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Tamta Mqargrdzeli on the horizon of relations between the Sultanate of Akhlat and the Mongol states in the 13th century

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to elucidate the relationship between the Turkish Sultanate of Akhlat, the neighbouring Mongol state and the Kingdom of Georgia, as well as we want to clearly demonstrate the role of Tamta Mqargrdzeli in the domestic and foreign policy of the neighbouring state. The article will contribute to the description of the domestic political situation in the Akhlat Sultanate at the beginning of the 13th century and will outline the relationship of the local government with both neighbouring Christian states (referring the Georgian Kingdom) and the leaders of the Mongol states invading from Central Asia. Therefore, our intension is to illuminate the role of Tamta Mqargrdzeli as a mediator in the process of operational conduct and maintenance of diplomatic relations. From the perspective of state

interests, a description of Tamta's role as the temporary governor of the Akhlat Sultanate, left without leadership, and her activities as a diplomat. In the 13th century, the personality of Tamta Mqargrzelis was clearly associated with diplomatic relations between the Georgian Kingdom and surrounding Muslim states. The topic of the research presents the role of Georgians in the contiguous Akhlat Sultanate and Mongol states, describes their contribution and significance. This issue has not been sufficiently studied in Georgian historical sources and papers. A specific study will contribute to the description of the history of the medieval Middle East and clearly highlight the role of Georgians (referring the role of women and their position) in determining the strategically vital domestic and foreign policies of adjacent countries. The study will restore the historical perspectives that arose in the diplomatic and military-political relations of Georgia with the neighbouring Turkic-Mongol states of the 13th century and will represent compelling illustration in the analysis and development of these processes.

Keywords: Diplomatic Marriage; Culture; Power; Religion; Politics.

Introduction

Dynastic marriages represent one of the characteristics of medieval society. They created the opportunity for people with different political structures, similar or varied religions, cultures and borders to come together and establish close relationships that would bring them both a better and durable future. In numerous instances, diplomatic marriages were considered a key condition for the foreign policy and influence of a state, through which it was possible to regulate and enhance political, military and diplomatic relations with neighbouring states.

There is a paucity of historical sources concerning Tamta Mqargrzel. Our goal is to study the activities of Tamta Mqargrzel from a political, military and diplomatic point of view, based on the Eastern sources of the 13th century. We will bring back the historical perspectives that arose in the diplomatic relations of Georgia with the neighbouring Turkic-Mongol states of the 13th century (which we will, of course, be able to study based on historical sources). We will determine the main aspects of Tamta Mqargrzel's captivity in the Akhlat Sultanate, the study of which will enable us to reconstruct the unfamiliar aspects of her life. The study will be innovative in terms of describing and developing external relations between the Georgian royal court and the Turkish Sultanate of Akhlat, especially in terms of presenting the life of Tamta Mqargrzel as a politician, diplomat and Christian. In terms of novelty, the study well conveys the history of the rise of other royal women in the Mongol state of the Ilkhanate, in addition to Tamta Mqargrzel, and a comparative analysis of their life paths with Tamta Mqargrzel. The abovementioned will enhance the value of the study from a gender perspective.

In addition, the novelty of the study is the description of the economic situation of the population of the Akhlat Sultanate and its representation in the era of the Mongol conquests.

Hypothesis

Diplomatic marriages of the Georgian royal court were the primary focus of the foreign policy of the Georgian kingdom.

Methods

The main direction of the research paper will be the method of typological processing of historical sources (primary and secondary sources, scientific papers and articles), classification of sources and their processing. Qualitative method will be selected as a research direction. Namely: after searching and studying the sources, their reliab-

ility and interrelation will be determined, and then the direction of the research topic will be determined. We will try to indicate similar, homogeneous and different opinions on the main topic, analyse them, compare and formulate a conclusive opinion.

