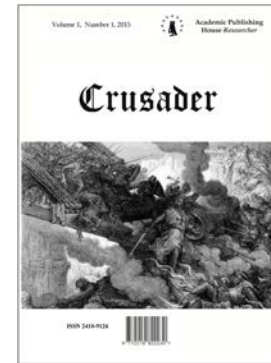


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The Crusades and the Kingdom of Georgia

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Abstract

The Crusades had a significant impact upon the fate of the Georgian state. The Georgian royal court used the Europeans' undertakings to its own advantage. The Georgian king David IV the Builder (ruled from 1089 to 1125) was well-aware of objectives pursued by the Crusade wars. The ruler's clever approach to laying out the nation's policy, predicated upon the relevant characteristics of the then-existing international situation, resulted in the Crusades overpowering the might of the Seljuq Turks, which successfully facilitated the stepping-up of efforts to wage a war of liberation on the part of the Georgians.

In the East, David IV the Builder was viewed as a protector of Christianity. He, concurrently, was seen as a ruler with a tolerant policy toward Moslems and firm ties with the Moslem world, which was due to a special state of affairs inside and outside Georgia. Thus, the link between the Kingdom of Georgia and the Crusades hinged on certain political circumstances.

Among the rulers known to have had dealings with the Crusaders are George III (1156–1187), Tamar the Great (1181–1213), George IV Lasha (1213–1222), Rusudan (1223–1245), and some others.

Some of the original sources, like letters from foreign kings, mention with great regard the name of George V the Brilliant (1314–1346), considered a eulogist of Jerusalem's holy places and a mainstay of Christianity. His activities did not have a direct linkage with the Crusades but, nonetheless, were a continuation of the struggle of their ideology. The solicitude of the Kingdom of Georgia toward Christianity would, eventually, pay off by helping boost its prestige and ensure its high standing internationally.

Keywords: Crusades, Kingdom of Georgia, protector of Christianity, Jerusalem's holy places.

1. Introduction

The Crusades are known to have had a significant impact upon the fate of the Georgian state. Right from the First Crusade onwards, the Georgian royal court had used European policy to its own advantage. David IV the Builder (1089–1125) was well-aware of objectives pursued by the Crusade wars. The ruler's clever approach to laying out the nation's policy, predicated upon the

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relevant characteristics of the then-existing international situation, resulted in the Crusades overpowering the might of the Seljuq Turks, which successfully facilitated the stepping-up of efforts to wage a war of liberation on the part of the Georgians.

2. Materials and methods

The study explores some of the extant original sources on the Crusades in Georgian, Russian, and other languages and draws extensively upon materials from 'The Georgian Chronicles' (Georgian: 'Kartlis Tskhovreba'), the medieval Georgian historical monument which recounts the relationships between the Kingdom of Georgia and the Crusaders.

The paper makes an extensive use of works on Crusades-related issues by authors from the past and present. The study employs a historical-comparative method to establish the extent of participation of the entire Caucasus region (i.e., the various peoples inhabiting the area at the time) in the Crusades and the significance of the war's effects across the region.

3. Results

At different stages of its development the Georgian state took a realistic account of the international situation (Rondeli, 1998: 151-165). At the turn of the 11th-12th centuries Georgia's success was facilitated by the political situation obtaining in the Near East. Priority in the foreign policy of David IV the Builder (1089-1125), as well as of the kings preceding him, was given to relations with Byzantium. Almost throughout the 11th century Georgia was under the influence of that empire (Mtreveli, 2002: 50-80). The advent of the Seljuk Turks played a major role (Shengelia, 1961). The Turks, who led a nomadic life in the Eurasian steppes, adopted Islam in the 11th century. The Seljuks were distinguished among them, making name with their successful fight against Iran's Muslim principalities. Their leader Toghrul-Beg was recognized as caliph. He proclaimed himself sultan, through which he gained power and fought for the unity of the caliphate and the predominance of Sunnism. The main objective of the Turks was to overthrow the Fatimid caliphate. It should be noted that the Turkish sultans were not in full control of their armies. The Turkoman tribe, serving in the army of the Seljuks, basically sought to take possession of lands that would provide pasture for their flocks of sheep. From this standpoint neither Syria nor Mesopotamia met their interests (Tat, 2003: 19). The Seljuks considered Byzantine Anatolia to be ideal, and they began ravaging this region. This was followed by counterstrikes on the part of the Byzantines. A major battle between the Seljuks, led by the Sultan Alp-Atsalan, and the Byzantines took place at Manzikert in 1071. Owing to internal treason, the Byzantine Emperor Romanus Diogenes IV was heavily defeated and taken prisoner. The Seljuks invaded the entire territory of Anatolia reaching the Sea of Marmara. Among the causes of the defeat of the Byzantines important was the civil war waged in the country. The Seljuks brought under their power the Abbasid caliphate, but failed to do away with the Fatimids. Following the death of Malik Shah (who replaced Alp-Arslan in 1072) in 1092 the sultanate broke up. Malik Shah's brothers and children fought each other for power. Syria and Northern Mesopotamia were nominally under the Persian Sultanate, with its capital in Baghdad, and ruler Barkiaruk. Independent emirates sprung up in major cities, led by atabags. In Northern Mesopotamia and Syria lands were considerably parceled. Haleb (Aleppo) and Damascus came under Malik Shah's cousins, Tripoli was ruled by a Muslim kadi, Shaizar was ruled by the Arab dynasty of the Munkids, Mosul by the dynasty of Kerbogha, and Diarbekr by the Ortukids.

It is noteworthy that the Seljuks, who were the minority in the country, failed to assimilate the Arabs. In the cited territories (the entire Near East) the proportion of Christians and Jews was considerable. Believed to be the people of the Bible, they enjoyed special privileges. At that time the Jews lived predominantly in Northern Syria. They had a major settlement in Jerusalem. Orthodox Syrians were most numerous Christians (Monophysites). Orthodox Greeks (actually Syrians under Greek influence) in conditions of the Byzantine empire lived only in the city. In Syria one came across Georgian monks and Gregorian Armenians (Monophysites) (Tat, 2003: 24).

Notably enough, following Syrian expansion, the followers of Islam refused to wage war there, though traditionally, Syria was considered to be a country of the Jihad.

In the first third of the 11th century, following the decease of the Emperor Basil II (1025), the Byzantine empire was at its zenith. Its possessions embraced Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and the north of Syria, Cyprus, Crete, the Balkans and part of Southern Italy. The empire had a professional

army. It was ruled by the emperor basileus – direct successor of the Roman empire, the “chosen of God”. Following the defeat in the battle of Manzikert in August 1071, the role and influence of the Byzantine empire gradually declined. The Byzantine plan of entering the South Caucasus and consolidating its supremacy remained unrealized (Metreveli, 2002: 329). The 1080s were marked by inroads into Georgia of countless bands of Seljuk Turks. The historian of David the Builder refers to this invasion by the name of Didi Turkoba (“Great Turkish conquests”), dating it 1080. The incursions of the Seljuks put the Armenian people in dire circumstances (Eremyan, 1979: 8). The Armenian commander and political figure Filaret Varazhnuni, who became the ruler of Cilicia after the battle of Manzikert, deciding to save the country, went to Sultan Malik-Shah with ample gifts, declaring his submission. This move proved unproductive – the Armenian principality passed into the hands of the Seljuks. Azerbaijan also found itself in a difficult situation (The History of the Armenian, 1951: 156-157)¹. Malik-Shah took Gandza, capturing its ruler Fadlon (Fazlun) (The History, 1958: 138-139; Kartlisa Matiane, 2002: 298). The Shirvan-Shah Fariburz was obliged to come into Malik-Shah’s presence, with the outcome that he had to pay seventy thousand dinars as a single tribute, and annually forty thousand dinars (The History, 1958: 139). A coin has survived, struck in the name of the Shirvan-shah Fariburz, with the names of Malik-Shah and El. Mustazhir Billaha (Pakhomov, 1923: 139) which point to the subordinate state of Shirvan to the Seljuks.*

The Shirvan-shah Faribure arrived too in Ispahan to prove his submission (Minorsky, 1964: 96). Georgia also faced a grave threat. The inroads of the Seljuks (especially Didi Turkoba) undermined the Georgian feudal economy, which threatened the country with eradication (Berdzenishvili, 1971: 158). King Giorgi V (1072-1089) of Georgia sought to find a way out and save the country from destruction. Visiting Malik-Shah, he undertook to pay an annual tribute. The historian of David the Builder notes with satisfaction that the Georgian king was accepted by the sultan “as a beloved son” (The Life of the King, 2008: 304), meeting “all his requests”; he relieved the Georgian kingdom from of “plunderers”, and gave him Kakheti and Hereti. As we can see, by paying tribute, which they took for many years” (The Life of the King, 2008: 304), Giorgi obtained some peace.

