



**Reflection of one episode of Georgian history in the 14th century
Syrian chronicle – „History of Mar Yahbalaha and Bar Sauma“³²**

Gvantsa Evaniseli

PhD student at Ivane Javakhishvili State University
Tbilisi, Georgia, 0179. N1, Ilia Chavchavadze Ave.
+995 599 60 11 09. gvanca.evaniseli@tsu.ge
ORCID ID 0000-0002-1771-737X

Abstract

The Catholic Western world exhibited a heightened interest in establishing contact with unfamiliar populations following the emergence of the Mongols on the global stage. The Papal authority entertained aspirations of effecting the conversion of the Tatars to Catholic Christianity through the deployment of missionary endeavors. The Catholic Church embarked on a vigorous proselytization campaign within the Mongolian uluses. In pursuit of this objective, Georgia, distinguished by its amenable disposition toward Franciscan and Dominican missionaries, emerged as a strategically valuable foothold for this mission. Conversely, the Mongols made efforts to persuade the Papal authority of their earnestness, with the intention of forming an anti-Egyptian coalition. Following this goal, they dispatched envoys to Western regions, often including Christians, to engage in negotiations; among these envoys were the Nestorians, who had established themselves within the Tatar domain long before and propagated the heretical beliefs censured in Western Europe. Rabban

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Sauma, a notable itinerant clergyman, was among those who embarked on a journey to the Western world in the years 1287-88. He attained such a distinguished accolade not solely due to his proficient mastery of the Latin language, but also by virtue of his sanctified actions. These included a life of asceticism, enduring numerous trials, and an ardent yearning to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Together with Rabban Sauma, his disciple, the future patriarch Yahbalaha III, also embarked on the most difficult path with the desire of repentance in about 1275-77. It was within the course of this expedition that the monks arrived in Georgia, where they were informed that, notwithstanding the benevolence of the Ilkhan Khan-Abaqa, they would encounter impediments preventing them from advancing further on their journey. A chronicle attributed to an anonymous author from the first half of the 14th century documents that the monks' travel to Jerusalem was thwarted due to the presence of marauders and malefactors within the territory of Georgia. The apostasy of Samtskhe from the the Ilkhan rulers must have been a contributing factor in the situation. The resistance of Georgians must have been caused by the earthquake that happened on April 10, 1275. The latter, along with the rest of Georgia, especially affected Samtskhe. The substantial loss of life, widespread damage to infrastructure and edifices, coupled with the imposition of Mongol levies and military obligations, likely contributed analogous transformations within Georgia.

This information brought into the scientific area and its analysis is of paramount importance, because the chronicler, in his accounts, primarily addresses the political ramifications of the earthquake and notes the departure of father and son-Sargis and Beka, from allegiance to the Ilkhan rulers. The excerpt from Syrian anonymous author's chronicle, as cited in the article, serves to complement the chronicler's narrative by shedding light on the pertinent social aspects of the earthquake consequences.

Keywords: Ilkhans Khanate; Georgia; Samtskhe region; Rabban Sauma; Rabban Markos; Nestorian Christians.

Introduction

In the 20s of the 13th century, a new power emerged on the international arena in the form of the Mongols. Their military expansion caused confusion in the Christian states. Initially, pagan Tatars were even considered Christians. For example, in a letter sent to Pope Honorius III, Ivane, the general of Georgia at that time, complained that the Tatars invaded our country "armed with the cross", thus deceiving us and killing about six thousand men (Tabaghua, 1984: 178-179).

As for the Crusaders, the long-forgotten legend about John the Presbyter, got revitalized with renewed vigour. In 1221, when the enthusiasm of the knights participating in the Fifth Crusade was gradually fading, rumours got spread that David, a descendant of John the Presbyter, would come from the east to help the Crusaders and liberate the Holy Land. The widespread rumours were reflected in a letter sent by the bishop of Acre, Jacques de Vitry, to Pope Honorius III on April 18, 1221. The analysis of the letter reveals that "in the account of Jacques de Vitry, as well as other Latin chroniclers, which refer to the story of the legendary David, the stories of the Nestorian era (meaning Khan of Naimans- Kuchlug, who pursued an anti-Islamic policy after becoming the head of the Karakhatian state) and the Mongol leader are confused" (Gogoladze, Tsitlanadze, Karchava, Silagadze, 2015:313) are confused."

