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SILK ROADS, TRADE AND TERRITORIAL EXPANSION: KINGDOM OF GEORGIA IN 11TH-14TH CENTURIES

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Abstract. Regional or international trade has always played a central role in the history of Georgia. Trade routes made it possible to establish close political, cultural and economic relations with neighboring as well as distant countries. The kingdom of Georgia's territorial expansion towards Arran, Shirvan, and Armenia in the 11th-13th centuries was largely driven by economic and trade reasons, namely the desire to control the regional trade routes which criss-crossed Dvin, Barda, Ganja, Tbilisi, Ani, Trebizond, Ahlat, Tabriz and many other major cities along Georgia's southern borders.

The present article will also pay attention to the changes to the trade routes in the Caucasus region caused by the Mongols and how their invasions changed the kingdom of Georgia's position in the regional commerce. By mid-13th century new major trade corridors connecting Asia with the Middle East and the Black Sea were geographically distanced from Georgia harming the latter's geopolitical position in the region.

KEYWORDS: SILK ROADS, KINGDOM OF GEORGIA, SOUTH CAUCASUS, TRADE, MONGOLS

INTRODUCTION

In the period from late 11th to the Mongol invasion in 1220s-1230s the kingdom of Georgia experienced the golden age characterized by economic ascendancy and southward territorial expansion. The present article will discuss what caused the rulers of the unified Kingdom of Georgia to carry out territorial expansion to the south in the 11th-13th centuries. Despite a large body of literature on the subject mostly in the Georgian historiography, the issue has yet to be researched beyond obvious military and political reasons Georgian monarch had at the time. A few scholars, only briefly, have mentioned trade and trade routes as one of the reasons for Georgian political expansion to the south.

J. Stepnadze, for example, noted that one of the main foreign political goals of the Georgian

kings was to control the trade routes running through the Armenian lands (Stepnadze, 1985: 50-57) [1]. V. Gabashvili shared this viewpoint, but only confined himself to a few sentences when discussing the subject (Gabashvili, 1967: 202) [2]. G. Japaridze too mentioned the importance of trade routes in a similar context, arguing that during the time of David IV the Builder, Georgia aimed at accessing the key trade routes of the region (Japaridze, 1995: 59) [3]. R. Kiknadze mentioned the Georgian kings' intention to exploit the trade routes located to the south. Sh. Meskhia likewise drew attention to the economic interests of Bagrationi kings when it came to the annexation of Tbilisi and the general need to annex cities with a large population (Meskhia, 1972: 122-130) [4]. In Georgia, the legal position of merchants (mainly during the rule of David IV) was

also given a due scholarly attention (Aleksidze, 1968: 141-170) [5].

Therefore, in the Georgian historiography, mostly military and political aspects of the territorial expansion of the kingdom of Georgia in the 10th-13th centuries and its relations with neighboring nations are discussed (Asatiani, 1968: 7-54) [6].

As to the foreign historiography, the study of hypothetical trade routes from Central Asia and then passing through the Mtkvari (Kura) river occupies a special place in the study of trade routes running through the Georgian territory, which, however, extends beyond the period discussed in this chapter.

As a result, there is a gap in the historiography regarding the study of the unified kingdom of Georgia's trade and economic policies. Furthermore, to date no single work has been written that would review in its entirety the history of the silk roads that ran through Georgia or along its borders from late antiquity to the end of the Mongol period in 14th century. When discussing regional trade, control over caravan routes, and the importance of obtaining military booty, modern historians have often omitted essential details from Georgian and foreign sources.

Below it will be argued that the reason for the southward expansion of the kingdom of Georgia, along with the military-strategic one, is purely economic: access to important trade routes and rich cities near the borders of Georgia, their control and exploitation. Furthermore, we have a few hints in the sources that the Georgian kings had a well-thought-out long-term foreign policy, as evidenced by nearly two centuries of continuous military expansion, by attempting to control the roads passing through Arran, Shirvan, and Armenia. We also have hints in the sources that the Georgian kings had their sights set on far more distant lands (northern Iran, city of Ahlat at the lake of Van), which, as shown in the description, was also due to the economic allure of these regions.

It can be argued that since the end of the 10th century, the Georgian kings tried to expand the newly unified state from the peripheral economic position to the rich trade routes of Arran, Shirvan, and Armenia. This can be seen in all of Georgia's military campaigns to conquer distant cities such

as Dvin, Ahlat, Ani, Shirvan, and even parts of the northern Iran.

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

To better understand the kingdom of Georgia's expansion, we should look at the geography of the region which often served as a major motivator behind territorial aggrandizement.