In 1081 the Byzantine imperial throne was occupied by Alexius I Comnenus. His policy differed essentially from that of his predecessors. He removed from power the stratum of financiers and merchants who had entrenched themselves at high offices. His goal was to retrieve the lost lands (by this time the Byzantine empire had shrunken, and the Islamic state too was split). It should be noted that the Byzantines and Muslims understood each other well and they preserved interrelations. As to the attitude of the Byzantines to Europeans, it was very involved. The Byzantines felt resentment and mistrust for Europeans. In comparison with the East, Western Europe in the 11th century had lesser population. The peasants lived in poverty and cultural life was backward; urban life was at a low level. The inhabitants of Western Europe moved northward: to Scandinavia, Central Europe, along the banks of the Danube. They exported diverse raw materials, slaves, and imported items of luxury. The Europeans reached Constantinople and the shores of Syria and Alexandria.

3.1. The Crusades

The Church Fathers conceived the idea of a Holy War – the Christian world was believed to be a homeland that needed protection. Palestine and especially Jerusalem, where Christ lived and was crucified, came to occupy the foremost place in men’s minds. People thought that pilgrimage to the Holy Land was a pledge for absolution. Journeys to Jerusalem became especially frequent in the 11th century. Worship of the Holy Places turned into men’s demand (Michau, 2004: 9)[†]. They believed that death in the Holy Land would allow them to be beside Christ on Doomsday. Thus, European public was ideologically prepared for the liberation of the Holy Sepulcher. In these circumstances there emerged a simple anchorite Peter the Hermit of a distant monastery, who practically headed the struggle between the East and the West. Viewing the Calvary and Christ’s Sepulcher, the suffering of the Palestinian Christians inspired Peter with the necessity of liberating

* It should be noted that in the 1070s-1080s the Cilician population was largely comprised of Armenians fleeing from the Seljuks.

† On the time of the Crusaders, see (The Crusades Era, 2003)

Jerusalem from the Muslims. He arrived in Italy, fell at the feet of the Pope Urban II, begging his support in this cause. The Pope promised the anchorite full support in the liberation of Jerusalem.

In 1195, a rally was held in the central square of the town of Clermont in France attended by a countless crowd. A special throne was erected for the pope. Peter the Hermit was the first to address the people. Urban II delivered a speech which presented Christ's heritage as shamefully enslaved and Christian Europe as an arena for the barbarians to prey upon. The pope called on the people for a crusade and asked them to give aid to the Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus. The crusaders, who received their name from the red cross drawn on their clothes, were assured by Urban II that upon the end of the campaign they would be absolved of their sins. Urban II personally visited the provinces of France, holding rallies at Rouen, Angers, Tours, Nimes. The entire country was overwhelmed with warlike enthusiasm. The drive for pilgrimage was felt everywhere. The enthusiasm of the French crusaders spread to other countries of Europe as well: England, Germany, Italy and Spain. Men of all strata, rank and age rallied under the banner of the cross. It is notable that thieves and brigands eagerly joined this movement (Michau, 2004: 14). The point is that many crusaders dreamed of seizing lands and becoming rich. Urban II was well aware of this, using this sentiment skillfully to entice the crusaders. In his speech at Clermont the pope said: "Milk and honey flow from the land there. Jerusalem is a most fertile area. It is the hub of the world and a second Paradise. The land invites you, awaiting to be freed and incessantly entreating you to help it".

Deus vult – "God wills it", under this motto did the crusades argue the objective of their campaign.

It should be borne in mind that Alexius Comnenus, beleaguered by the Seljuks and Pechenegs, asked the leaders of West European states to rescue the Byzantine empire. In 1094 he addressed the pope for aid. In 1095 a large wave of crusaders left for Jerusalem. The goal of at least a large part of them was to set up independent principalities in the East, the conquest of Byzantium, and finally, gaining superiority in trade with Byzantium and Muslim countries (Uspenski, 1901: 2-3). The poverty-stricken masses of almost the entire Europe moved with their families to liberate the Holy Sepulcher. The especially large number of the pilgrims (up to one hundred thousand) had been overlooked. Lack of order and discipline, hunger (the crusaders begged for alms on their way), the inhospitable encounter on the part of Hungarians* and Bulgarians (their route lay through these countries, and a large part of the pilgrims were actually annihilated) was the cause of the failure of the first wave.

The advent of the crusaders was the cause of disaster for the Byzantines. Alexius I Comnenus granted the request of the crusaders and allowed them to move along the shores of the Bosphorus. Here the attempt of the crusaders to cross into Turkey failed, with considerable losses. Those who survived returned home.

In 1097 bands of the crusaders reached Constantinople. Alexius I Comnenus took caution and dispersed them in the Empire, so that they might not unite and attack Byzantium. He obliged the European knights to swear an oath of loyalty and to regain the lands seized by the Seljuks. In addition, they were to recognize Alexius I as suzerain, themselves being content with vassalage. In June 1097 the Byzantines retrieved Nicaea. The crusaders crossed Anatolia and, hungry and thirsty, reached Cilicia. Here a split occurred between the leaders of the crusaders. Some thought of setting up their own kingdoms, others remained loyal to the religious motive of the crusade. They were less interested in Byzantium and its emperor, for they cared more for their own well-being. In 1098 Baldwin of Bouillon†, declared himself count of Edessa[‡], and brought the cities and fortresses under control, actually setting up the first Latin State in the East. On 20 October 1097 the crusaders came up to Antioch. It was largely settled by Jacobite Syrians and Gregorian Armenians. Antioch was a strongly fortified city, with a high stone wall surrounding it at the radius

* While crossing Hungary the pilgrims acted aggressively, slaying four thousand Hungarians, for which they received retaliatory strikes, with high casualties. Then Belgrade was robbed, for which they were punished. The ruler of Serbia stipulated that they should not stay in towns for more than three days.

† Baldwin was the brother of Godfrey of Bouillon; he was adopted by Taros, the ruler of Edessa. The latter was killed during one of the revolts (in 1098)

‡ The county of Edessa was set up in Cilicia. Later the Principality of Antioch was founded here under the Norman leader Bohemond of Taranto.

of four miles. To the south four high hills abutted (with a stone wall inside); to the north the river Orontes flowed past, playing the role of natural defense. Antioch was defended by 130 fortified towers. The city had been seized from the Greeks by the Muslims who held it for 14 years. The head of the city Baziam was locked in strongly with seven thousand cavalry and twenty thousand foot. The crusaders besieged Antioch. Countless pilgrim tents were pitched around the city. The knights were distinguished for patience and courage. After a seven-month siege Antioch was taken by the crusaders (in 1098). The city fell through treason, being betrayed by an Armeniaan, Firuz, who was in charge of defending three fortified towers. Following the capture of Antioch the Christian army took the road to Jerusalem. At that time an epidemic broke out among the crusaders, claiming 50 thousand lives. Jerusalem – the city of Hebrew kings, prophets and Christ – was especially attractive for the crusaders. They pitched their camp on the mounts of olives, to the north of the city. Here were the tents of Godfrey of Bouillon, Robert of Normandy and Robert of Flanders. The tents of Raymond of Toulouse and his entourage were pitched on the hill of St. George. Part of the soldiers of the Count of Toulouse were deployed on Mount Sion ([Michau, 2004: 42, 43](#)).

The offensive against Jerusalem, besieged by the crusaders, began at dawn, 14 July 1099. Although the assault was heavy, the outcome was inconclusive. The assault was renewed on the following day, 15 July. Following a stiff and bloody fight the crusaders entered Jerusalem. Significantly enough, this happened precisely on the day and hour of the Crucifixion of the Lord. The crusader who spilt blood, claiming the lives of seventy thousand persons, buoyantly went to the temple of the Resurrection to worship the Holy Sepulcher. The kingdom of Jerusalem was founded, comprising lands of Palestine and Syria. Later the crusaders took the town of Tripoli, setting up a county here too. The eastern Mediterranean shores were in the hands of the crusaders.