Following the Mongol invasion in Georgia and their subsequent expansion to Eastern Europe, the Latin world gradually commenced its acquaintance with these hitherto unfamiliar people. The Holy See, in response, dispatched missionaries to the East aiming at converting them to the fold of Catholic Christianity. Initially, the Mongols were

not interested in an alliance with the Papacy, however, after the defeat in the Ain Jalut battle, one of the Tatar uluses, in the form of the Ilkhanate, took active action to create an anti-Muslim coalition with the Latins.

Mongol diplomatic efforts proved notably efficacious in their engagement with the Holy See. Through determined endeavors, they succeeded in persuading the Papal authority of their sincerity to embrace Catholic Christianity and forge an alliance. For this purpose, they would send not a pagan, but an Orthodox Christian ambassador, sometimes even a Nestorian monk, to the West. It is plausible that the pagan Mongols did not understand the difference between the various currents of Christianity at all. Nevertheless, perhaps the Khans, in their negotiations with the Pontiffs and Latin leaders, hoped to achieve their goal more easily in this manner. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that the Khans, within their negotiations with the Pontiffs and leaders of the Latin world, aspired to expedite the realization of their objectives through this strategic approach.

The principal objective of our study is to examine a particular episode from the Western expedition undertaken by the Nestorian cleric, Rabban Sauma. Furthermore, this investigation holds relevance for the historical narrative of Georgia, offering substantial insights into the social conditions prevalent in Southern Georgia during the 1270s. Additionally, the overarching aim of this article is to delineate the challenges encountered by the Mongol forces in consolidating their dominion over the conquered regions of Georgia, with the exception of Western Georgia.

Method

In our pursuit of this inquiry, we employed the hermeneutic analysis method. The central written source under scrutiny is the biographical account authored by the traveling monk, Rabban Sauma. It is pertinent to acknowledge that this source has been preserved in a Syriac translation, and it is presented in an abbreviated format.

Consequently, the likelihood exists that certain elements may have been omitted or altered from the original text. This particular circumstance necessitates a scrupulous approach to the primary source material. As a result, alongside the hermeneutic analysis, we have also incorporated the method of critical source analysis into our research to enhance the depth of our inquiry.

Discussion

Nestorian Christians played a major role in the diplomatic and political services of the Mongols. They appeared in the 5th century for the first time, after the preaching of Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople. The doctrine asserted that through Mary, an individual in the image of Christ was born, who by divine providence later acquired the divine nature. The Third Ecumenical Council, which was held in Ephesus in 431, considered the doctrine to be heresy and condemned it. From now on, the exiled Nestorians were associated with the Persian world, since their center was located in the city of Ctesiphon. Since then, their activities had been political as well as religious, as hiding under the patronage of the main opponent of Byzantium clearly indicated the neglect of the power of the Byzantine emperor. (Foltz, 2010:61) The migration of Nestorians to the East did not prevent further spread of their doctrine. On the contrary, it can be said that the proximity to the Silk Road helped many of them to start trading activities. As a result, they could combine preaching and trade.

The Church of the East (i.e. Nestorian Church) had a missionary character. In order to preach the teachings of Nestorius, it was not considered necessary to establish monastic complexes in separate places. Accordingly, there was no need for the missionary to be a representative of any monastic order. Nestorian merchants who travelled along the Silk Road were also considered missionaries by the Eastern Church, the above-mentioned factors contributed to dissemination of the Nestorian faith in Central Asia. The fact that

missionaries could work in parallel with preaching can be considered a boost for widespread evangelization (Dickens, 2001:2).

Historian Aubrey Russell in his work discussed the area of Nestorian settlement in different periods and listed the following areas: India, China, Central Asia and Arabia (Vine, 1937:135). For the purposes of our work, it is particularly important to find out from what period the Nestorians appeared in Central Asia. As the historian Mark Dickens notes, the first missionaries appeared already during the reign of Shah Kawad I (473-531), and their work with the Hun Hephthalites, living there, was so successful that in 549 they requested the right to appoint a bishop from the patriarch of the East (Dickens, 2001: 3). Christianity spread more immensely in Central Asia a little later during the rule of Patriarch Timothy I (780-823). He sent about a hundred missionaries to the East partly on his own initiative and partly at the request of local tribes. It appears that he designated a metropolitan bishop who was located in the city of Samarkand. The full impact of the missionaries dispatched by the Patriarch of the Eastern Church will only be understood in the future, as more information regarding Christianity among the Mongols and Turks is gathered (Vine, 1937:128).