Georgia's southern border was the Mtkvari River, which separated it from Arran, once controlled by the Kurds. In the north, the border of Shirvan was the eastern part of the Caucasus Range and the Samuri River. Of these two borders, the northern border was geographically more solid. The Mtkvari River and the Mtkvari-Araxes confluence could not provide a suitable geographical barrier to stop hostile attacks to the west and south. Furthermore, Shirvan's territory was mostly plain, which made it easy to attack and difficult to defend (Minorsky, 1958: 84-85) [8].

Rivers were another important geographical component. The territory of Shirvan consisted of six small and medium-sized rivers, which stretched over the entire space of this side. By capturing the river lines in the region, a way was opened to control the Shirvan area more effectively.

Due to the lack of a firm geographical barrier/border with Arran, the Shirvan rulers were constantly attempting to expand westward and southward. Due to its strategic importance as a gateway to the North Caucasus and as a major port city for trade in the Caspian Sea, Derbent was another natural area of expansion for the Shirvan rulers (Istakhri, 1937: 3) [9]. Thus, Arran and Shirvan represented a single, indivisible geographical space.

When we look at a map of the South Caucasus, we see that Tbilisi is at the very northern end of a geographical corridor that extends from Tbilisi itself and goes southeastwards along the Mtkvari River to the modern Mughan plain, which borders the Caspian Sea from the west. There is no significant geographical barrier that would impede the movement of people and conquerors in this corridor from Tbilisi to the southeast and vice versa. As a result, it is not surprising that the corridor along Mtkvari was used by foreign troops in major military campaigns directed against Georgia.

Therefore, it was natural for Georgian kings to be highly interested in the events taking place in Arran and Shirvan. This also resulted in the Bagrationis' permanent efforts to prevent the creation of a single powerful state in the territory from the Georgian lands to the Caspian Sea. We can also assume that if it had not been for the geopolitical cataclysms that occurred in the 13th century following the arrival of the Mongols, the Kingdom of Georgia would have attempted to expand into more territories toward Arran/Shirvan. In other words, guarding/controlling the said corridor was vitally important from a military point of view for the Georgian leaders.

The territory of Shirvan was strategically important because it was also a kind of geographical springboard for the invasion of the territories of Georgia (i.e. eastern Georgia). This explains why the Georgian kings conducted active defensive, and sometimes preventive, military campaigns in Shirvan. Mtkvari-Araxes areas were rich lands both in terms of agriculture and regional trade. It is not surprising that one of the main targets of Seljuks and other nomads in the subsequent centuries was to occupy the lands across Mtkvari-Araxes. The fall of Shirvan into enemy hands usually undermined the defense of Georgian territories and increased the risk of territorial encroachment. Accordingly, active military intervention of the Georgian kings in the south-eastern direction served as a kind of long-term strategic goal.

This essentially meant that both the states emerging on Iranian territory, as well as Georgia, always strove to prevent the establishment of a unified and powerful centralized state in Shirvan. The simple geography of the region – the predominantly plain land of Shirvan, open on several flanks – made it almost impossible for the rulers of Shirvan to form a strong state.

The campaigns carried out by the Georgians in the direction of Shirvan started soon after the formation of the unified monarchy of Georgia. For example, in 1067, Bagrat IV captured the fortress of Daskarat al-Husayn in Shirvan. Moreover, it seems that Bagrat was motivated by large-scale plans because, for example, in Sadr ud-Din al-Husayni's work, "Akhbar ud-Duvlat is-Seljuqiya", capture of Barda by Bagrat is also mentioned (Asatiani, 1968: 18-20) [10].

In addition to the military-strategic importance of Arran-Shirvan for Georgia, trade and economic reasons too should be considered. As is often the case with trade routes, the geographic corridor functioned as a trade corridor. Arran and Shirvan were precisely such regions famous for vibrant economic activity, where many large cities with large populations had grown. The cities of Arran and Shirvan were well connected by a vast network of roads. Control of these roads would provide the Georgian kings with significant financial gain. Furthermore, as previously stated, Arran and Shirvan are geographically contiguous with northern Iran (Azerbaijan) in the south, which meant that the cities of Arran and Shirvan were directly connected to the larger economic centers in the Iranian highlands of Tabaristan and Khorasan – Tabriz, Maragha, Ardabil, and so on.

Another important direction for the geography of trade routes along Georgia's borders was the southwest or the expansion toward Armenian lands and Anatolia. Here, unlike the Arran/Shirvan areas, the geography was more complex (due to the mountainous terrain), which historically hindered the movement of peoples and armies. Nevertheless, throughout Georgia's history this direction was one of the important corridors for attacks on the country as well as an essential point for economic activity due to its geographic proximity to empires of the Middle East.