The expedition inspired by the Pope Urban II proved useful for the barons and knights, who seized great riches and lands. The Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus retrieved – through the crusaders – the territories adjoining the Black sea, that had been seized by the Seljuks. Thousands of the lower strata lost their lives in this struggle, and the survivors got nothing.

The kingdom of Jerusalem was predominant among the states set up by the crusaders. The system of these states was analogous to that of West European countries. The local population – be they Muslim or Christians – had not much liking for the crusaders, often rising against them. It should be noted also that after the initial reverses the Seljuks began to rally gradually and were preparing for revenge.

A significant role in the crusade movement was played by cities (especially Italian ones; Genoa, Pisa, Venice, etc.), for the conquests of the Seljuks were tantamount to death – trade with the East, came to a standstill. Therefore, they gave all-out support to arranging an expedition to the East ([History of the Middle Ages, 1952: 285-286](#)).

3.2. Georgia's attitude to the Crusades

What was the attitude of the Georgian state of the end of the 11th century to the crusades like? To what extent did Georgian interests correspond to the European undertaking to liberate the Holy Sepulcher?

The real objectives of the crusades must have been well known to David the Builder. At the same time it was essential for the royal court to clarify the relations with the Byzantine Empire, under whose influence Georgia was. One thing is clear: the administration of David the Builder kept a close watch on the international situation: the routes of the crusaders, must have been known to him as well as the outcomes of their battles. Furthermore, he timed the country's policy to the current state of affairs. It is noteworthy that David's historian directly links the successes of the Georgian kingdom against the Seljuks, the up building of Kartli and discontinuing the payment of tribute to them to the capture of Antioch and Jerusalem by the crusaders. "The Franks came over at that time and" took Jerusalem and Antioch, and with God's help the land of Kartli was restored, while David gained in power and enlarged his fighting forces. He paid no further Kharaj to the sultan and the Turks were no longer able to winter in Kartli ([The Life of the King, 2008: 309](#))*.

To David's historian the "Franks" were the crusaders. This was their appellation not only in Georgia but in the entire Near East as well. The advent of the crusaders was per se a development

* The excerpt is borrowed from Katharine Vivian's translation: *The Georgian Chronicle, The Period of Giorgi - Lasha*, Adolf M. Hakkert, Amsterdam, 1991, p. 9.

of world scale. Their each step “towards liberating Christ’s Sepulcher” was at the centre of contemporary attention. In Zurab Avalishvili’s view, Georgia did not need aid from the crusaders, nor did she expect such aid, or contemplate an alliance with them. In the scholar’s opinion, Georgia was part of the East whose conquest the crusaders intended (Avalishvili, 1989: 27-44). This may have been the case, and the crusaders did not aim to help Georgia, but it is clear that the expeditions of the crusaders broke the power of the Seljuks. This, for its part facilitated the implementation of David the Builder’s policy. The successful struggle of the Georgian king with the Seljuks played into the hands of the crusaders. Hence the principalities set up by the crusaders considered Georgia their friend. It should be emphasized that Georgia fought independently for her freedom, without hoping for anybody’s help (obviously, nor did any other state intend to liberate Georgia from the Seljuk violence). However it is clear that the wars waged by the crusaders had an objectively positive impact on the liberation struggle of the Georgians. The action of the crusaders and Georgia, though taken independently, was mutually beneficial.

Georgia’s gaining in power was largely the result of the internal development. In the opinion of some scholars, among the foreign factors, the main was not the campaigns of the crusaders but the disintegration of the state of the “Great Seljuks” (Gabashvili, 1957: 134). It cannot be denied that following the break-up of the “Great Seljuk” state separate Turkish political units were strong from the military viewpoint. Hence without the activity of the crusaders, the Seljuks might have inflicted further damage to Georgia (Meskhia, 1965: 27; Kopaliani, 1968: 92, 93; Metreveli, 2002: 331).

One thing is clear, there was an essential difference between the goals of the Georgian Kingdom and the leaders of the crusaders. The real, predatory intentions of the crusaders, draped in the banner of liberating the Holy Sepulcher from infidels, soon became clear. The crusaders annihilated the population of the East, carrying away enormous booty. Nor did they stop short of shedding the blood of Christians. Neither could it be ruled out that when need arose and an opportunity presented itself they might move against Georgia. In a word, under the slogan of “liberating the Holy Land” the crusaders carried on a policy of conquests. Hence Georgia and the crusaders could not have the same objectives. The Georgian people fought not against Islam but against the Seljuks who were bent on conquering and uprooting Georgia. The people fought to preserve their originality that was at stake.

David the Builder, who was called the defender of Christianiky in the East or the “sword of the Messiah”, pursued a tolerant policy in relation to the Muslims, maintaining close contacts with the Muslim world, as dictated by the home and foreign situation. Therefore, the alliance between feudal Georgia and the crusaders was due to a temporary political situation (Meskhia, 1973: 72-81).

What was the situation with the crusaders following the taking of Jerusalem? Jerusalem, with up to twenty adjoining towns and villages, constituted a kingdom with King Godfrey at its head. The pilgrims were attracted by the charm of the Holy places and property. According to the laws of the time, a person who lived for one year and one day in this or that house (that had earlier belonged to a Muslim) and owned a certain plot of land became an owner of these (Michau, 2004: 60). Accordingly, a person who did not live in a home with a plot of land for the same period lost the right of ownership.

On the eve of Christmas a large army of pilgrims flooded Jerusalem*. They were largely from Pisa and Genoa, and were led by Bishop Duriano and Archbishop of Pisa Daimbert. The latter arrived in Jerusalem as an apostolic legate and managed to misappropriate the patriarch’s throne of Jerusalem. The new patriarch demanded from Godfrey, on behalf of the Church, to acknowledge his supreme ownership of Jerusalem and Yafo. At the same time, the Holy city was visited by Bohemond, an Antiochene prince, Baldwin, count of Edessa, and Raymond of Toulouse, with Italian pilgrims. Bohemond and Baldwin, as well as Godfrey, agreed to accept the investiture of the conquered countries from the pope.

Disorder reigned in the kingdom of Jerusalem, set up following the victory of the Christians; a deficit of legislation that could amend the situation was felt. King Godfrey convened a special council in his palace on Zion hill and, together with the princes, adopted a legislation that he called Jerusalem Assizes. Defined in the assizes were questions of interrelationship of the king and his

* At this time the kingdom of Jerusalem had an army of two to three hundred thousand knights. This was not very large in comparison with outer forces, but the Christian arms instilled the enemy with fear, and for some time the kingdom enjoyed peace.

subordinates; the relationship of feudal lords and their vassals are ordered: the prerogative of royal power is clarified. It should be noted that the Jerusalem assizes are important as the most refined and well-formulated document of feudal law. Its shortcoming may be considered its focusing attention mainly on armed persons (this is natural as war was important for this state). Ordinary people (farmers, prisoners of war) were mentioned in passing (they were viewed as chattel). It is significant that a hunting falcon and a slave had the same price, a war horse cost twice the price of a commoner or prisoner*.

The affairs of the newly set up kingdom and principalities were complicated. The Muslims attacked them from different parts and inflicted heavy losses. The beginning of the second decade of the 12th century was unsuccessful (1113, 1114, 1115). Muslim bands invading from the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris devastated Galilee. Other calamities came on top of this. Locusts destroyed Palestinian plains, the county of Edessa and the Principality of Antioch were overwhelmed with famine; earthquakes destroyed many settlements from Taurus to the Judean deserts. After reigning for thirteen years, king Baldwin of Jerusalem died. He left behind Baldwin of Le Bourg as his successor. The latter ascended the throne under the name of Baldwin II (1119).

