 2009:315]. Philippe asked the Kings of Hungary⁷, Cyprus⁸ and Germany⁹ to ensure the safety of the Crusaders when crossing their respective countries. The Kings of Sicily and Naples¹⁰, Bohemia¹¹, Aragon¹², and Navarre¹³, as well as the King of England¹⁴ also planned to take part in the Crusades. As were the Dukes of Burgundy, Bretagne, Loraine, Brabant, citizens of Genoa and Venice; Church dignitaries such as the Patriarch of Jerusalem¹⁵, representatives of the Hospital order, cardinals¹⁶; The Dukes of Savoy, Armagnac, Dauphins of Vienne and Auvergne; Philippe of Valois' brother Charles d'Alençon, etc. About 300,000 crusaders were involved in this initiative. Marseille, Aigues-Mortes, Narbonne and Montpellier fleets were to be mobilised and led by the Duke of Narbonne and Carlo Grimaldi from Genoa [Froissart 2009:102].

Philippe asked the Pope Benedict XII (1334-1342) to bless the participants and the following people received the cross: Philippe VI, the King of Sic-

6 According to the First Four Valois Chronicles, Pope John XII appealed to all Christian rulers to agree to make Philippe de Valois the Commander-in - Chief of the campaign.

7 The King of Hungary - Louis I the Great (1326 - 1382), from the Dynasty of Anjou, King of Hungary from 1324 and King of Poland from 1370.

8 The King of Cyprus - Hugh IV de Lusignan (1324 - 1360)

9 The King of Germany - Ludwig of Bavaria (1324-1360)

10 The King of Sicily and Naples - Robert I (1309 - 1343)

11 The King of Bohemia - John I (1310 - 1346)

12 The King of Aragon - Peter IV (1336 - 1387)

13 The King of Navarre - Philip III (1328 - 1843)

14 The King of England - Edward III (1327 - 1377)

15 The Patriarch of Jerusalem - Pierre de la Palu

16 The Cardinal of Naples, of Périgord, of Ostia and of Ban - Albano.

ily, Charles d'Alençon, Dukes of Savoy and Armagnac, Dauphin de Viennois, the Duke of Bourbon, the Cardinals of Naples, Milano, Perigord, Charles of Bohemia, the king of Navarre and Peter of Aragon [Froissart 2009:315].

Thus those willing to participate in the Crusades represented a cross section of European (Cyprus, Sicily, Hungary, Germany, Bohemia, Aragon, England, etc.) monarchs, aristocracy, Church dignitaries and a major part of the European Christian elite.

The Reasons for Initiating the Crusades

In this article we are focussing on the reasons behind the Crusades. First of all, there must be a generally known reason underlying all the Crusades. The major goal of the Crusades was to save the Holy Land from Muslim rule (as discussed above), in this particular case, from that of the Sultan of Egypt, An-Nasir Mohammed.

As indicated by Froissart, the more specific reason for this initiative was the desire to assist the country of Rasa [Froissart 2009:438]. Jean Froissart retells that 'the enemies of God' conquered the major part of the Kingdom of Rasa, took it as a military hostage, tortured and killed the kingdom's Christian King. This infuriated Pope Benedict XII, who appealed to Philippe de Valois and the King of Aragon to fight against the Saracens on behalf of Christianity. In addition, the Pope promised the Crusaders, that all their sins would be forgiven if they accompanied the King on the Crusade [Froissart 2009:437-439].

Some scholars of the kingdom of Rasa (for instance, Kervyn de Lettenhove) equate it to Serbia¹⁷. However, the Turks had not yet conquered Serbia at that time.

On the other hand, some scholars argue, that the kingdom of Rasa was situated on the territory of Armenian Cilicia as one of its cities; Ayas was ruthlessly demolished by Al-Nasir while the King of Armenia, Levon IV (1320-1341) appealed for help to the Pope [Grousset 1979:401]. The Armenian factor in this Crusade should also be discussed now.

In 1322 Egyptian Mamelukes invaded Armenian Cilicia, took the town of Ayas and demolished the fortresses. The King of Cyprus, Henry II sent an army to assist Armenia while the Armenian Archbishop Konstantin IV travelled to Cairo and secured a 15-year truce with the Sultan. The King of Armenia appealed to the West for help and sent ambassadors to the Pope. In

¹⁷ Rasa – a country in Turkish Europe, in Northern Serbia, which got its name from one of the confluences of the river Moravi with the main towns Belgrad, Semendra and Galombats. From the Middle Ages on Serbia was referred to as Rascie [Froissart 2009:582].