Results

Based on the finding, it should be said that at first, Tamta Mqargzeli had difficulty establishing herself in the royal family of the Akhlat Sultanate, but gradually Tamta increased her influence and strengthened the local Christian population and communities, becoming their protector. According to the Georgian and Foreign researchers: G. Japaridze, T. Alsen, R. Hampri, V. Minorsky, A. Vardanyan, I. Auge, A. Eastmond, H. Conrad and B. De Nicola, Tamta's contribution to the lives of Christians living in the Akhlat Sultanate, local monasteries and Christian pilgrims is vital. She supported the protection of Christian churches and monasteries and, by caring for them, contributed to the strengthening and expansion of Christian centers in the Islamic Akhlat Sultanate located outside the Christian world. Tamta participated in diplomatic relations between the Akhlat Sultanate and the Mongols. By the end of her life, she had acquired substantial influence and figured in the negotiations between the Turkic-Mongol states. Tamta Mqargzeli, on her own initiative, minted coins in the Akhlat Sultanate, was engaged in tax and fiscal policy, with the support of the Mongols, further strengthened her power in the eyes of the population of the Akhlat Sultanate, in fact, she occupied the position of an undisputed ruler, which indicates her wide-ranging capabilities, influence and achievements. Amidst the geopolitical cataclysms and events of the 13th century, despite the obstacles Tamta Mqargzeli managed to maintain stable, beneficial relations with the rulers of the Georgian Kingdom and the Mongol Empire from the Akhlat Sultanate, as well as increase her own prestige and influence.

All this clearly indicates a positive acceptance of gender policy in the Mongolian state of the Ilkhanate, along with the fundamental increase in the role and importance of women (for example, Toghuz-Hatun, Terken-Hatun, etc.).

Discussion

At the beginning of the 13th century, in 1208-1210, Ivan Mqargrdzeli, the atabag and amirspasalar of the kingdom of Georgia, was captured by the sultan of Akhlat. In order to avoid captivity, Ivan Atabag gave his daughter Tamta in marriage to the sultan. Little information about this story has been preserved in Armenian and Persian historical sources of the 13th century, as follows: R. Bedrossian (1986), Kirakos Gandzaketsi's History of the Armenians, N. Shoshiashvili (1961), Grigol Akaneli, "Historia populi sagittariorum", R. Kiknadze (1974), "Juvayni's narrative on Georgia". However, the mentioned historians: Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Grigol Akaneli and Ala al-Din Ata-Malik Juvayni describe in detail the military-political and strategic relations of the mentioned era, the Georgian Kingdom, Armenia, the Akhlat Sultanate and the Turkic-Mongol peoples of Western Asia. In modern historiography, variety of authors write about the personality of Tamta Mqargrdzeli (for instance, "Georgia and the Islamic World of the Middle East in the First Third of the 12th-13th Centuries" by Gocha Japaridze, "Tamta's World", "The Life And Encounters Of A Medieval Noblewoman From The Middle East To Mongolia"-Antony Eastmond, etc.). It is appropriate to turn to the sources and describe the political situation that arose after the capture of Ivan Mqargrdzeli in the Akhlat Sultanate. According to the above-mentioned monograph by Gocha Japaridze: "It is usually stated that the astrologer predicted in the morning to Ivan (whom Arab sources also called Malik of Georgians) that he would enter the palace at approximately the time of the call to prayer (Azan al-Asr), spend the night in the

palace and sit on the palace throne, although not in the clothes that he was wearing. Delighted by this prophecy, he drank wine, encouraged, set out with twenty horsemen to Akhlat gate of Archesh. Suddenly his horse stumbled. According to some sources, the horse's leg fell into a hole specially dug and camouflaged by the Akhlatians, or the incident occurred on a bridge that the Akhlatians deliberately broke" (Japaridze, 1995, p. 168). The story is dated to 1210, when the commander of the Georgian-Armenian Christian army, Ivan Mqargrdzeli, was captured by the Muslim guardians of Akhlat in a prison on the north-western shore of Lake Van, which now belongs to eastern Turkey.