Roads led from Artanuji, Javakheti, to Ani in the southwest, Trebizond in the west, Kars in the south, Kalikala, Ahlat, and Lake Van. Sprawling road network led from Lake Van to Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. Controlling the Trebizond-Ani-Kars-Ahlat route, as in the case of Arran/Shirvan, would have given the Georgian kings access to regionally important highways as well as significant financial gains.

Accordingly, there were two trade (and, at the same time, military) routes along the borders of Georgia, the importance of which was primarily determined by the geography of the region.

It can be safely argued that the expansion of Georgia in the south-eastern direction was a long-term policy. The result of this policy was at least partial dependence of Shirvan on Georgian monarchy from about 1123 when the western part was directly under the influence of the Bagrationis

and the eastern part of Shirvan was independent (Stepnadze, 1990: 34-35) [11].

The non-payment of 40,000 dinars by the ruler of Shirvan prompted Seljuk Sultan Muhammad's campaign to Shirvan in 1123. It is possible that the reason for this was Shirvan's dependence on Georgia at that time. It seems that this dependence on Georgia continued throughout the 12th century (including during the reign of Demetre I).

When considering the geographical context, it is worth noting the role of rivers in the region. The control of the rivers was significant from a commercial point of view. Honey and other goods, for example, were often imported into and exported from Tbilisi via the Mtkvari river (Istakhri, 1937: 4) [12]. According to Ibn-Hawqal, Mtkvari, and Araxes were used for navigation and thus highly likely for trade purposes. Interestingly, it is clear from the historian's account that he was well aware of which river was used for trading purposes. Not every river, however, was used in that way. Ibn-Hawqal used the river Sabidrud near Ardabil as an example, claiming that it was not navigable due to its small size. Istakhri mentioned that ships from Barda reached the Caspian Sea by river.

Controlling the entire space of Mtkvari-Araxes rivers must have been economically profitable. Numerous undetailed and direct references to rivers being used for regional trade can be found in Arabic/Persian sources. Because they catch fish and transport them to other cities (Zakaria Al-Kazvini, 1975: 39) [13]. The fish in the Araxes River was shurmakh, which was not found elsewhere and was transported to numerous locations. Araxes banks were well-known for their pomegranates (Yakut, 1964: 59) [14]. Controlling Araxes and Mtkvari was also important due to the proximity of many cities on their borders. It is conceivable that the primary focus of the region's economic activity should have been on the territories that were already present at the confluence of these two rivers.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that various political forces in the region were making continued attempts to seize Mtkvari and a large part of Araxes. By controlling these two regional arteries, it was possible to control a large part of the South Caucasus from a military point of view: the transfer/shipping of troops, necessary items, or food. The case of the Russians campaigning in

Barda and Shirvan, for example, clearly demonstrated that rivers were actively used for military purposes. It was easy to enter Arran by controlling the upper part of Mtkvari, as well as to enter Shirvan by the Araxes River and vice versa. In other words, Georgia would not be completely safe if a significant part of the Mtkvari and Araxes rivers were in the hands of another power.

Due to these economic and military considerations, one of the most important tasks of the Georgian kings was to occupy as much of the Mtkvari and Araxes riverbanks as possible. Hence the constant attempts of the Georgian kings in the 11th-13th centuries to go as far south as possible and reach some kind of natural border. The middle of the Araxes River can be considered a border because it separates Arran and Shirvan (the traditional space of Georgian interests) from Azerbaijan (Northern Iran).

Araxes could not fully fulfill the role of a protective barrier, but in ancient times and the Middle Ages, such geographical barriers were purposefully chosen to draw a simple frontier zone and construct rudimentary defensive barriers.

Surely it is difficult to imagine that before the start of military campaigns, Georgian kings and other high-ranking political leaders of the kingdom explained the potential expansion of Georgia in the southern direction in terms of the so-called "grand strategy". However, the geography of the region (the direction of rivers, roads, mountains, valleys, and ravines), as well as the economic wealth there, directed the expansion of the unified kingdom of Georgia towards Arran, Shirvan, and Armenia in the 11th-13th centuries.

REASONS FOR BAGRATIONI'S MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

Apart from Tbilisi, the trade potential of other Georgian cities is only partially reflected in foreign sources. Georgian sources also provide us with very little information on trade relations between Tbilisi and the rest of Georgia. Moreover, it is especially difficult to discuss Bagrationis' economic policy or the role of trade in 10th-13th Georgian foreign policy. Naturally, these circumstances pushed the Georgian historiography to focus at-

tention mostly on the political and military processes between Georgia and its neighbors in the 10th-13th centuries (wars, peace agreements, etc.).