addition, Philippe de Valois considered Armenian Cilicia to be an ally in his new initiative, moreover, he supposed Cilicia to be a springboard for the allied Crusaders' army. In 1332 Philippe IV wrote a letter to the King of Armenia describing his plans. He also allotted 10,000 florins for strengthening Armenian fortresses. In 1335-1337 the Mamelukes invaded Armenian Cilicia three times and ruthlessly demolished it. Levon IV was obliged to secure an armistice with the Sultan of Egypt and give up the left bank of the river Pyramus (Ceyhan) as well as an important trade and military port Ayas [Grousset 1979:401]. In the 1340s Muslims invaded Cilicia again and the king of Armenia, once again, asked for help from Western Europe. In 1341 Pope Benedict XII sent a letter to both the Armenian Catholicos and Levon IV and informed both, that he was willing to help only if Armenia was converted to the Catholic faith [Chevalier 2011:240-242]].

It is significant that Levon was married to Constantza of Aragon (1305-1344), daughter of the king of Aragon, widow of the king of Cyprus. The King of Aragon, Constantza's brother, was one of the participants of the Crusades. The French sources also discussed the issue of the assistance provided to Armenia by the king and the Pope [Viard 1936:305-316].

From the above-mentioned the connection of the Armenian Cilicia with the European Crusaders and the leaders of the European countries (specifically, with the Kings of France, Aragon and Sicily) becomes obvious. Consequently, I argue that the country of Rasa was Cilicia of Armenia.

Preparations for the Crusades

In 1329, the King of Catalonia-Aragon Alfonso III decided to liberate Granada and asked for assistance from the King of France. Philippe VI promised help to Alfonso III [*Miret y Sans* 1917:8-9]. However, it also became known that the King of Castille later entered a truce with the Muslims [Viard 1937:122-123]. This news made Philippe VI change his mind and refocus his interest from Spain to the East.

The negotiations between the patriarch of Jerusalem and the Sultan did not yield positive results. In 1331 the Patriarch visited the king of France in Paris and informed him and his court nobles about the negative attitude against Christians at the Sultan's court. The Pope appealed to Church servants to preach for the Crusade [Viard 1937:130]. The advisors of the King of France opted for the Crusade by sea-travel and for financing the expedition by the 'Church's tithe' and other church taxes [Viard 1936:307 – 308].

On November 11, 1333 the Pope announced Philippe VI as head of the Crusades [Coville 1981:22]. The Dominican friar, Brocard made a plan for the Crusades in Latin which was translated into French by Jean Diu Vibe. Gui de Vigevano described bridges, ships, military equipment to be used during the Crusades [Favier 2006:491-493]. In the letter of November 18, 1331 Philippe asked the Doge of Venice to determine the number of ships and expected expenses [Viard 1936:308].

As I noted above, Levon IV also asked Philippe IV for help, and the latter sent 10,000 gold florins in order to obtain the right for the Crusaders to cross Armenian Cilicia [Viard 1936:308]. Before then, in 1322 Pope John XII sent 30,000 florins to the Patriarch of Jerusalem to assist Armenia. [Favier 2006:491-493].

The expedition organised by Philippe IV was ready to start in July 1332. On October 2, 1332 the nobles (the Kings of Navarre and Bohemia, the Duke of Burgundy, etc.) received the sign of the cross during the knighting ceremony of John, son of Philippe VI. [Viard 1936:309].

On October 1, 1333 in Saint-Germain-des-Prés Abbey, the archbishop of Rouen, Pierre Roger officially announced the Crusades. After that the king officially received the cross together with the patriarch of Jerusalem, the king of Navarre, Philippe, Dukes of Brabant, Burgundy, Bourbon and others. The order was given out to preach the Crusade in all the Christian world. The departure was planned in three years' time: August, 1336.

On November 3, 1333 Philippe learnt that the Turks had invaded part of present-day Romania. He contacted the Doge of Venice, the Emperor of Byzantium and the Hospital order. He also tried to involve England in the Crusades. He sent Raoul de Marigny, Bishop of Beauvais to negotiate with the King of England. On September 19, 1334, Edward III accepted the Cross and sent the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Stratford to France as an ambassador [Viard 1936:309]¹⁸.