Z. Avalishvili emphasized that “The principalities of the crusaders were set up abroad, on others’ land... The religious zeal of West Europeans, the policy of the Roman Church, the quest of the knights and gentry for “heroic exploits” and fame and spoils, the avarice prompting to capture trade and sea ports” (Avalishvili, 1989: 32-33) left their imprint on the crusaders, campaign. The scholar discusses the work of the French chronicler Gautier “The Antiochene Wars”, in which he describes David the Builder’s victory in the Didgori battle. Gautier is elated with the success of the Georgian king. It can be concluded from this work that, in the view of the crusaders, David’s army was their ally, their real brothers in Christ. The crusaders viewed the Georgians as their companions in arms and aiders (Avalishvili, 1989: 32-33).

The Georgia of the first quarter of the 12th century may be pictured as a crusading country [One may recall the appellations of David the Builder as “Christ’s slave” (“Abdulmesiani”) and the “sword of the Messiah”]. We cannot overlook the fact that Georgia is a neighbor of Muslim countries, sharing their culture to a certain extent. The Caucasus was widely populated with Muslims. The Georgian state took all this into consideration, developing a broader national and religious plan than “crusade proper” (Avalishvili, 1989: 32-33).

The crusades as a phenomenon did not constitute a firm alliance of the “Franks” and the Georgians. Their relationship was due to a single religion (Christianity). They fought a common enemy owing to different causes and aims.

3.3. The Georgian Kingdom and the Crusaders

David the Builder’s contacts with the crusaders is confirmed by Abul-Faraj; the author of a Syrian chronicle. The participation of the Georgian army in the fight for Jerusalem (for the liberation of Christ’s sepulcher) is pointed out by P. Ioseliani, V. Potto and N. Urbneli. There is a report to the effect that David the builder often sent gifts to the Frank king Baldwin of Jerusalem (Avalishvili, 1989: 48)[†]. The report found in Prince Ioane’s “Kalmasoba” to the effect that Malik-Shah’s son Tanghan Melik Sultan came secretly, disguised as a dervish, to visit Iberia and to see king David, and in the same guise king Alexander... and among them was Baldwin (*sik*) king of Jerusalem, who had won many victories over the Saracens or Arabs. And this Baldwin to Kartli came secretly, as told by other histories ... and none of the Georgians learnt about their secret coming, and they went back in the same year?” In this evidence interest attaches to the fact that political figures of different countries came to David the Builder covertly. Contacts of Baldwin II (1119-1131), king of Jerusalem, with David could really have taken place. It is significant that Prince Ioane entered the story of Baldwin’s coming to Kartli “as told by other histories”. It is hard to say specifically which “histories” (sources) Prince Ioane used. It is suggested in Georgian historiography (Sh. Meshkhia, V. Kopaliani, Sh. Badridze) that at the end of the first two decades of the 12th century, when the crusaders fought Il Ghazi and his allies during which Prince Roger of Antioch and many European knights died, when king Baldwin II of Jerusalem vowed to fight

* “This legislation, surviving the Latin state itself, was a good deed for the Holy Land and a model institution for the west that was still in barbarous condition” (Michau, 2004: 62).

[†] Quoted from Reinhold Rohricht. *Gescht. Des Königsreichs. Jerusalem (1110–1291, Innsbruck, 1898, p. 120.*

against the Seljuks and the government of Antioch (the retention of the latter city cost the crusaders formidable losses), the aggravated situation induced the latter to look for an ally, and it cannot be ruled out that Georgia seemed to them to be such an ally. Thus, in a definite situation the contact between Georgia and the crusaders was mutually beneficial. Christian Georgia would help the crusaders against the Seljuks, and the fight of the crusaders rendered easier for David to triumph over the invaders and drive them out of the country. It may be an exaggeration, yet not fortuitous, that the historian of David the Builder names “the king and sovereigns of the Franks” among the kings that had “assembled under the shadow” of the Georgian king. Obviously, the historian implies the crusaders under “Franks”. David the Builder appears to have been popular among the crusaders.

A letter, sent by Anselus, the cantor of the Holy Sepulcher, to the congregation of the Paris church of the Virgin, tells the story of the acquisition and disclosure of a cross made of the life-giving pillar by Anselus (Anso). Z. Avalishvili paid attention to this event, devoting a special essay to it ([Avalishvili, 1989: 5-26](#))*. Anselus’ letter was published at various times in Latin, French and Georgian. Despite the fact that the letter is dated to 1108 (Z. Avalishvili), the view has been expressed, which is probably not very far from the truth, that it was written after the death of David the Builder. The content of the letter supports this view. “This cross was greatly revered and loved in his lifetime by David, king of the Georgians”, that David who, like his ancestors, held and guarded the Caspian Gate that keeps out the Gog and Magog, which his son has been doing to the present day, whose land and kingdom is a bastion, so to speak, against the Medes and the Persians”.

Following David’s decease and his son’s ascending the throne, his consort, to be revered for her holiness rather than her noble descent, had her hair cut, attired herself in religious garments and arrived in Jerusalem with a small retinue, bringing with her this cross and much gold, and it was her desire not to return home but to end her life here in peace and tranquility†.

It is clear from this quotation that David was already dead when the letter was being written. It is said directly that after the death of David and the enthronement of his son his consort took the cross and other valuables to Jerusalem. At the same time, the conduct of David’s widow is considered to be praiseworthy not so much for her noble decent but holiness” This was probably because Gurandukht, daughter of the Qipchaq Atraka Sharaghan’s son, was not considered to be of high noble rank by Anselus, the “cantor and priest of the famed Holy Sepulcher.” He was charmed rather by her holiness. Hence, reference in Anselus’ letter to David the Builder as deceased must not be the result of an error ([Metraveli, 2002: 335](#)). Another view holds that David the Builder was mentioned erroneously as deceased. “David’s widow” may as well have been the person whom David had as wife before he married Gurandukht ([Badridze, 1976: 16](#)).

Anselus, letter is significant for its information on the Georgia of David the Builder’s time. The Georgian state is considered a defender of the Caspian Gate and a “bastion of the crusaders” in the fight against the Seljuks. The reference by the French psalm reader to Georgia as a “bastion” clearly points to the existence of close relations between Georgia and the crusaders. Georgia acquired special significance for the crusaders after David had driven the Seljuks out of the country’s borders.

Anselus mentions David’s cross with special awe: “Of the gifts that God has given us, one gift – great and inimitable – that is the cross made of the wood of the Holy Cross. I, yours affectionately, for the honor of your church, yourself and for the enhancement and name of your city, sent it with Anselm, your faithful... Now, the cross I sent you is made of two woods. There the cross placed in the cross is the wood on which he hung; which is imbedded is of the wood that was under the feet and supported the cross, both honorable, both Holy‡. Donating the cross to the church of the Virgin in Paris, Anselus entreated to be mentioned for his contribution in sending the cross. He suggested the ready text: “Anselm, our priest, sent us this cross, made of the wood of the

* Z. Avalishvili. About one cross in the book “From the Time of the Crusaders”, Tbilisi, 1989.

† Letter of Anselm, the cantor of the Holy Sepulcher, to the congregation of the Paris Holy Virgin (see [Avalishvili, 1989: 17-18](#)).

‡ Ibid. p. 17. According to tradition, Christ’s cross consisted of four woods. One was that on which Pipate made the inscription; the other where the extended arms and legs were fixed, the third where the Lord’s body was, the fourth the cross itself.

Holy Cross, to our church, from Jerusalem". He also asks to be mentioned in prayers after his death. The conveyors of the cross from Jerusalem to Paris [this mission was headed by Fulk, son of Anselm (Anselm was not alive then) informed bishop Galon from Fontain about their return and the bringing of the cross. The bishop met the Holy Cross with the whole congregation. The cross was taken into the Paris church of the Virgin solemnly. It was the first time when a cross was brought to Paris from Jerusalem. To the French this cross seemed a symbol of the struggle of their fraternal knights in Palestine, and there were many who wished to see it, worship it and receive grace from it. To meet their wish, the wide field of St Denys was chosen and it was ordained that on the second Wednesday of June of every year the cross brought from overseas (croix d'autre-mer) would be raised here, the bishop would stand at a specially made pulpit and, following the prayers, would bless the people with this cross – first facing east, from where it was brought, then south, to Paris, where the cross was kept.

Anselus' letter reports, incidentally, that David's widow divided the treasure (gold) she had brought with her and distributed it to the monasteries of the city. She also gave alms to the poor and the travelers. Then she "took the monastic vows" at the Georgian nunnery in Jerusalem* .