The Ayyubid Sultan Saladin failed to subjugate Akhlat, but it played crucial role in the aggressive plans of his successors. As a result, "the only point of direct contact between Georgia and the Ayyubids was the country of Akhlat, and the main object of rivalry was Akhlat itself" (Guchua, Anjaparidze, 1979:345).

Ivan's capture was a great and unexpected gift for the Ayyubids. Al-Awhad no longer had any hope of saving Akhlat. Sultan Al-Adil was busy with the war with the Crusaders and was unable to help his son (Abu-Shama, 1974:169). Currently the situation suddenly changed. The Sultan ordered the Georgian commander to be brought to him, but Zakaria Mqargrdzeli intervened and threatened the Akhlatians: "If you do not release my brother, your destruction is inevitable. I shall seize your territory from Georgia and lay waste to this land, rendering it a barren desert." The frightened Akhlatians no longer sent Ivan to Al-Adil (Khanlaryan, 1976:119). Al-Awhad summoned Georgian representatives to assure them of Ivane Mqargrdzeli's safety and demanded that the Georgians leave Akhlat (Abu-Shama, 1974:170). The capture of Ivan Mqargrdzeli had a great impact on the life of his daughter Tamta during the succeeding years. Tamta,

throughout Ivan Atabag's diplomatic negotiations with the Sultan of Akhlat, became the Sultan's reward when the latter forcibly married Tamta as a ransom in exchange for Ivan's release from captivity. Tamta married to Al-Awhad, the ruler of Akhlat, a nephew of the Ayyubid Sultan Saladin.

The role of women in the Middle Ages is underrepresented in historiography. Nevertheless, Tamta Mkhargrzelis's small participation in the study of historical sources provides enough information to convey the history of women.

Initially, Tamta's fate in the Akhlat Sultanate was considerably challenging. Ivan Mqargrdzeli ransom was indeed very high: „the Georgians swore a thirty-year peace that they would not start a new war against the Muslims in the south, that they would return the captured fortresses, that they would release 2 or 5 thousand Muslim captives, that they would hand over 21 fortresses to the Sultan of Akhlat, and that they would pay 100 thousand dinars (according to other sources, 80 or 200 thousand dinars)” (Abu'l-F'ed'a, 1872:85) (Abu-Shama, 1974: 75). The final demand was to marry Tamta to the Sultan Al-Awhad, which was the most expensive ransom.

In the 12th century, the city of Akhlat represented an independent Turkish emirate and was ruled by a Muslim emir who granted him the title of Shah-Armenian (King of the Armenians). However, the city was in the grip of internal conflict even before Ivan Mqargrdzeli was captured. The last representative of the Shah-Armenian dynasty, an unnamed son of Beg Temur, forcibly evicted the locals from the city.

Tamta's arrival in Akhlat coincided with the arrival of a new force in Anatolia and the Caucasus. From the east came the Khwarezmians, people of Turkic-Persian origin from Central and East Asia who had settled in the southern region of the Aral Sea (modern Tur-

kmenistan and Uzbekistan). The first phase of the Mongol expansion in 1220–21 forced them to retreat west, where the Khwarezmian Shah Jalal al-Din Mangburni had established his kingdom (in Iran, Azerbaijan, and the Caucasus). The Khorezmshah's invasion of eastern Anatolia began in 1225, when Jalal al-Din set out from Tabriz. This invasion worsened Tamta's position. In 1225, Jalal al-Din defeated the army of the Georgian Kingdom at the Battle of Garni. Subsequently, the Khorezmshah managed to seize power and dominate the South Caucasus. Ivan underestimated the Sultan's forces, and the enemy's numbers prevailed. According to the Georgian chronicler, Ivan Mqargrdzeli did not support the army of the brothers Shalva and Ivan Akhaltsikheli, who commanded the vanguard of the Georgians, and that is why the army of the Georgian kingdom was defeated and destroyed.