Nestorian Christianity began to spread massively in the Turko-Mongolian tribe of Keraites around 1007-1008. The Syrian scholar Abu'l-Faraj, aka Barebraya, narrates the story of the conversion of the Keraites to Christianity in a very interesting manner. The King of the Keraites, who had ventured out for a hunting expedition, found himself disoriented and unable to retrace his steps due to a snowstorm. After relentless attempts to navigate his way back, a mysterious individual suddenly appeared before him. This man conveyed to the king that if he embraced Christianity and placed his faith in it, the Lord would guide him towards salvation. The saved Keraite king questioned the Christian merchants about their faith and asked the Metropolitan of Merv to send priests to baptize him and his people

(Stewart, 1928:143-144). From this narration, apart from the fact that the Keraites accepted Christianity at the beginning of the 11th century, it is especially important for us that we identified the merchants walking on the Silk Road as missionaries once again. Thus, the fact that Nestorian proselytism was linked with trade and the Silk Road, as mentioned above, is once again confirmed by this report (Gogoladze, Tsitlanadze, Karchava, Silagadze, 2015:286).

Other tribes were also baptized from the tenth to the twelfth century, namely: Onguts, Uyghurs, Naimans, Merkits, Kangles (Dickens, 2001:9). The aforementioned tribes were brought together at the outset of the 13th century within the Turkish-Mongolian confederation established by Genghis Khan. While it is true that some of these tribes only embraced the doctrine of Nestorius in a limited manner, the unified Mongol Empire nonetheless counted a significant Christian population. This is evident from references made by Muslim historians, on one hand, and the emphasis placed by Latin authors on the substantial presence of Nestorians within the region, on the other.

Nestorians, in frequent cases, hold significant positions in Mongol Empire. For example, Kitbuqa, the commander of Ilkhan military forces in the battle of Ain Jalut, was Nestorian (Jackson, 2005:120).

As previously discussed, Nestorian Christians held a substantial influence in shaping the foreign political interactions of the Mongols. This influence was notably exemplified during the era of the itinerant monk Rabban Bar Sauma. As stated previously, the primary objective of this article is to elucidate a relatively obscure segment of the travels of the aforementioned cleric, specifically addressing the question of why he and his disciple, the future Patriarch of the Eastern Church, Yahballaha III, halted their journey from China to the Holy Land in Georgia. With this understanding in mind, we will endeavor to address the central question, specifically, what developments within Georgia

during the 1270s precipitated a situation where a portion of the country ceased to acknowledge the authority of the Ilkhan rulers?

Before discussing the main issue of the article, let's briefly touch upon the biographical information about the travelers. Rabban Sauma was born in an aristocratic Christian family in Khanbaliq. His father, Shibani, was the ruler of the church. Although residing together, the couple experienced a period of infertility, during which they earnestly implored the Lord for the blessing of a child. Their prayers were answered, and they were granted a son, whom they named Sauma. When the young boy reached an age suitable for formal education, his parents engaged a teacher and entrusted their son to his care. From that point onward, and for the duration of two decades, Sauma resided with the clergy. It was during this period that he made a resolute commitment to forsake worldly indulgences and focus his thoughts more intensely on matters of the soul and devotion to the Lord. He gave up both meat and intoxicating drinks. Their son's decision proved to be disheartening for the parents, who endeavoured to persuade him to reconsider. They reminded him that by choosing the path of a monk, their wealth would remain without an heir, or it might be seized by outsiders. To appease his parents, Sauma gave up on his decision, but did not mean it. Three years later, in defiance of opposition, he took the tonsure and embraced monastic life, generously bestowing his wealth upon the impoverished. With a fervent desire to strengthen his faith through asceticism, he journeyed from Khanbaliq to the mountains, eventually discovering an isolated place. The account of his unwavering faith and renunciation of worldly pleasures quickly spread to the neighboring regions. Individuals gathered around him, seeking to listen to his teachings (Borbone, 2021:59-65). Notably, Rabban Marcos, who would later become a patriarch and accompany him on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, was one of those who held admiration for Sauma's character and dedication to asceticism.