Ancellus has his own version of the fate of the Lord's cross. Christians cut the cross into pieces and distributed them to churches of the believers[†]. Besides the emperor's cross, there are three crosses at Constantinople, two in Cyprus, one in Crete, one at Antioch, one at Edessa, one at Alexandria, one at Ascalon, four at Jerusalem, the Syrians have one, the Greeks of St. Sabas one, the monks of the Josaphat ravine, the Latins one, the king of the Georgians, and the Patriarch of the Georgians one.

Avalishvili raises an interesting question: Is it believable that the king of Georgians (David the Builder is implied) would not keep a treasure received by inheritance and more precious in the eyes of all Christians in his home and not bequeath it to his son? Especially a king like David the Builder whose seal bore the legend "Vanquisher of enemies with the cross, I, David, am invincible"? Would this cross not be counted as a relic of the Bagrationis? Indeed, the cross acquired by Ancellus may not have belonged to the Georgian king but one part of it, remade into a separate cross and riveted.

It is clear from the foregoing that Ancellus¹⁴, letter points to the extremely high popularity and authority of Georgia in the first quarter of the 12th century and her king David the Builder in the entire crusader world.

The Seljuks, weakened by the first strikes of the crusaders, tried to rally their forces; they were uniting and getting ready for revenge. On separate occasions they did attain some successes. In 1101 they defeated Europe's army in Asia Minor. From time to time they attacked the crusaders. From 1101 to 1105 the Fatimids organized land operations. The crusaders suffered substantial losses. Georgia proved to be a serious support for the weakened political units of the crusaders[‡]. The Seljuks themselves considered Georgia to be an important force, ranking her higher than the crusade political entities of Jerusalem, Tripoli and Antioch-Edessa (Kopaliani, 1968: 96). The historian of David the Builder believes that the extreme harassment of the Seljuks by the Georgian in the 1120s caused their irritation and marching out against Georgia.

"After several reverses of this kind the hard-pressed Turkomans, together with merchants of Gandza, Tbilisi and Dmanisi, went to approach the Sultan. Travelling through Persia, they dyed themselves black – some their faces, some their hands and others their whole bodies: when they related all the calamities that had befallen them people's, sympathy was aroused and there was great lamentation among the local inhabitants" (The Life of the King, 2008: 323-324; Vinsan's transl.: 23-24). Following this, a Turkish-Arab coalition army was mustered and it marched against

* The letter of Anselm, cantor of the Holy Sepulture

† Tbil. p. 19.

‡ Special forces were created for the defence of the gains of the crusaders: the military-spiritual brotherhood of the Templars was set up in 1118, the so-called "Temple" (order of Templars). The Teutons, spiritual order was set up in 1119. Later it moved to the Baltic area, formally to convert the pagans to Christianity but actually to conquer the Western Slavs. These orders constituted an important military force.

Georgia to punish her. The army was commanded by Najm ad-Ain Il-Ghazi, the ruler of Bagdad, and master of Mardin and Aleppo. He was most powerful among the Seljuk rulers.*

It is not accidental that in the Didgori battle (1120) David the Builder, apart from his own troops (40 thousand Georgians, 13 thousand Qipchaqs, 500 Alans), availed himself of the service of European knights as well (100 warriors). These were Europeans that had found their way to Georgia during the crusades. The historians that made a special study of the participation of the Franks in David's army (T. Dadeshkeliani, I. Javakhishvili, S. Kakabadze, Sh. Meskhia and others) consider the participation of the crusaders in David's army quite possible, if we bear in mind that, apart from Matheos Urhaetsi, the Frenchman Gautier, quite independently of him[†], points to the participation of the Franks in the Georgian army. I believe the view of "Franks" being the "Varangians" (M. Brosset, S. Eremyan) is groundless. The evidence of the sources, observation of historians and the than relations of the crusaders and the Georgians render the participation of the crusaders in the battle of Didgori quite convincing (Meskhia, 1973: 106-107)[‡].

3.4. Georgia and Byzantium

Here I should like to touch upon David the Builder's policy in relation to the Byzantine empire "Throughout the 11th century Georgia was under the influence of Byzantium. It was at the close of this century that David was the first among the kings of united Georgia to renounce the Byzantine royal titles. It should be noted that in the 11th century all Georgian kings bore the titles of Curopalates Nobilissimus, Sebastos or Caesar. David himself, prior to becoming king, bore the title of Sebastos. In one document he is even referred to as "Panipersebastos" (Zhordania, 1893: 236). The fact is that David renounced the Byzantine titles after he had achieved significant political and economic success. That is why, beginning with the 1090s he is not referred to by any Byzantine royal title in any source. In other words Georgia considered herself as a country on equal terms with the Byzantine empire. David did his best to strengthen in all ways possible his relations with Byzantium on terms of parity. This interest made the Georgian king take the step of dynastic marriage by sending his daughter Kata in 1116 to Greece "as daughter- in law of the Greek king".[§] Following this dynastic marriage, David's historian was right to say that the "king of the Greece" was like "one of the household" of the Georgian king. The good-neighborly relations with the Byzantine empire did not change to the last years of David the Builder's reign (David preferred to stay neutral and not to intervene in the split between his son-in-law (Isaak and the eldest son of Alexius Comnenus Ioane), thereby ensuring the security of the south-western borders in the Georgian kingdom (Metreveli, 2002: 329-330).

A very interesting piece of evidence is to be found with the First Historian of Tamar. The author of "The Histories and Eulogies of the Sovereigns," in narrating the battle of Shamkor, recalls the courage of the Georgians, noting by the way that they remembered the courage and triumphs of their forefathers and the thirty-seven heroes of old, who fought in the sight of David and overcame a foreign force, and Vakhtang's soldiers who fought with him:

"Now for the new David and for Giorgi, Tamar's son, the eighty-first anointed descendant of the Prophet David" (Zhordania, 1893: 439-440). The direct reference to "the troops of the new David (the Builder – R.M.). ... in the battles of David (the Prophet – R.M.) joined at Jerusalem" must imply the alliance between the crusaders and the kingdom of Georgia. The crusaders are allegorically considered to have been David the Prophet's troops, whose goal was liberation of Jerusalem, the capital of David the Prophet (Kekelidze, 1968: 78).

* Il- Ghazi delivered a crushing defeat to the crusaders in 1119 on the bank of the Orontes, on the so-called "bloody field". He was pronounced immortal, and was since called Najm Ad-Din "star of the faith".

[†] Gautier writes:.. "and the two hundred French warriors that he had he assigned to the front ranks, to deliver the first strikes". *Ital. bella Antiochena*, the Latin text with a Georgian translation and notes by Z.Avalishvili. In the book "From the time of the Crusaders", Tbilisi, 1989, p. 44.

[‡] In the first half of the 12th century the term "Frank" became established in Georgia in reference to a West European. A case is recorded when the term "Aleman" is used to refer to a German. "The Histories and Eulogies of the Sovereigns"). This term must have been borrowed from the French.

[§] As it transpires (Sh. Meskhia, V. Kopaliani, O. Lordkipanidze), Kata married Isaak, son of the Byzantine emperor Alexius Comnenus.

The Georgian king (especially David the Builder) were not oblivious to the dire straits Armenia was in and they liberated Armenian lands conquered by the Seljuks. It was the effort of the Georgians (jointly with the Armenians) that resulted in the “revival of Armenian state formations ... within Georgian state hood” (Eremyan, 1979: 8).*

In 1144 the Seljuks besieged and took Edessa. This became the pretext for launching the Second Crusade (1147-1149). Preaching commenced in Europe for starting the Second Crusade. Unlike the first expedition, the second was supported not by the pope but by Abbot Bernard. The expedition was led by kings Louis VII of France and Konrad III of Germany. The failure of the Second Crusade was due to the aggravation of the opposition between the Byzantine empire and the crusaders. Of the 24-thousand - strong army of the crusaders up to 5000 men reached Syria in the spring of 1147. The German army was totally annihilated while crossing Asia Minor, while the French suffered systematic attacks in their movement along the coastal zone. Louis VII was advised to attack Halab (Aleppo) and to recover the lands lost across the Orontes river. Louis VII rejected this counsel, taking the road to Jerusalem. In September 1148 Konrad had his troops embark on ships, sending them to Europe. Six months later Louis VII did the same.