As a result, the wars of the unified Kingdom of Georgia for the cities of Armenia, Arran, and Shirvan are perceived more as wars of self-defense (with the signs of a front-line-defense strategy).

Although the above geographical excursion, as well as a detailed description of the trade routes and rich cities on Georgia's borders, reveal that the natural and logical directions of the expansion of the unified Georgian monarchy were the southwest, south, and southeast territories (Armenia, Arran, and Shirvan), it would be incorrect to deny a purely military component as causes behind these wars.

That is why it is necessary to bring forward the small amount of direct and indirect information preserved in Georgian and foreign sources about the attitude of the Georgian royal government towards trade and what role it played in the foreign policy of the Bagrationis.

Already during the reign of Giorgi I, first attempts can be seen to spread influence in the lands located to the south of Georgia. This policy is more clearly seen during the reign of Bagrat IV when the king occupied the royal throne of the Kvirikians – the city of Dmanisi and made several attempts to capture Tbilisi. During the reign of Bagrat, the first Georgian expedition to Barda was carried out (1067-1068).

The Kingdom of Georgia expanded to the south more extensively during the reign of David IV the Builder (1089-1125). He annexed Kakheti-Hereti in 1103, and Samshilde, Kaladzori, Lore, Rustavi, and other nearby small towns in 1110-1118. David conquered Dariali pass and the surrounding fortresses in 1118.

In 1122, David took Tbilisi, and in 1123 campaigned twice in Shirvan reaching the city of Shaburan in the following year. Around the same time (before David died in 1125), Georgians should have established control over Derbent. In 1124, David captured the following fortresses of the Armenian kingdom of Tashir-Dzoraketi: Gagni, Terunakal, Kavazinn, Norbed, Manasgomn, Tavushi Kaian, Kaitson, Lore, Tashir and Mahkanaberd. In the same year, David took Dmanisi.

David's military campaigns were a continuation of the policy pursued by Bagrat IV, and in turn, laid the foundation for a larger expansion of the Kingdom of Georgia in the southward direction. Though the first years of the rule of David IV's successor, Demetre, turned out to be unsuccessful (Dmanisi was lost, and in Ani, the Shedadians, returned to power), the situation was nevertheless rectified when Demetre soon recaptured Dmanisi, and in 1139 Georgians captured the city of Ganja.

Georgians took Ani in 1161, during the reign of Giorgi III (though the city was handed over to the descendants of Shedadid in 1163), and Dvin in the following year. In 1163, Georgians attacked Erzerum. In 1174-1175, Giorgi again attacked Ani and established direct political control over the city.

Later in 1192-1193, to celebrate the birth of Lasha-Giorgi, successor to Queen Tamar, a campaign was organized in the city of Barda. Then another campaign to Erzurum. After the victory in the Battle of Shamkhori in 1195, Shamkhori and Ganja came under the influence of Georgians. In 1196, the Georgian army occupied the Armenian side of Amberd.

In 1199, Ani directly entered the domain of Georgia. An interesting conquest in the same direction was the capture of Bijni in 1201. The Battle of Basiani, fought in 1202, was critical for Georgians to expand their influence into neighboring territories. They captured Kars in 1203 and then again in 1206, and they failed to capture Ahlat, a significant trading city on the shores of Lake Van, in 1208-1209.

Around 1210, Georgians made the largest foreign campaign, when the army reached the north of Iran and, probably, the modern Iran-Turkmenistan border. Let us discuss in detail the campaign of Georgians to Iran, because this was one of the most famous military campaigns in the history of Georgia and was also related to trade and economic interests. In the Georgian historiography, there is a widespread opinion that the Georgian military campaign in Iran was an endeavor against the Khwarazm (Stepnadze, 1989: 187-200) [15]. Other researchers name the ravaging and pillaging of the territories as the reason for the campaign (Topuria, 1975: 224; Gabashvili, 1971: 128) [16].

Although it would not be correct to deny the military-strategic reasons, it is also necessary to

take into account the trade and economic interests behind the Georgian military campaign.

According to “Histories and Eulogies of the Crowned”, the Georgians campaigned in the northern Iran after the looting of Ani by the Sultan of Ardabil. The Armenian historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi also mentions the cruelty committed by the Sultan of Ardabil. To take revenge, the campaign of Georgians to Ardabil was followed by Zakaria Mkhargrdzeli’s decision to burn alive the people gathered in one of the shrines of the city (Gandzaketsi, 1978: 129) [17].

The Georgian campaign to Ardabil should have familiarized the Georgian troops with the wealth of this part of Iran. The Georgians most likely attained valuable information about important trade routes that passed through the region, which led to Tabaristan, Khorasan, and central Iran.