Tamta Mqargrdzeli's contribution in the Akhlat Sultanate were characterized by frequent shifts. In 1225 Tamta was considered the commander of the fortress of Aliabad; „this is the city through which Jalal al-Din passed and saved his forces by avoiding taking the fortress, as his goal was to capture the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi” (Kiknadze, 1974:30) (Boyle, 1958: 430-431). The fortress was probably located near the borders of modern Armenia and Azerbaijan (Kiknadze, 1974:31). During this period Tamta was still busy with the political affairs of his family in Armenia. On 14 April 1230, she was still in Akhlat when the city was finally captured by Jalal ad-Din. It took three or more years to capture the city after his first attempt in November 1226, when Hajib Husayn ad-Din Ali repelled his attack. The siege was long and brutal: “The people of Akhlat ate sheep, then cattle, oxen, horses, donkeys, mules, dogs and cats. They caught and ate rats” (Richards, 2005:298). The defenders of the Khlat Sultanate

showed determination like no other. Jalal ad-Din attacked Khlat with armoured vehicles and inflicted extensive destruction on the city.

After 1230-1231, the Mongol invasions ceased for 6 years, after which they resumed with renewed vigor. The six-year period of peace in the Akhlat Sultanate was again replaced by hostility, local conflicts resumed. For that time, the city was captured by the Seljuk Sultan Keykubad I, his Parwan (chief minister) Kamyar soon after the death of Jalal ad-Din became the owner of the Akhlat Sultanate.

In 1229, after the death of Sultan Al-Muazzam's brother, al-Ashraf successfully captured Damascus, the religious centre of the Ayyubid dynasty. He had received the city from Sultan Al-Muazzam's successor, An-Nasir Dawud, but he had to yield his territories in Jazira to maintain the power of his family as a whole (Humphreys, 1977:193). He continued to control Akhlat, but the area was isolated from his main stronghold, and al-Ashraf had no chance of recapturing it after the city fell to the Seljuk Turks. From this point until his death in 1237, the Sultan of Akhlat's power was focused in the Syrian capital.

According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Tamta actively interfered in the internal politics of the Akhlat Sultanate. She reduced taxes and expressed support for pilgrims. During this period, Tamta had a certain influence and superiority in the eyes of the population living in Akhlat (Bedrossyan, 1986:46). Local Muslims ordered their subjects not to rob or oppress travelers heading to Jerusalem, which was largely due to the power and influence of Tamta Mqargrdzeli. Tamta's appointment to Akhlat as the Sultan's personal representative was the result of Al-Ashraf's wise policy. She could act as a mediator in regulating relations between Christians and Muslims.

In the 1220s, Husam ad-Din Ali, al-Ashraf's treasurer, was appointed governor of Akhlat (Ward, 2004:345). Although Hajib was loyal and successful in defending the city of Akhlat during the Khw-

arezmian's invasions between 1226 and 1229, he broke rudely with the Ayyubid clan. In 1229, before ad-Din Ali could take Damascus, the sultan ordered his execution. Contemporary histories of the era inform us that this decision was unexpected and that Husam ad-Din's loyalty to the sultan was indisputable. Whatever the true reason for treasurer's punishment, it is foreseeable that Sultan of Akhlat saw him as a threat in his power struggle, and this may be why the Ayyubids eliminated their loyal treasurer (Humphreys, 1977:216).

The circumstances of Tamta's capture by the Mongols are coherent, even though she was apparently still with her brother Avag in the fortress of Khachen in northern Armenia. It is less convincing that Tamta Mqargrdzeli was still in Akhlat when she was captured by the Mongols in 1245. In 1236, the fortress of Khachen was besieged by the Mongol general Chormaqan, who had returned to the Caucasus, but now with a much larger and more powerful army. He was constantly on the move to conquer the region. Avag could not withstand the siege and quickly surrendered to the Mongols, handing over his sister. Tamta was captured again.