The Second Crusade ended in failure and the myth of the invincibility of the Europeans was shattered. The monarchy of the Franks was weakening. Salah ad-Din (Saladin) came to lead the fight against the Europeans. In 1183 he devastated Galilee, capturing many fortresses. The Muslims delivered heavy strikes on the Europeans on land and sea. In 1185 Saladin concluded a peace with the Latins. The power of the Muslims grew. In June 1187 Sultan Saladin crossed the river Jordan with his main forces, besieging Tiberias; then the Europeans were actually routed at Hattin. On 2 October 1187 Jerusalem fell, being triumphantly seized by Saladin.

Saladin's victories outraged the peoples of Western Europe, leading to a third Crusade. The expedition was headed by the German Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, the French king Philip Augustus and the English king Richard the Lion-Heart.

It should be noted that the Christian world of Western Europe was essentially altered almost one hundred years after Urban II's preaching. Crusades remained only in the interests of popes, emperors and kings. The masses gave little support to the idea. In 1188 Frederick Barbarossa defeated the sultan of Konya (Anatolia). The German army suffered great losses in Cilicia – in crossing a river Frederick Barbarossa was drowned. Philip Augustus and Richard the Lion-heart put to sea. The king of England captured Cyprus. In July 1191 the English and French took Acre. Richard the Lion-Heart, who had a strong well-trained and well – armed army, won two important victories: in September 1191 he triumphed at Arsuf and in August 1192 he took Yafo. For his part, Saladin, who had no means of reinforcing his army, preferred to conclude a peace with the Franks (2 September 1192). The Third Crusade prolonged to some extent the life of the Latin states (Tat, 2003: 117-118). At the same time it reduced the significance of Saladin's victories. The crusade showed that West-European Christianity was capable of mobilizing forces for an expedition in the Holy Land. It should be said, however that on the historical scale victory remained with the Muslims (Saladin). The attempt of the kingdom of Jerusalem and other Latin states to create a powerful state ended in a fiasco (Tat, 2003: 118).

In general, the situation of the crusaders was becoming hopeless. The prospect of laying hold of Jerusalem was practically nill. At this time, according to the historical sources, there was some revival in the troops. The rise of a new hope was directly related to the name of the king-priest Johannes, who lived in the East, appeared to be victorious and had the same goal of liberating the Holy Sepulcher as the crusaders dreamed of. The German Chronicler Otto Frisingen (grandson of the emperor Henry IV and uncle of Frederick Barbarossa (Kosminski, 1963: 23-26; Badridze, 1968: 363-400) narrates in his Chronicle (Ottonis Episcopo, 1569: 146-147) that, in the words of a Syrian bishop, “Johannes king-and-priest, who lives beyond Persia and Armenia, in the extreme east ... in one of his battles defeated the kings of Persia and Media ... and took their capital city Ecbatana”. After this, in the Chroniclers words, Johannes set out on a campaign to help the church of Jerusalem. Otto stresses that this person, according to here say, “Is a descendant of the Magi mentioned in the Gospel and that he held sway over many peoples” (Oppert, 1870: 13-14). The information of the Syrian bishop boosted the morale of the crusaders. They believed that the

* According to “Kartlis Tskhovreba”, David the Builder was the seventy-eighth descendant of David the Prophet, and Tamar was the eighty-first (after Demetre I and Giorgi III).

king-priest would come to the aid of Jerusalem. The report of the Syrian bishop in 1145 was embellished with new glory in the second half of the 12th century.

The evidence of Otto of Frisingen on Johannes the king-priest has been discussed in the specialist literature. Added to this is the so-called letter of Johannes the high priest, composed in the middle of the 12th century. The extant manuscript of the letter is dated to 1177. Johannes declares that he is powerful and wealthy and owns vast lands. The letter speaks also of his goodness and love of God. This is why the crusaders placed hope in him. However, in the time of decline of the crusade movement, towards the close of the 12th century, Johannes the king-priest no longer figured in the crusaders' perception, which was due to the futile expectation of him. I have focused on this legend because in the scholarly literature Johannes the king-priest has been identified with David the Builder, for the majority of Christians called him "king David" (rex David) (Badridze, 1968: 369).

The tradition on Johannes the king-priest was apparently created in the first half of the 12th century. It was based on the rumours afloat in Europe about David the Builder and his son Demetre I, in particular about their fight against the Seljuks. It is noteworthy that one of the remembrances of the order of the Knights Templars, found in a Georgian manuscript in Jerusalem, contains agapes of the crusader Knights Templars compiled in the 12th century (Mtreveli, 1962). These agapes show clearly the close acquaintance of the Georgians and the Templars. It transpires that the Knights Templars donated estates and money to the Georgian Monastery of the Cross.

From the early 13th century internal political strife took place in the Byzantine empire. The country was weakened economically. In 1202 Isaak II Anceles was dethroned by conspirators. His son Alexius visited the pope to ask for his assistance in regaining the throne. In return, he promised participation in crusades and subordination of the Byzantine Church to Rome. Then Alexius called on his brother-in law (husband of his sister) Philip of Swabia. Through the latter, the crusaders promised to help Alexius. And indeed, in June 1203 the throne was restored to Isaak and Alexius. But this act did not bring stability. In January 1204 the rebellious population of Constantinople again ousted the emperor, bringing down the imperial power.

Under the conditions of turmoil the crusaders made another attack against the empire. On April 13 they took Constantinople, wreaking havoc on the residents of the capital and destroying architectural monuments.

The weakening of the Byzantine empire appears to have been used by the Georgian royal court to its advantage. An incident was used as a pretext. According to Basil the Ezosmodzghuari, the monks of the Black Mountain, Antioch, Cyprus and the Holy Mountain had arrived for "charity". Queen Tamar received them with great honor, treating them "as if they were Angels" according to Basil the Erosmodzghvari, "on one occasion according to their custom, monks of the Black Mountain, Antioch, and the island of Cyprus came out to perform acts of charity, as well as from the Holy Mountain. Tamar, as was her wont received them like angels and kept them for several days, treating them generously and providing for all their needs. Finally she gave a large sum of gold... to those who had travelled the furthest, to share between themselves and all the monasteries" (Ezosmodzghvari, 2008: 307; Vivian: 86). The monks departed and, when they came to Constantinople, men of the Byzantine emperor Alexius robbed them. The chronicler describes Alexius as a greedy person, "who had his brother Isaac's eyes put out and seized the throne. He was in every way a villain, unfit to reign and abominated by every one, most especially for his greed (Ezosmodzghvari, 2008: 507; Vivian: 86).

When Queen Tamar knew about this act committed by Alexius, in her anger she sent a sizable army stationed beyond the Likhi mountain, actually declaring war on the Byzantine empire. As the result of the active military operations along the south-eastern shore of the Black Sea, her army took Lazia, Trebizond, Limon, Sinope, Kerasund, Kitiora, Amastris, Heraclea and every part of Paphlagonis and Pontus". This was a significant territory, and Queen Tamar set up a state of these conquered regions, offering it to her kinsman Alexius Comnenus, son of Andronicus, who at that time had taken refuge with Queen Tamar". The Byzantine historian Michael Panaretos says: "The great Comnenus master Alexius came, from the magnificent city of Constantinople, and he marched out at the will and effort of Tamar. His father's sister, and, aged 22, he took Trebizond in April 1204. He reigned for 18 years and died at the age of forty, on the 1st of February 1222 (Panaretos Michael, 1960: 16).

This is how the kingdom of Trebizond was set up in 1204 (Karpov, 2006: 34, 134-142).

According to Tamar's historian Basil, this defeat of Byzantium in Asia Minor and the setting up of a buffer state of Georgian orientation had a great response among the crusaders, serving as an impetus for their future activity. "When the Franks came to know that the Greeks were deprived of all support from the East, the Venetians set out and took the capital city from them, gaining also royal power, and the wretched Alexius took refuge with her son-in-law in Bulgaria" (*Histories and Eulogies*, 2008: 507; *Vivian*: 87). It is notable that the Bulgarian king (son-in-law of Alexius) had knowledge of the greed of Alexius, "he took him to a fortress where a large amount of gold was displayed to him, and said: "Ah Alexius, here is your heart's desire, take this gold in place of any other food, drink, since it is for this that you have brought down the royal house of the Christians and dissipated the empire of the Greeks". Alexius "deprived of God's help died here".