In 1210, during the campaign directly against Iran, the Georgian army took Marand, Tabriz, and Mian and reached the southern coast of the Caspian Sea to the modern Iran-Turkmenistan border, to the city of Jurjan. The sources describe the innumerable wealth (pearls, gold, silver, rugs, horses, mules, and camels) that fell into the hands of the Georgians, which gives the reader the impression that the Georgians were only interested in getting booty (Histories..., 1959: 104-107) [18].

It is worth noting that the mentioned military campaign’s route served as an important economic artery for the entire region, connecting northern Iran to rich Tabaristan and Khorasan. Many cities famous for their trade potential were located along this major highway, most likely causing Georgians’ interest. It is also possible that Georgians had detailed knowledge of the wealth of Tabaristan and Khorasan, as well as the key routes leading there, before the campaign to Ardabil.

Moreover, we can assume the existence of economic relations between Georgia and Khorezm through Tabaristan. According to Ibn Isfandiari, one hundred thousand Nishabur dinars, Byzantine (Rumi), Baghdad, and loads of Tbilisi fabrics were sent from Tabaristan to Khorezm (Beradze, 1976: 70) [19].

The last point of the Georgians’ campaign in Iran – the city of Jurjan – is especially interesting. According to Yakub, Jurjan, located on the southeastern coast of the Caspian Sea, was famous for its timber and silk production. Furthermore, Jurjan was a kind of pivot point in Central Asia, specifically in the fight against the Kingdom of Khwarazm. Trade routes from Central

Asia to Tabaristan and large cities in the central parts of Iran passed through the city, from which direct routes reached Arran, Shirvan, and Armenian cities that were (partially) part of the kingdom of Georgia. According to Istakhri, who although reports on the 10th century, the city of Jurjan was quite large and famous for its trade activity, given its commercial links to the ports of the Caspian Sea. Various products were transported from the city to Derbent. We can assume that at the start of the 13th century, the trade route passing through Jurjan, as well as the city itself, should have been a more important center than in previous centuries. Near Jurjan, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, there was the city of Astarabad, from where goods were transported by sea to Derbent.

This is a list of the major campaigns carried out by Georgians in the direction of Arran, Shirvan, Armenia, and Iran. Georgian, Armenian, and Persian-Arabic sources provide very little information on the reasons for these campaigns, which, as previously stated, are primarily limited to the Georgians’ plundering intentions.

The conquered cities and entire regions had undeniable military-strategic importance for the Georgian kingdom. Expansion to the south enabled the Georgian monarchy to form a front-line defense, keeping the enemy away from native Georgian lands and resulting in less economic and human resource loss. The conquered lands of Armenia, Arran, and Shirvan, as well as their powerful fortresses, created a sense of territorial (geographical) depth. If the enemy was able to penetrate the depths of the territory with troops from various fortresses, it would be possible to weaken the enemy through minor skirmishes and then drive them into undesirable areas for eventual defeat.

In addition to these military-strategic reasons, as we have seen above, the south-west (Armenia, Anatolia), south (Armenia), and south-east (Arran, Shirvan) directions were the wealthiest territories in terms of trade and transit near the Georgian borders. Although Georgian and foreign sources almost unanimously mention the capture of booty as one of the reasons for the military campaigns carried out by Georgians, it is clear that this expansion of Bargatoni stay in three directions aimed at establishing control over the trade routes and capture rich cities.

Furthermore, another important factor for the expansion to the south should have been the large merchant class living in the cities of the region. These classes had already developed extensive trade networks with both

nearby and distant countries. Following the military conquest, it was in the interests of the Georgian rulers not to break these contacts as controlling these trade classes would result in large incomes for the kingdom of Georgia.

As a result of the aforementioned Georgian campaigns, by the 20s of the 13th century Georgia gained control of the two main trade routes, Dvin-Erzurum and Derbent-Shamakha, as well as numerous, relatively minor trade routes. The capture of the Archesh-Ahlat trade route became a new strategic goal for the Georgian kings.

Despite the brief period when the kingdom of Georgia controlled vital trade routes and centers (cities) before the arrival of the Mongols, the Kingdom of Georgia grew prosperous. According to Hamdallah Qazvin, Georgia's income was 500 tumans (5,000,000 dinars), which exceeded the revenues of Arran and Mughan, Shirvan, Greater Armenia, Kurdistan, and Khuzistan. In general, Hamdallah Qazvini's data should be seen as realistic. In Georgia's case, income from tax-paying countries (Ahlat, Shirvan, and Arran) should not be included in state income. Georgia's total income was at least slightly lower than that of other wealthy neighbors, indicating the country's wealth and economic importance. Furthermore, comparing the incomes of Western European countries demonstrates Georgia's relative financial strength. Ivane Javakhishvili drew attention to the fact that by 1300, the income of the king of England was 4,000,000 francs, and in 1311, while that of France 3,000,000 francs.