As for the companion of Rabban Bar Sauma, the future Patriarch Mar Yahballaha, also known as Rabban Marcos, was born in 1245 in the city of Koshang. It is true that his ethnicity is not entirely clear to historians, although the story written by a companion entitled: "The Story of Mar Yahballahas and Bar Sauma" still provides scant biographical information about the future patriarch (Borbone, 2008:222). Yahballaha was born into the household of a Nestorian clergyman. From his earliest years, he stood out among his siblings for his ardent pursuit of education, religious vocation, and ecclesiastical pursuits. His journey toward becoming the disciple of his spiritual mentor, Rabban Sauma, was marked by a challenging and transformative path. Rabban Sauma, from the outset, cautioned Marcos that the path to monastic life would be arduous. Following three years of living an ascetic, altruistic existence, and dedicating himself to teaching, he underwent the tonsure, signifying his consecration as a priest (Borbone, 2021:67).

Their collective decision was to embark on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with the aim of seeking complete absolution of their transgressions and sins. As they made preparations for their joint journey, it became imperative for them to secure a "firman," a type of official pass, from the paramount Mongol authority, allowing them safe passage along the perilous routes. At this juncture, the expansive Mongol Empire had become disunited, fragmented into numerous small entities known as uluses. Crossing the borders between these uluses posed significant risks for travellers. The primary source document underscores several of these challenges faced by the Nestorian travellers. In the following discussion, we will provide a succinct overview of each, with particular attention reserved for the final one due to its critical importance in the history of Georgia:

The journey to the Holy Land was expensive not only for Western, but also for Eastern pilgrims. In addition to food and clothing, it was necessary for the travellers to change livestock (horses,

mules), a place to spend the night, and people who knew the way to Jerusalem. The necessities listed above required a lot of money, which monks, living a poor and ascetic life, did not have. It is also worth noting the fact that before the trip, the ignorant clerics distributed the property they used in their daily life to the poor. Kublai Khan (1259-1294) took a duty to cover the expenses. The latter gave the traveling monks cattle, gold and silver and valuable textiles for moving on (Borbone, 2021:71.73).

The Silk Road, while regaining significance after the emergence of the Mongols, continued to pose risks to travellers. The predominant factors contributing to its perilous nature included the sparse population and desolation in these regions. This recurring theme is extensively documented in the biographical accounts of traveling monks. For example, in one episode, the author notes: "*From there they reached Khotan, after two months of struggle and hardship in that arid steppe. Nobody lives there because of its bitter water; nothing can be sown there and along the entire way there are only about eight days during which drinking water provisions can be found*" (Borbone, 2021: 73). (Rossabi, 2010: 52). Such difficulties would probably have been encountered by clergymen coming from distant Asia. Nevertheless, none of them stopped their advance towards Jerusalem.

Another significant factor to bear in mind is that the Mongol state had lost its unity, with the once vast empire fracturing into multiple substantial segments. The tension within individual units did not subside. The journey of Bar Sauma and Bar Marcos gives us information about one of these conflicts. In 1269, Khaidu (ca. 1230-1301), a cousin of Kublai Khan, rebelled against him. The fight between them over Turkestan lasted for decades. In 1271, the great Khan sent his own son, Nomukhan, to end the conflict, but the latter was defeated and was captured by Khaidu. Considering the circumstances, traveling via the Silk Road happened to be dangerous not only for merchants, but for monks too. Indeed, the internal upheavals

within the empire necessitated a temporary halt in the clerics' journey, spanning six months. Nevertheless, they remained steadfast in their determination to fulfil their pilgrimage to the Holy Land (Borbone, 2021:73-75) (Rossabi, 2010:55).

After addressing the aforementioned matters, we shall now proceed to examine the problem that impeded the clergy's journey to Jerusalem. In order to thoroughly delve into this specific section, we shall present the quotation from the original source in full: "...they [Rabban Sauma and Bar Marcos -G.E.] left in the company of others, heading for Jerusalem. When they reached the town of Ani, they stopped over and visited the convents and monasteries there, bewildered by the imposing and beautiful buildings. Thence they entered Georgia, where the route was supposedly easier; But upon arrival, the people informed them that the road had been closed due to some robberies and murders that had taken place" (Borbone, 2021: 79). Having realized this passage, a chain of logical questions appears. In particular, why the clergy could not proceed? Was there a threat of robbers and murders along the way? Why didn't the orders issued by the Ilkhanate apply in Georgia? And what event could have caused the increase of robbers and murderers in Georgia?