It should be noted that the above scheme of "Kartlis Tskhovreba" (confiscation of the gold granted by Tamar by the Emperor of the Greeks – the Georgian campaign in retaliation and capture of places in Asia Minor – the seizure of Constantinople by the Franks) was viewed critically by Zurab Avalishvili (*Avalishvili*, 1989: 52-94). In the first place the scholar stressed the point that the dethroning of Alexius Angelos and the setting up of the kingdom of Trebizond belong to the period of the Fourth Crusade and that this fact should be taken into account. Avalishvili reviews the literature available on the kingdom of Trebizond and considers that Georgia was attracted by the "Chan" image of Trebizond. Indeed, the south-eastern shore of the Black Sea was inhabited by the Chan and related Georgian tribes. It should be also borne in mind that the weakening of the Byzantine empire was followed by the growth of the activity of the Turks settled in Asia Minor. Naturally, the Georgian population residing there was also threatened. Thus, the founding of the kingdom of Trebizond preceded the final fall of Constantinople.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the establishment of the kingdom of Trebizond was the result of the active policy conducted by the Georgian royal court and "it was an instrument of her foreign policy" (*Uspenski*, 1948: 601).

One more question. Why did the kingdom of Georgia take the road of raising the Comnenus to the throne in the kingdom of Trebizond? Georgia's patronage and active assistance of the Comnenus should be accounted for by the fact that several generations of the latter had resided in Georgia and were related to the Georgian royal dynasty, with special considerations of the state, close neighborhood of Chaneti, and perhaps ethnic kinship with its dynasty. How did the Comnenus find their way to the Georgian royal court? What was the dynastic link between them, in particular between the Georgian Bagrationis and the younger branch of the Comnenus. In 1185 the Byzantine emperor Andronicus Comnenus was dethroned and killed. The kingdom was taken over by representatives of the house of Angelos. Isaac was enthroned. Of the Comnenus the emperor Andronicus' son Manoel was also slain. Manoel's sons Alexius and David survived, finding refuge at the court of the Georgian Queen Tamar.

As to kinship, here we should recall David the Builder's daughter Kata who married in Byzantium "In the same year king Demetre died, and Demetre's sister Tamar, builder of Tighva, she too passed away and her sister Queen Kata was married in Greece (*The Chronicler*: 352). As is known, Kata married Alexius I's son Isaak Comnenus. Kata and Isaak had a son Andronicus, who visited Giorgi III, king of Georgia", with his wife of radiant face and beautiful with children and niece, the brother's son of the father of the great emperor and king of the entire West and Greece" (*Histories and Eulogies*, 2008: 392).

The first historian of Queen Tamar doubtless points to close kinship by noting: "And as was befitting, he, thanking God, accepted and did appropriate honor to his nephew, and granting him towns and fortresses to his satisfaction, he set seats for him close to his own throne...", and so on. The relationship of the Bagrationis and the Comnenus is clear. Andronicus was Giorgi III's cousin, i.e. Demetre's sister's son and Demetre himself was sibling brother of Kata (this fact is confirmed by the Byzantine historian Michael Panaretos too). The Alexius Comnenus, mentioned in the source, was the grandson of Andronicus. It was he that became the first king of the Empire of Trebizond.

Let us look at the genealogy (naming only one of each generation):

Alexius I Comnenus

Isaak

(Kata's husband)

Andronicus Manuel Alexius

(king of Trebizond)

David the Builder

Demetre V

(brother of Kata)

Giorgi III

Tamar

The Empire of Trebizond played an important role in Georgia's economic, strategic and political life. Its existence was especially essential for checking the attacks of the Byzantines from the west and the Turkish sultanate of Rum from the south-west.

Alexius Comnenus was the mainstay of the Georgian royal court in the country's foreign policy, especially in the relations with Byzantium. A considerable part of the Greeks inhabiting the Black Sea littoral looked hopefully to the Comnenus reigning in Trebizond. They doubtless enjoyed a high reputation and the compatriots had not lost the illusion of regaining the throne of their ancestors. Embarking on the political arena through the Georgian royal court, Alexius and David Comnenious were forced to plunge into political turmoil in Asia Minor.

In the closing years of Alexius' reign, the Georgian government was au courant of the internal political life of Byzantium, occasionally actively intervening in the political developments in Byzantium.

Throughout the existence of the Empire of Trebizond (1204–1461) two political orientations and cultural tendencies took shape at its royal court – Georgian and Byzantine. The Comnenus were loyal to Georgia, her royal court and the Georgian kings. This was clear in the period of Georgia's heyday. Following the invasions of the Mongols and the decline of Georgia, this situation altered to some extent, the Georgian orientation acquiring a somewhat unstable character.

Thus, the setting up of a major empire populated mainly with Georgian peoples of Georgian orientation in the neighbourhood of Georgia in the reign of Queen Tamar was beyond doubt a significant event – a triumph of Georgian policy and diplomacy, based on Georgia's power and consideration of the international situation (the 4th Crusade, the weakening of the Byzantine empire), occurring early in the 13th century.

The 5th Crusade (1217–1221) was directed against Egypt. The Franks sought to gain Jerusalem in return for Ayyubid lands. Indeed, they won several major victories and the Ayyubids offered the restoration of the boundaries of Jerusalem within the old limits. Here the pope's legate, who led the campaign, abstained from accepting the offer in the expectation of more – they tried to set up a Frank state in Egypt.

Before setting out, Pope Honorius, sent a special letter to King Lasha-Giorgi (1213–1222), calling on the Georgian king for a joint expedition which, in the pope's view, would facilitate the "destruction of the Muslim world". Lasha-Giorgi agreed to the Georgian army's participation in the campaign. The noble feudal lords too assented. They believed that fight for Holy Sepulcher was their duty too. The Georgian began preparations for the campaign, but they did not take part in this campaign. It is hard to tell the cause. It is not ruled out that the route of this expedition – Egypt – was not comprehensible to the Georgians. Whereas they were ready to fight for Jerusalem, the conquest of Egyptian lands was hard to understand for them.

From the 1220s the entire international situation changed. The appearance of Mongol hordes from Central Asia was the heaviest blow to the whole world, including Georgia. The Mongol army led by Genghis-Khan took Khorasm. Twenty thousand warriors were sent under Jebe and Subudai in pursuit of the fleeing Khwarazm-Shah. The army passed through Iran and Azerbaijan without falling on the track of the Khwarazm-Shah. In 1220 the Mongols invaded Georgia's frontiers. At the first encounter the Georgian army was defeated. The Mongols retreated to Mughan where they wintered and the next year (1221) they attacked Georgia again. This time the Georgians forced the enemy to leave Georgia for the Northern Caucasus. In this battle Lasha-Giorgi was wounded and he died in 1222.

Like his ancestors, Lasha-Giorgi was known in the countries of the West. Interest attaches to the letter of the French crusader De Bois to the archbishop of Besancon (France) Amede de Tremley. The French crusader informs the archbishop: "...I have learnt from reliable sources that certain Christians called Georgians from Iberia, equipped with countless cavalry and foot soldiers,

pleasing god, have risen in haste against the faithless infidels and taken 360 fortresses and 9 large cities: they have conquered the strong ones, and turned to ashes the weak ones. Of the cities of the pagans, one lying on the Euphrates, has proved to be the most distinguished and large”.

The French crusader hopes that the Georgian (Giorgians) ... will come to deliver the Holy Land of Jerusalem and will bring pagandom low. Their noble king is sixteen years old, a peer to Alexander in power and goodness, though not in faith. This youth carries with him the bones of his mother, the mightiest Queen Tamar who, while still living, vowed to go to Jerusalem and she asked her son, should she pass away, to take her bones to the Lord's Sepulcher.

I shall not discuss De Bois' letter here. I should note only that it shows clearly the high (it may be said, exaggerated) view of the Georgians and hope for the aid.

The 1239s-1240s proved hard for Georgia. The Mongols put the country in a dire situation, practically placing it under their rule. Obviously, Rusudan (1222–1245), the Queen of Georgia, could offer no resistance to the invaders. She appealed for assistance to Pope Gregory IX. The pope was full of his own problems to act on this request.