As previously stated, little information can be found in Georgian and foreign sources about the importance of trade and economy in the foreign policy of the kings of the unified Georgia. However, a number of revealing direct and indirect reports can still be gleaned.

The Seljuk invasions caused great damage to the lands of Armenia and Georgia, not only through direct raids, as we read in Armenian and Georgian sources. The Seljuks began to occupy important trade routes connecting Georgian lands to Arran, Shirvan, and Armenian cities. It is difficult to discuss the details due to a lack of information, but it is easy to imagine that by blocking the main roads near Georgia's borders, its cities suffered significant economic losses due to reduced trade flows.

As previously stated, the capture of the main regional military and economic highways was extremely important to the Georgian kings. The Tbilisi-Ganja-Barda road was one of them. The wars between Georgian

kings and Seljuks in the 12th century can be described not only as a struggle for political supremacy but the competition over the South Caucasus trade routes. Indeed, David Aghmashenebeli's historian gives us a small hint about the importance of capturing the trade routes when he mentions that the area of attacks by the Seljuks was particularly noticeable on the section of the Tbilisi-Barda road. The historian also adds that the Seljuks were interested in this road because of the abundance of water, firewood, hay, and various wild animals (Life..., 1955: 332) [20]; in other words, because of the wealth of the territories along this road.

We can assume that the regional trade on this important road was affected as a result of the Seljuks' invasions. However, Georgians could also cause damage which was a good way to weaken the enemy. Most likely, the main reason for the military campaign conducted by the Seljuks against the Georgians in 1121 was David IV's intensified preparations for the capture of Tbilisi. The Seljuk Turkic leaders could not have overlooked that, because there were close economic contacts between Tbilisi and Arran-Shirvan and information was easily transmitted by merchants. As the Seljuk Turks could block the roads, the Georgians could also block them to achieve strategic goals. Most likely, David followed this tactic when he tried to blockade Tbilisi while preparing to capture it. It is not surprising that the reason behind the Seljuks' invasion of Georgia in 1121 was forestalling the loss of the trade center of Tbilisi and the desire to regain control over the Tbilisi-Ganja-Barda trade route.

David Aghmashenebeli's historian directly mentions that before the military campaign of 1121, oppressed Turks and the merchants from Gandza, Tbilisi, and Dmanisi came to seek help from the Seljuk sultan. Behind this worry of the merchants should have been their difficult economic situation, harassment of caravans by Georgians – robbery, blocking of roads, etc.

However, like many other conquerors, after capturing Tbilisi in 1122 and partially burning it down, David began to effectively use the trade and economic potential of the city. The king introduced preferential tax conditions for the non-Georgian population of Tbilisi. For example, coins were minted in the name of the Caliph for the Arab population of the city. Coinage reform was directly related to connecting Tbilisi and other Georgian cities closely with regional and international trade. In addition, David imposed fewer taxes on the Muslim population than on people of other faiths (Sikharulidze, 1985: 89) [21]. Assuming that most of this Muslim pop-

ulation was engaged in at least regional trade, David's tax and monetary decisions were aimed at encouraging trade with Georgia's neighbors.

The creation of favorable financial conditions for foreign merchants by Georgian kings has been widely discussed in the Georgian historiography. Foreign merchants in Western Europe, Russia, and the Byzantine Empire, for example, faced a number of restrictions. Such a policy may reflect the Georgian kings' humane outlook, but we believe it should have been more due to the economic importance of the Arab, Armenian, and Jewish populations to the kingdom of Georgia.

The annexation of Tbilisi by David IV in 1122 was a significant ideological and military-strategic step in the formation of a truly unified Georgian kingdom. However, it is also significant that the long-term efforts of the Georgian kings to annex Tbilisi should have been motivated by purely commercial and economic considerations. The newly formed Georgian monarchy, with its growing economic potential, noticed that there were a number of cities (some Georgian, some not) that were distinguished by great economic wealth outside its borders.

BAGRATIONIS AND MILITARY BOOTY

Military booty was a significant source of state income, consisting primarily of money, sale of the captives, and valuables (gold, silver). Indeed, according to Georgian and foreign sources, Georgian campaigns in the south were primarily motivated by the seizure of property in wealthy cities.

Capturing booty was extremely important. However, we believe that explaining Georgian campaigns in the 12th-13th centuries solely through the capture of the valuables does not provide the full picture.