During the course of our research on this traveller, we encountered several scholarly works, such as Sir Wallis Budge's "The Monks of Kublai Khan Emperor of China" (Budge, 1928), Pier Giorgio Borbone's "A 13th Century Journey from China to Europe: The Story of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sauma" (Borbone, 2008), Wilhelm Baum's "The Church of the East: A Concise History" (Baum, 2003) and numerous others. Nonetheless, in the majority of these works, a comprehensive explanation for the interruption of the journey to Georgia proved elusive. One of the exceptions to this is the Austrian historian and theologian Wilhelm Baum, who, in his research, elucidates that the delay in the journey was due to the confrontation between the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde (Baum, 2003:95). We do

not share his view. We will try to understand the reason why it was impossible for Bar Sauma and Rabban Markos to continue the journey.

The mentioned trip must be dated by 1274-1277 (Baum, 2003: 94). After getting acquainted with the relations between the Ilkhans and the Golden Horde during this period, we can confidently state that we do not see any active military confrontation between them, especially on the territory of Georgia (Morgan, 1995:86-91). Rashid ad-Din noted that after Berke's death (1266), the Golden Horde was forced to make peace with Abaqa Khan. According to the same author, the peace with the Ilkhans was maintained until 1288 and was broken by the attack of the Golden Horde (Morgan, 1995:89). In the 1270-80s, the Golden Horde was more focused on establishing diplomatic ties with Baybars, the ruler of the Egypt Sultanate, and his successors, than on organizing active military campaigns against the Ilkhans (Morgan, 1995:89-90). Therefore, we believe that Wilhelm Baum's statement is false and the expedition to Jerusalem must have been interrupted for another reason. The fact that the Nestorian monks moved to the territory controlled by the Ilkhans without any problems makes us think that they had the full support of the people. Perhaps that is why the author of the biography noted that Georgia should have been an easier place for pilgrims. It is true that officially Georgia was under the rule of the Mongols, however, it seems that it did not completely obey them. An important and reasoned factor to consider here is which part rebelled against the Mongols and why?

We know that in 1249 the united Georgia was divided into two parts. Researcher Mikheil Bakhtadze made a fairly reasonable assumption regarding the fact that the division of the country, in addition to the division of treasury, was followed by the formation of a new apparatus of state administration in Western Georgia (Bakhtadze, 2011:46-52). All this was accompanied by a change in foreign policy. David Narin, who did not obey the Ilkhans, tried to establish a connection with the Sultanate of Egypt, which was the main rival of

the Hulaguyan state in the west. On the other hand, Eastern Georgia, which was under the yoke of the Ilkhans, chose to ally with them and the Latins in order to liberate the Holy Land (Evaniseli, 2019:87-88). It is plausible that the monks encountered such a complicated situation in Western Georgia, however, there is one important circumstance to consider here. In particular, the clergy follow the already existing and well-trodden Silk Road throughout their journey. Then, it is not clear why, according to the author's note, Western Georgia, departed from the Mongol rule, should have been a safe route, which did not intersect with the Silk Road. Thus, their visit to Western Georgia is less probable. There were two political units left: Samtskhe Saatabago, which was separated from the unified Georgia in 1266 (Bakhtadze, 2008:25), and Eastern Georgia.

At that time, Demetre II reigned in Eastern Georgia, whose policy was governed by Sadun of Mankaberd, who was close to the Mongols, until his death. Since the latter was promoted by the Ilkhan Khans, it should not be in his interest to go against them. Moreover, during this period, Eastern Georgia's opposition against the Mongols is not visible neither in the Georgian original sources nor anywhere else.

Samtsakhe- Saatabago was the only political unit, declared as Khasinju in 1266. Although it did not avoid the service of the Mongols, sometimes would rebel against them (Bakhtadze, 2008:26). An illustrative instance of such a rebellion is also chronicled in the "Hundred-Year Chronicle," which states: "At that time, Sargis and his son, Beka, confronted the Tatars..." (Chronicler, 1987:168) (Bakhtadze, 2008:26-27). We will return to this quote later and discuss it further.