In 1334 the Papacy was actively involved in the preparation for the Crusade. The King of France asked the residents of Genoa for their help. Meanwhile, on December 4, 1334 Pope John XXII died and it became necessary to involve the new Pope, Benedict XII in this venture. The new Pope invited the king of Sicily, the Order of Hospital and the Venetians to take part in preparations. Philippe appointed Duke Luis de Bourbon as general of the Crusades. [Viard 1936:309]. Paris collected 40,000 livres for the campaign. According to the *Grand French Chronicles* [Viard 1937:134] in March 1336 the Crusaders

18 The ambassador of the king of England handed Philippe VI the request from Edward III not to support the Scots, but Phillippe VI refused.

were ready to start, but the Pope requested the King (in his letter of March 13, 1336) to delay the expedition, as Europe was in anarchy at that time. Apart from this, on August 4, 1336 a hurricane in the forest of Vincent was considered by the king as an ominous sign of being late. When Philippe started getting the fleet ready, the Hundred Years' War broke out. The King refused to start the Crusades, although, according to Froissart, Philippe was ready for the expedition [Froissart 2009:315]¹⁹.

The date of Philippe de Valois receiving the cross on October 1, 1333 (either in Paris or in Près-aux-Clares) is regarded as the start of this historical expedition [Viard 1936:310; Coville 1981:22]²⁰. Also, according to another theory, Philippe received a cross once again in Avignon either in 1335 or in 1336 [Favier 2006:21].

The Reasons for the Failure of the Expedition

European sources and scholars agree that the main reason for the failure of this venture was the outbreak of the Hundred Year's War between England and France [Viard 1936:315-316]. Obviously, the Pope played a major role in delaying the expedition as he was worried about the difficult situation in Europe. In 1336 Philippe VI went to Avignon to visit Pope Benedict XII accompanied by the Duke of Normandy and kings of Navarre and Majorca. The expedition was planned to start on August 1 of the same year, but in his letter of March 13 the Pope urged the king to cancel the trip.

'In this unsettled time, when there are wars in all parts of the world, one should think hard about what to do. It is not difficult to start a venture, but the way it will end and what fruit it will yield must be the object of discussion and thought' [Coville 1981:23].

The Pope also mentioned that the relationship between England and Scotland was strained, and Germany was also unstable. As well as this, Toscana and Apulia were on the verge of a conflict and Sicily was in turmoil as well. 'In this

19 According to Froissart, Philippe was getting ready for the expedition and travel by sea. He had ships and galleys ready to transport 40,000 people and food in Marseilles, Aigues-Mortes, Narbonne and Montpellier. Ambassadors were sent to the king of Hungary to urge him to join the venture and accept the pilgrims in his country. The King of Hungary agreed. Next, Philippe addressed the king of Cyprus, Hugh IV de Lusignan, the king of Sicily and Venetians to open the borders. The King sent the Grand Prior of France to the island of Rhodes to conduct all the preparatory work. The knights of the order of St. John contacted the Venetians to receive the products from Cando, as this island belonged to Venice. The amount of products collected was sufficient and the cross was received by more than 300,000 Christians [Froissart 2009:102].

20 Although Richard argues that Philippe receives the cross in 1331 [Richard 2010:485].

situation the Crusades were not advisable, as France could be challenged by its enemies' – wrote the Pope [Viard 1936:314-316].

This prediction came true and soon the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) broke out between England and France. It is difficult to judge if the Crusades would have been carried out if not prevented by the war. However, it is still a fact that according to European sources this campaign was being prepared thoroughly at the top level and it may have been successful.

Georgia and the Crusade

The reply sent to Philippe de Valois by George the Brilliant made it clear that the European countries had appealed to Georgia to take part in the Crusades discussed above: "Mighty Kings of France had often appealed to the Kings of the East to fight against the Saracens. However, the fact is that then they do not appear and leave (involve them the kings of the East) in this poignant war on their own. Therefore (I ask you) decide definitely when you will be crossing the sea and you will be seeing me (there), according to your good will, with my 30,000 soldiers" [Kiknadze 1983:158]²¹. The Georgian King is ready to accept the challenge. However, the Georgian king justly reproaches Philippe de Valois for frequently vacillating and turning down military expeditions initiated by Europeans [Tyerman 1985:50].

However, the following issue is particularly interesting to us: what influenced the decision of Philip de Valois regarding the participation of Georgia in the Crusades?

First, information about Georgia was already available in this period in Europe, including France. As early as the first part of the 12 th century Ansellus the Psalmer [Avalishvili 1989:5-26], Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Saint-Jean d'Acre [Tvaradze 2004:141-142], Vincent of Beauvais [Tvaradze 2004:147] and a popular legend about John the Presbyter [Badridze 1984:164] informed Europeans about this small Christian country fighting against the Muslims. According to this information, Georgians were distinguished warriors fearlessly fighting against the Muslim environment [Brinken 1973:125]. Moreover, in the letter written in 1108 to the Paris episcopo Guillaume, Ansellus the Psalmer from Jerusalem writes: 'when alive, David, King of the Georgians, dedicated this cross to the utmost worship and love. Like his ancestors, he