Consider some examples. According to the information preserved in "Histories and Eulogies of the Crowned", as a result of the capture of Dvini by Giorgi III, the country was filled with wealth. An abundance of captives and treasure covered the fields. Tbilisi was filled with captives, who were sold for one dram (Histories, 1959: 5-6) [22].

Later, in 1163, when Athabeg Il-Deniz of Arran recaptured Dvin with a coalition army, the invaders took innumerable property such as gold and silver from the Georgians.

According to Basili Ezosmodzghvari, after the battle of Shamkhori, Tamar's army entered Ganja, where they found plenty of gold. Furthermore, when describing the army's return to Tbilisi, the historian gives us a detailed picture about the property that fell into Georgians' hands. It seems that the booty was so large that when the Georgian army reached Tbilisi, they spread all their booty in the vast Didube-Avchala-Gldani area, to the north of the capital. The army brought many slaves and started selling them cheaply in the city. Then, immediately after entering Tbilisi, the items that the Georgians obtained as a result of the battles and as a tribute from the territory of Arran are described: gold, jewelry, dishes, gems, pearls, helmets, swords, colorful gold fabrics and luxurious clothes, horses, mules, gold necklaces, spices, copper pottery, many captives, gold, Indian stones, and innumerable pearls (Basili, 1959: 127-129) [23].

"Histories and Eulogies of the Crowned" provide information on the Georgian army arriving in Ganja following the battle of Shamkhori where it was met by nobles, big merchants, judges, and legislators. When the population of Ganja took down the gate of the city, they began to spread precious fabrics and threw gold and silver, drams, and drachmas on the heads of the Georgians. The army returned to Tbilisi with countless gifts to Tamar: 12,000 captives, 20,000 horses, 7,000 mules, and 15,000 camels. Also, various flags, treasures, gold and lari (Histories, 1959: 72-73) [24].

As a result of the Battle of Basiani, Basili Ezosmodzghvari mentions the countless properties that fell into the hands of the Georgians. In the next section, he mentions gold vessels, pearls, and gold and crystal vessels decorated with Indian stones.

To celebrate the birth of Lasha-Giorgi, Georgian troops campaigned to Barda, raided Arran, and freed 3,000 captives for the long lives of Tamar and her son. During the capture of Archesh near Ahlat, the Georgians likewise amassed much wealth.

According to the sources, the Georgian campaign in northern Iran holds a special place with the scale of booty obtained. In response to the brutal campaign led by the ruler of Ardabil against Ani, Georgians took Ardabil, and all the property

was found in their hands: pearls, gold, silver, carpets, horses, mules, and camels.

According to "Histories and Eulogies of the Crowned", one of the goals of the Georgians' campaign in Iran was to march to Tabriz because of the wealth in the city. The wealth of Tabriz was indeed so great that the Georgians were surprised by the amount of gold, silver, pearls, and clothes they received from the inhabitants of the city. Moreover, during the campaign in Iran, the Georgians also received a large income from the lord of the city of Mian, took the city of Zangani, and then marched to Khorasan.

Although there are numerous reports of Georgians marching to foreign countries to collect booty, this should not be interpreted to mean that Georgian kings were interested in that goal. In ancient times and the Middle Ages, the capture of booty was often an unavoidable process that accompanied the conquest of wealthy cities.

In the case of the Georgian kings, we see more than just the capture of booty. The Bagrationis correctly valued the opportunities arising from the control of new trade routes, which was reflected in a series of measures taken by the royal dynasty to ensure free and safe trade in Georgian-controlled lands. Access to new trade routes, as well as increased economic income, came with increased financial costs. It was necessary to maintain security along these roads by building new forts and stationing military units. A minor incursion by the enemy could disrupt trade activity throughout the region and divert caravans, resulting in significant financial losses to the royal treasury. Georgian kings were frequently confronted with the issue of road protection. For example, David IV's historian, while talking about Tbilisi, mentions the Turks who sneaked into the city with a rich caravan.

The kings of unified kingdom of Georgia well understood the importance of regional trade relations and road safety for Georgia. This became especially important when Georgians moved further south to the economically much richer areas.

Apparently, harassing the caravans and individual merchants was a problem in 12th-13th-century Georgia. For example, in one of the sections of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" (1033), Baghdad merchants talk about robbed Egyptian caravan. The author of "Histories and Eulogies of the

Crowned" mentions the episode when Zakaria and Ivane Mkhargrdzeli went to raid from Lori to the banks of Araxes, an army of Dvinians, Bijnelians, and Amberdians appeared out of nowhere to raid the trade caravans. The Mkhargrdzeli brothers went out to stop the pirates, restrained the enemy thus restoring security to the entire region (Histories..., 1959: 60) [25].