Queen Rusudan sent a special letter to pope Honorius III, telling him that the Georgians were ready to take part in a campaign in Syria in liberating Holy places. She asked the pope to inform her of the time when the emperor set out on his campaign, for the Commander Ivane might march out at the same time to aid him. Ivane Mkhargredzeli too sent a letter to the pope in which he informed him of his readiness to march out with his entire army to aid the Christians. At the same time he wrote to the pope that many nobles had “accepted the Cross” (i.e. become crusader). In his letter of reply to Rusudan the pope expressed his satisfaction, praised her intention and informed her that “the brilliant and august Emperor, Frederick king of Sicily intended to start the campaign one year after the festival of John the Baptist. Ivane Mkhargredzeli too sent an analogous letter. Owing to the aggravation of the political situation the Georgians failed to carry out this mission.

Because of the impending Mongol threat, the crusade organized on the initiative of the German Emperor Frederick II, which made a sensation, had some success. An agreement was concluded with Sultan al-Kamil on 11 February 1229, according to which Jerusalem passed into the possession of Frederick II. The agreement, concluded on condition of mutual recognition, pleased the Muslims but not the papacy (Tat, 2003: 121). The settlement proved short-lived. The successors of Sultan al-Kamil, jointly with the refugees from Khorasm, managed to capture Jerusalem. For its part the loss of Jerusalem became the cause of the Seventh Crusade (1248–1249). The crusaders were led by St. Lodovico. This time the German empire and England did not take part in the expedition.

The campaign ended in a full fiasco for the crusaders. The king and his knights were taken capture in the Egyptian city of Mansûra on 6 April 1250. The crusaders paid a large ransom for their liberty. At this time the guards of Turk sultans – Mamluks – seized power in Cairo, establishing a military regime.

Upon establishing a state in Iran, Hulagu decided to capture Mesopotamia and Syria. He took Bagdad (1258) and overthrew the Abbasid Caliphate. In the same period the Latin states were on the verge of disintegration. The Genoese fought the Venetians, then the Pisans. On top of this there started a split between the dynasties. For fear of an invasion of the Mongols the Franks took a favorable attitude to the Mamluks, who actually checked the Mongol attack in 1260. The Mamluk Sultan Baybars conquered Muslim Syria. The Eighth Crusade availed nothing against the Mamluks. On 18 May 1291 Acre was taken, and on 28 May the stronghold defended by the Templars fell, the Europeans were expelled. The only man who remained was the king of Jerusalem, but he resided in Cyprus and his kingship was of somewhat formal nature. A two hundred year epopee of fierce fight practically came to an end. Its outcome was deplorable: the confrontation of the peoples of the West and East. This confrontation lasted for quite some time.

Beginning with the crusades Georgia was considered an active force in Europe and the Near East. Towards the second half of the 12th century Georgia threw off the Mongol yoke, regaining her old borders (“From Nikopsia to Daruband, from Ovseti to Aragats”). In the eyes of foreigners Georgia was a powerful state that had a strong king and army defending Christianity. For example, Giorgi the Brilliant (1314-1346) is represented in the letters of the Egyptian sultan as “well known and famed best among kings” and, which is most important, glorifier of the Holy places, the mainstay of Christians, helper of the pope ...” (Silagadze, 1989: 103-104; Tsereteli, 1949: 78-79).

It is significant that in the first half of the 14th century Georgia had intensive relations with the pope, the Empire of Trebizond, and the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt.

After shaking off of the Mongol dominance, the strengthened Georgia began to care towards bettering the status of Georgians and other Christian peoples hard pressed in Jerusalem. For a time the Monastery of the Cross (belonging to the Georgians) had been transformed into a mosque of the Egyptian Mamluks. In 1305 David VIII regained the monastery (Metreveli, 1962: 42-45). The church of the Resurrection of Christ, the Calvary, the Holy Sepulcher remained under Egyptians. They kept the “keys” and they administered the entry and exit of the monastic complex (Metreveli, 1962: 46-47).

Giorgi the Brilliant sent special envoys to the sultan of Egypt in 1316 and 1320. The king demanded the mitigation of the condition of each Christian, and in turn, obliged himself to give military aid when needed. The sultan seems to have heeded this request and he abrogated the rule introduced to humiliate Christians (in riding a horse (donkey) they had to have their legs on one side. Giorgi the Brilliant demanded the return of the keys of the Holy Sepulcher. This request too was granted by the sultan. (The *yarlyq*, brought back by the Georgian envoys (Pipa the eristavi of Ksani and the dean Ioane Bandaidze), stresses the granting of “all the requests, for the keys were given to the Georgians”. It is significant that several agapes were ordained for the services done to Jerusalem by Giorgi the Brilliant (Metreveli, 1962: 26, 126, 149, 251).

The measures taken by Giorgi the Brilliant were obviously not directly linked to the crusades (the movement was already waning), yet they were a continuation of the fight for their ideas. The retrieval of the Monastery of the Cross, mastery of the keys of the Holy Sepulcher, care for the rights not only of Georgians but of the Christian faith of other peoples again raised the authority of the kingdom of Georgia, its political prestige acquiring international scale.

4. Conclusion

The Crusades had a certain relation with Georgia from the very beginning. David IV the Builder connected the conquest of Antioch and Jerusalem by the Crusaders with the most important event in the history of Georgia – the suspension of the payment of tribute (1099) to the Seljuk Turks, and Georgia became truly independent. The Georgians and the Crusaders became allies in the fight against the Seljuk Turks. According to the Georgian sources, the army of David the Builder fought side by side with the Crusaders in Jerusalem. The Georgian King had a relationship with the King of Jerusalem. It was not accidental that European knights (Crusaders) fought in the ranks of the Georgian army in the *Battle of Didgori* (1121).

The relations with the Crusaders can be traced through the twelfth century and the first half of the thirteenth one. This relations stood out during the reign of George III (1156–1184). Taking into account the complex political situation that was in Byzantium before the conquest of Constantinople (1204), Queen Tamar (1184–1213) inducted the army along the Georgian Black Sea coast on the border of the Byzantine Empire, resulting in giving the grounding to Trabzon Empire.

Subsequent interrelations between the Kingdom of Georgia and the Crusaders [Georgians were preparing to participate in the V Crusade (1217–1221)] interfered the invasion of the Mongols.

After leaving the dominance of the Mongols, George V the Brilliant held the activities, which had no direct connection with the Crusades, however, they were the continuation of the struggle for their ideology. The tendance about the rights of Christians (not only Georgians, but also Christians of other nations) raised the political prestige of the Kingdom of Georgia and ensured the prestige in the international arena.

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УДК 93

Крестовые походы и Царство ГрузииРоин Метревели^{а, *}^а Национальная академия наук Грузии, Тбилиси, Грузия

Аннотация. Крестовые походы в значительной степени повлияли на судьбу грузинского государства. Грузинский царский двор использовал в своих интересах начинания европейцев. Давиду IV Строителю (1089–1125) хорошо были известны настоящие цели крестовых войн. Грузинский царь рассчитал политику страны на основе образовавшейся международной конъюнктуры, крестовые походы сломили мощь турков-сельджуков, что, в свою очередь, способствовало успеху в активизации освободительной войны грузинами.

На Востоке, Давида IV Строителя считали защитником христианства и, что он одновременно вёл толерантную политику по отношению к мусульманам, у него были твердые связи с мусульманским миром. Все это было обусловлено внутренней и внешней обстановкой государства. Таким образом, связь между грузинским царством и крестоносцами была вызвана определенными политическими обстоятельствами.

С крестоносцами отношения имели цари Георгий III (1156–1187), Тамар (1181–1213), Лаша-Георгий (1213–1222), Русудан (1223–1245) и другие.

В первоисточниках – письмах иностранных царей высокими почестями упоминается царь Георгий V Блистательный (1314–1346). Его именуют восхвалителем святых мест в Иерусалиме и опорой христианства. Проведенные мероприятия Георгием Блистательным не имели непосредственную связь с крестовыми походами, но представляли продолжение борьбы их идеологии. Забота о христианстве подняла авторитет Грузинского Царства и обеспечила авторитет на международной арене.

Ключевые слова: крестовые походы, Грузинское Царство, защитник христианства, святые места Иерусалима.

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