From this time on, a new period began in the life of Tamta Mqargrdzeli. Chormagan Noyn sent her to the central region of Karakorum, located 5,000 km away in the Asian steppes. Tamta Mqargrdzeli found herself at the court of the Mongol Khan when power in the Akhlat Sultanate finally changed. On July 3, 1243, in the Battle of Köse Dag, the Seljuks, Georgians and Armenians suffered a complete defeat at the hands of the Mongols. Consequently, the Mongols took over the Seljuk government structure for several years and appointed puppet sultans there. The Mongols entirely controlled the Seljuk cities.

After 9 years, Tamta returned to Akhlat, where she encountered a different political system. Historical sources do not contain

information about Tamta's journey to Mongolia, but we know that she was there at that time, since the new king of Georgia, Rusudan, demanded her return. She sent the great Hamadollah as an ambassador to the central Mongol kingdom. When the ambassador returned, Hamadollah demanded from the khan to return Tamta. Tamta was sent back under the escort of the ambassador by the Mongol ruler (Bedrossyan, 1986: 145). Tamta Mqargrdzeli, as the wife of Al Malik-Al Ashraf, was sent back to Akhlat. By order of the khan, Akhlati and the surrounding territories were transferred to Tamta.

The Georgian King Rusudan was inspired to return Tamta by Avag Mqargrdzeli, who was already the atabeg of the Georgian kingdom and commanded the Georgian troops in the first decade of the Mongol invasion. Tamta's life changed completely; she returned to Akhlat after several decades as a ruler. Tamta, as an independent political figure, ruled the city on behalf of the Mongol rulers. In her rank, she was equal to the king of Georgia, the emperor of Trebizond, the Seljuk sultan and the rulers of other neighboring countries. After a long break, Tamta returned to the politics of Anatolia and the Caucasus. Tamta Mqargrdzeli had influence in Akhlati until her death around 1254. The Mongols confirmed Tamta's status and position in Akhlat, but in recent years, people considered vassals of the Mongols had a hard time. The repressive policies of the Mongols were hard on the local population. Hence, Tamta's position and rank became completely unacceptable and unpopular in the eyes of the local population: if Tamta had previously been known as a tax reducer, now she had to fulfill the enslaving demands of the Mongols to collect money, goods and tribute.

In the course of the Mongol invasion, Georgian and Armenian nobles eventually became vassals of the Mongols, responsible for maintaining order in their lands and collecting taxes. These taxes were

based on Mongol censuses, although they were able to quickly establish control over these territories. The census was conducted in the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum immediately after its capture in 1243, succeeded by a second main description. According to the 13th-century Armenian historian Grigor Aknertsi, “The conquerors received 60 tetri from each registered man. Anyone who refused to pay the tribute would be severely punished and then fed alive to their dogs” (Shoshiashvili, 1961:127). Grigor Aknertsi dates the Mongol census one or two years after the appearance of the locusts (e.g. 1252-1253). Vartan dates the census to 1253, while Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Stefanos Orbeliani, Anonymous Sebastian and Stephanos Bishop date it to 1254. According to the history of the *populi sagittariorum* (tribes of archers), each man was obliged to pay 60 *spitak* (aspers); Anyone who refused to pay the tribute would be severely punished and then fed alive to their dogs”. The severity of this tax has been compared to the devastation caused by a plague of locusts. According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi: “In 701-702 (1252-1253) locusts entered the Armenian lands from Persia and devoured all the peoples, and God sent birds that devoured the locusts” (Shoshiashvili, 1961:128). By order of Hulegu Khan, taxes were increased.