Vardan, an Armenian historian, also preserved reports of Georgian kings' protection of caravans and regional trade in general. According to the author, Giorgi III launched a large-scale campaign against thieves and other evildoers in 1180 (Vardan, 1861: 162) [26]. According to Queen Ana's "The Georgian Chronicles", Giorgi III and Tamar launched a widespread fight against thieves and brigands (The Georgian Chronicles, 1942: 241) [27]. Undoubtedly, this also involved measures to restrain attacks on caravans and individual merchants.

The protection of the roads on the territory of the country and the caravans passing through them is also described in the chronicler of the time of Lasha-Giorgi. According to the author, no one in Georgia could rob caravans during Tamar's reign (The chronicler..., 1955: 369) [28].

Creating favorable trade conditions entailed more than providing only military security. It was likewise necessary to construct roads, bridges, and other infrastructure, as well as to establish new settlements and cities. It should be noted that, based on the few references preserved in the written sources, the multifaceted promotion of trade played an important role in the policy of the kings of Georgia in the period from the 11th to early 13th centuries. As early as the reign of Bagrat IV, special attention was paid to the cities which were experiencing significant economic growth (it was at this time when Ateni was founded). Moreover, Bagrat IV must have had trade and economic considerations when he decided to widen the mountain roads after capturing Tbilisi for the third time.

The city of Gori experienced particular economic boom during the reign of David IV when ethnic Armenians were settled in most likely for trade and economic reasons. The Georgia king helped organize cities and built roads, bridges, and special houses for merchants while successfully fighting the Seljuks.

As can be seen from numerous sources, the Georgian kings were well aware of the need to protect the kingdom's frontier perimeter and internal roads from outside enemies. This suggests that, while the capture of booty was important to the Georgians, it was not the only motivator for the military campaigns to the south. Booty was only the first step, while subsequent decisions were more related to the security and economic exploitation of newly conquered/annexed lands.

THE MONGOL REVOLUTION AND THE DECLINE OF GEORGIA'S POSITION ON SILK ROADS

The Mongols hold a distinguished place in world history. They transformed much of Eurasia, a change well reflected in shifts in the continent's land and sea trade routes. By the 1220s, these existing trade routes underwent a total transformation. With the Mongol campaigns, the extreme points of the Eurasian continent, from China to Europe and from the Eurasian steppes to the Near East, became interconnected through various trade corridors. In essence, the Mongols achieved what the Sasanian rulers had attempted in the 6th-7th centuries and the Arabs in the 8th-9th centuries but failed to fully realize (Avdaliani, 2019: 26-36) [29]. Both powers endeavored to link several major trade and economic centers, but they only achieved partial success.

Thus, the Mongols revolutionized trade in Eurasia. The routes they established were trans-Eurasian in nature (Prawdin, 2005: 347-348) [30]. By creating new corridors, the Mongols spurred economic growth in Europe. Consequently, European merchants could forge direct connections with Central Asia, China, and Iran, bypassing Egypt and the rest of the volatile Middle East.

By the mid-13th century a new reality emerged around Georgia. Trade routes around the Georgian kingdom underwent significant changes. The transformation was both rapid and tumultuous. Following the second and more expansive invasion of the Mongols and the establishment of their military-political dominance in the South Caucasus, trade routes through Ani, Dvin, Kars, Bardav, Ganja, and Shirvan were drastically altered. Initially, this change was influenced by Jalal ad-Din.

Furthermore, subsequent military campaigns by the Mongols had even more profound effects. The Central Asian nomads took numerous cities, decimated their trade and economic foundations, and in many cases either displaced or eradicated large parts of the populations.

At the same time, the Mongols conquered or partially destroyed many distant cities that were significant to Georgia. These included Tabriz, Khlat, and areas in northern Iraq, all of which had close trade relations with Georgian cities before the 1220s. The decline of these cities led to a decrease in the regional exchange involving Georgian cities.

The establishment of Mongol power had the anticipated consequences. The directions of trade routes changed. Georgia lost control over the rich trading cities to the south, southwest, and southeast of its borders. Although the new roads did not shift far to the south from Georgia, they nevertheless were still distant enough to deprive the Georgian monarchy of significant economic benefits it had enjoyed until the 1220s.

The major trade routes which ran from north Iran to Trebizond, other cities of Asia minor were complimented by another major road from the north of the Black Sea to Central Asia and China. South Caucasus and Georgia in particular thus found itself in between these major trade and economic highways undermining the country's position on the silk roads. Nor did the situation change after the fall of the Mongol domination in the first half of the 14th century. The invasions by another Central Asian conqueror, Timur Lang further entrenched Tabriz-Trebizond trade connection and undermined Georgia's economic power.

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