During the same period, we came across with an intriguing piece of information that, in our estimation, could shed light on the reason for the suspension of the clergy journey upon coming to Georgia. Or, more precisely what caused the mentioned robbery and homicide by the population. As the Chronicler narrates: *"The land did shake mightily, a manifest sign of our transgressions. Once more, on a*

Thursday, a lesser quake occurred, yet none thought to implore the merciful God's grace. And as Friday dawned, the earth quivered anew, but soon stilled. And as the Sabbath drew near, the people did intend to revel in the Lord's impending resurrection, but the Lord, in response to the multitude of our injustices, did unleash His wrath upon the earth, causing it to shake entirely to its very foundations" (The Chronicler, 1987:167). As the given quote shows, after three small earthquakes Georgia was hit by a major one. Here the author notes that the earthquake especially affected the Samtskhe region: *"This direful wrath smote Samtskhe most grievously, while other places remained unscathed. Even Mtskheta's temple lay in ruins. Countless souls met their demise in Samtskhe, and no sanctuary, chapel, nor fortress escaped unscathed; a great wailing and lamentation did ensue."* (The Chronicler, 1987:168) Such a heavy blow must have complicated the situation in the country. The earthquake in Samtskhe would not only cause the death of many people and the destruction of churches and monasteries, but also seriously damage the houses and surroundings of ordinary people. It would leave them homeless and without income. "Wrath of God" would probably contribute to the panic and the expulsion of the population, which would further reduce its economic base - the solvent population and labour force.

We believe that the factors enumerated above may have provided conducive conditions for acts of theft and burglary by individuals facing hunger and homelessness. The presence of trade routes in Samtskhe would have presented opportunities for these activities. Additionally, the imposition of Mongol taxes likely imposed a significant burden on the afflicted populace. Also, the intemperance was quite frequent on the part of these tax collectors. Samtskhe, in addition to paying taxes to the ulus of Ilkhans, also had military obligations. The numerically reduced country might not be able to provide the military contingent requested by the Khans, which would cause the dissatisfaction of the latter.

We think that this should be the expression of the above-mentioned dissatisfaction and rebellion on the part of father and son, Sargis and Beka Jakeli. It can be seen from the above quote that the chronicler does not mention the specific reason for the rebellion of the rulers of Samtskhe. He only notes that "*They stood up against the Tatars for the issue*", but he does not specify the issue. It is significant that in the hundred-year chronicle, the Jakeli rebellion follows the discussion of the earthquake episode, which speaks in favour of our assumption. The brutality of the Mongols and their imposition of the heaviest military obligations repeatedly must have become the cause of the Georgian rebellion.³³

The earthquake in Georgia must have happened on April 10, 1275, and the uprising of Sargis and Beka Jakeli against the Khan must have happened later. This period coincides with the arrival of traveling clerics in Georgia. Presumably, they had to enter Samtskhe from the city of Anis of Armenia, where the consequences of the earthquake made the road dangerous for them. The clerics knew very well that it would be even more dangerous for them to pass through the southern route, because the Security Warrant of none of the Mongol rulers - neither Kublai the Great Khan nor Abaqa, was valid there. These territories have long been the arena of conflict between the Ilkhans and the Mamluks. Accordingly, the journey of Rabban Bar Sauma and Bar Markos to Jerusalem ended with their arrival in Georgia. As we have seen from the above quote, the chronicler only talks about the human victims and destroyed buildings caused by the powerful earthquake in Samtskhe. Unfortunately, he does not say anything about the ways Georgians applied to survive this countless loss.

While speaking about the consequences of the earthquake, the chronicler only mentions a political outcome, according to which the

³³ We can provide Davit Ulu rebellion as an example. He refused to send the army for the Egypt military campaign and named Georgians' harassment and insult by the Mongol clerks as a reason. (The Chronicler, 1987, pp.120-121).

Jakelis confronted the Ilkhans. The biography of the Nestorian monks more or less fills the gap and additionally tells us that the earthquake resulted in and was followed by looting and murders in South Georgia. In addition, the original source confirms the information of the chronicler about the apostasy of Samtsakhe, because it is clear that the patronage of the Ilkhans did not apply to the monks in South Georgia.

Conclusion

The anonymous author's text on the travel of Rabban Sauma and Rabban Markos is a significant source for studying the situation in southern Georgia in the 70s of the 13th century. We can conclude that robbery and murder started in Samtskhe to escape the difficulties caused by the earthquake of 1275. As a result of great human sacrifice and destruction, it became difficult to obey the Ilkhans, so Sargis and Beka Jakelis confronted the Mongols. Therefore, despite the support of Abaqa Khan, the monks going to Jerusalem could not pass through the territory of Georgia. Nevertheless, Rabban Sauma travelled to Europe in 1287-88. His ambassadorship to the West proved to be so important that the historian Morris Rossabi even compared him to Marco Polo based on the route he had undertaken.

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