Local rulers had to establish the mints for tax collection purposes. Tamta Mqargrdzeli was captured by the Mongols from Akhlat, probably between 1236 and 1240, and taken to the heart of the khannate, a province of Karakorum. She was held captive for between 5 and 9 years. We believe that Tamta Mqargrdzeli's years at the court of the Mongol Khan were spent against the backdrop of the difficult and gruelling trials that the Mongols began to experience after the latter took her away from the Akhlat Sultanate. It is hard to talk about Tamta's relationship with the local Mongol political elite, since Tamta spent part of her time working with nomadic peoples during this new

period of her life, and it is likely that she learned and assimilated many new things in politics and diplomacy. Coins minted in the Akhlat Sultanate from 1245 onwards indicates that minting became a serious issue after Tamta returned to the city. She minted a coin depicting a warrior on horseback with a bow and arrow on the reverse. A number of Arabic inscriptions mention their Mongol overlord and praise Allah (Vardanyan, 2007:191).

Local rulers, including Tamta, were charged with collecting taxes in the Akhlat Sultanate. Their job was to collect money and goods and ensure that they were handed over to the Mongols. Consequently, the conflict between the nobles and the Akhlat chief eliminated. We are of the opinion that if many years had passed since Tamta's absence from Akhlat, upon her return she could have once again approached the people whom she ruled as a Christian. Tamta could have maintained harmonious and close relations with them in keeping with past practice, and thus acted as a mediator between the local Christians and the Muslim rulers. Nevertheless, the local nobles now demanded the opposite from Tamta Mqargrdzeli and made an effort to displace Tamta from the throne. The people realized that many nobles were trying to take advantage of the opportunity to get rich. Kirakos Gandzaketsi, unable to reconcile himself to the existing circumstances, he wrote: "Moreover, the rulers and governors of the districts collaborated with the Mongols and collaboratively oppressed the local population for their own benefit" (Bedrossyan, 1986:175). The nobility gathered taxes for their own survival prior to the Mongols' imposition of taxes, consequently the increased level of taxation clearly demonstrated their personal gain.

In the 13th century, the Mongols' taxation of the population was not a one-sided occurrence. Tax collection was the sole method of acquiring economic wealth. In respect to all these, the initial conq-

uests of Armenia by the invaders ended in the late 1230s. The Mongols began to rebuild the society they had recently destroyed due to support their economy with the taxes they had imposed. After the sack of Anis and Kars, the survivors (and escaped capturing) were allowed to return to rebuild their fortresses, villages, and towns. Notwithstanding, they no longer had clothing, houses to live in, or oxen to plough the land. Fortunately, they had a mild winter and enough wild grain to last them until the following spring (Shoshiashvili, 1961:129).

Tamta returned to the political life of Georgia and Armenia subsequent to the Mongol invasion. Since decades spent in captivity. During these years, she lived mainly in Akhlat and was allied to large sections of the Armenian population, but Tamta's active role in the politics of her native Georgian kingdom is vague. In the twilight of her life, Tamta Mqargrdzeli returned to Akhlat as the Mongol governor of the local region and became more actively involved in the internal politics of Akhlat. Throughout her life, Tamta had the opportunity to intervene in the governance of the Georgian state again, although her status and gender did not allow her to do so. In order to avoid this, she needed to find support, namely a man. As claimed by Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Tamta Mqargrdzeli found a promising candidate: her brother Avag's illegitimate son. Avag had no direct descendant entitled to inherit: he had a daughter, Khuashak, with his wife Gontsa (in Georgian, Gvantsa; she was a noblewoman from the Kakhaberidze family from Racha, in western Georgia), but he had an illegitimate son with another woman, unknown to her (Antelava, Shoshiashvili, 1996:351). Avag passed away in 1250 and was buried in Akhtala next to his father, Ivan Mqargrdzeli. However, his estate was confiscated and given to his cousin Zakaria Mqargrdzeli. Tamta took her nephew - an illegitimate child - to be brought up in Akhlat (Conrad,