21 'Domini reges Franciae frequenter reges orientales commoverunt contra Sarracenos; postea non venientes eos dimittebant in tribulatione guerrae. Sed dicatis sibi quod, quando mare transiverit, statum me videbit ad suum beneplacitum cum XXX milibus armatorum' [Golubovich 1919:415].

held and guarded the gates to the Caucasus – restraining Gog and Magog. His son, whose country and kingdom can be said to be our front rampart, has been guarding the gates” [Avalishvili 1989:17-18]. According to Jacques de Vitry, Georgians were devout Christians holding Muslims in terror [Tvaradze 2004:141-142]. Consequently, since that time, Georgia was considered by Europe as one of the most important allies fighting against Muslims.

Georgia had close contacts with the Crusaders as early as the 12th century, dating from the rule of David the Builder till the reign of Lasha-Giorgi [Avalishvili 1989]. Supposedly, there was a certain relationship between David IV and Baudouin I, king of Jerusalem. It can also be argued that European crusaders participated in the decisive battle of Didgori against the Turks [Badridze 1973]. In addition, the Roman Popes and kings of Georgia had contacts from the reign of Rusudan including the reign of George V the Brilliant [Avalishvili 1989; Badridze 1973; Metreveli 1962]. Catholic missions must have been active in Georgia as the Catholic centre was moved from Smyrna to Tbilisi [Tamarashvili 1902:36]. In the historical context of my research, Georgia seems to remain an interesting country for Western Europe. Georgians played a considerable role during the Mongol wars. The Georgian army spent seven years in a well-known war for Alamut. They also took part in the siege of Bagdad (1258) and in battles against Egypt initiated by Mongols [Lominadze 1979:569] and were known for their outstanding courage and fighting ability.

It is well-known that in the 13th century France attempted to establish the alliance with Mongols against Mamlukes [Richard 20th]. This interest became actual especially since the Saint Louis IX reign, after the seventh crusade. It is important to note that Georgians also took part in making the alliance between Western Europe and the Mongols. Specifically, in 1276, with a view to finding an ally in Western Europe and creating a second front against the Mamluke Sultanate, Abagha Khan sent special envoys to Europe, the Georgian brothers John and Jacob [Ninidze 1998:425]. The Georgian ambassadors delivered the letter from Abagha Khan to the Pope [Natroshvili 1974:165-66] and also, acquainted him with the wish of the great Kublai Khan regarding sending Catholic missionaries to Mongolia. In 1277 Georgian convoys met Philippe III, King of France and Edward I, king of England. Abagha Khan sent his apologies to the king of England for the Mongols being passive during a unified operation planned together with England in Palestine. Abagha's convoys headed for Rome from England and took the letter to Abagha, written by the Pope. However, due to the complicated situation in Europe, this diplomatic mission did not succeed [Natroshvili 1974:168]. Presumably, the Georgian king Demetre II also had a knowledge of the Georgian role in this process [Ninidze 1998:426].

Consequently, Georgia remained an interesting country for Western Europe regarding the process of searching for a possible alliance with Mongols in the fight against the Mamluks.

In order to find an answer to the question why Georgia was destined to become a focus of European interest in this historical context, a number of factors should be taken into account. In the first case, the Crusades planned by Philippe de Valois against the Sultanate of Egypt were inherently connected to the issues of Armenia and Cyprus.

I argue that the appearance of Georgia in this context must be due to the part Armenia and Cyprus played in the planned Crusades. As can be seen, one of the goals of the expedition was to assist the Christians of Armenian Cilicia. Georgia, one of a closer neighbours of Armenia, (Armenian Cilicia is not identical with Greater Armenia, the neighbour of Georgia!) must have also become part of European interest and the Armenians would also have provided them with information about this small country. Furthermore, in this period Georgia already had contacts with Cyprus and Georgian statesmen lived in the Nicosia colony. A prominent centre of Georgian culture, the Gialia Monastery must have been founded on Cyprus in the 12th – 13th centuries. Thus, both Armenians and Cypriots must have provided Europeans with information about Georgia.

Finally, the desire of Western European countries regarding the creation of an alliance with the Mongols against the Sultanate of Egypt may have become a sufficient reason for Philippe de Valois to include Georgia in the Crusade.

European historical sources and historiography reveal no information regarding the participation of Georgia in later Crusade campaigns. Currently only the letter by George V the Brilliant discovered in the Fransican archive is known to us. Despite this, it is not justified to argue that Georgia did not desire to take part in the campaign initiated by Philip de Valois.

The historical context within which the preparation process for the late Crusades was unfolding is discussed in the article. Hopefully, further research will shed additional light on the issue.

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