2012:173). Presumably, he hoped that he would eventually inherit Avagi's lands, just as George IV's illegitimate son, under Mongol suzerainty, David VII Ulu was placed on the Georgian throne through the influence of Avag. Tamta Mqargrzelis was a strong candidate to dispel the rumours that circulated at the royal court about Avag's son after his death. The son was, in fact, Avag Mqargrdzelis legitimate heir. Ultimately, Tamta's aspirations were thwarted by the emergence of a rival who, like her, harbored significant ambitions: her sister-in-law Gvantsa, the widow of Avag. After Avag's death, Gvantsa was dispossessed of Avag's ancestral lands, and despite the lack of a male heir, Gvantsa was still able to compete for power. She succeeded in reclaiming Avag's inheritance from the lands of Zakaria Mqargrdzelis and took control over these territories; (Aug'e,2012:173).

Tamta's return as ruler of Akhlat facilitated the political involvement of her niece Khuashak, and consequently elevated the political status of Gvantsa, the widow of the demised Avag Mkhargrdzelis - developments that exemplify significant changes in gender politics in the post-Mongol conquest period (Eastmond, 2018:380). A partial explanation lies in the different attitudes of the Mongols towards women and power. The change is visible not only at a general level, but also in the specific circumstances of Tamta's liberation. The traditions of the Mongol cultural world accorded women a much higher status and, therefore, independent power (in comparison to the royal women of the Mongol-conquered lands). Women who entered into marriage with members of Genghis Khan's (Chinggis Khan) family - along with their kin - were distinguished by the considerable rights they possessed. Each organized their own ordo (court), they had wealth: many tents, they travelled with as many as two hundred carts, some of which required twenty-two oxen (Kikodze, 1942:154). Women managed their property and were engaged in trade. After their death, all

this was transferred to other women (De Nicola, 2011:146); They possessed the power to command an army and take part in fighting; They could determine their own beliefs and provide for the education of their children (Allsen, 2001:30). Töregene Khatun was the de facto ruler of Mongolia during Tamta's captivity. She was the most merciful of all the women. Kirakoz Gandzaketsi calls her Togus-khatun, Vardani-Toguz-khatun, Rashid-ed-Din Doquz Khatun (Shoshiashvili, 1961: 214). In 1241, after her husband Ögedei Khan passed away, she took over the governance of the country until a successor appeared and was elected. Her son Güyük was very young, and in place of his father, Töregene took over the leadership of the Mongol Empire for five years, until a new khan was elected at the kurultai of Guyuk (Kiknadze, 1974:22).

Tamta Mqargrdzeli 's return to Akhlat was a true example of female power in Mongolia. Tamta lived under Mongol rule for many years until her death in 1254.

Conclusion

We concur with the view of Georgian and foreign researchers and believe that Tamta Mqargrdzeli was a successful figure in the domestic and foreign policy of the Akhlat Sultanate. Notwithstanding, local and international difficulties, Tamta still managed to politically protect her domestic beliefs and satisfy the interests of the local nobility, rulers and population. Meanwhile, securing a notable position within the domain of the Mongol conqueror elite. Due to the existing political, economic and social situation in the Akhlat Sultanate and the Mongolian states in the 13th century, all this was quite difficult to attain. The aforementioned asserts the role of Tamta Mqargrdzeli as a politician, a defender of Christianity, a worthy wife of Muslim rulers, a person who selflessly defended the interests of the country and family, a diplomat in the Middle Caucasus and Western

Asia. We assume that Tamta Mqargrdzeli 's activities in the Middle East, as a devout Georgian Christian, were for her a kind of political transformation from the Georgian political reality to the Islamic world, abounding in large-scale difficulties, suspicion and obstacles, which was associated with long and rather complex processes. By virtue of her strong character, inner strength and integrity, Tamta Mqargrdzeli managed to make her mark on the political arena and cope with the geopolitical and historical cataclysms that existed in Asia until the 13th century.

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