

Ghazar P'arpets'i's History of the Armenians and its Significance for dating the reign of Vakhtang Gorgasali

The dating of the reign of Vakhtang Gorgasali is one of the problematic issues in historiography. Armenian chronicler Ghazar P'arpec'i has the most important information about the reign of Vakhtang Gorgasali, according to which "Vakhtang killed the impious bdeshx Vazgen in the twenty-fifth year of king Peroz". Differences of opinion are caused by the date from which the author calculated Peroz's reign and, accordingly, when the Vakhtang's rebellion began. Since Peroz actually became king in 459, some scholars date the rebellion to 483 or 484. But since the rebellion lasted for more than 2 years and then Peroz died in 484, the dating of the beginning of the rebellion in 483 or 484 is unacceptable.

Nikoloz Janashia made an alternative explanation for this. When Peroz's father Yazdegerd II (r. 438–457) died in 457, Civil war soon followed; Yazdegerd II's eldest son Hormizd III declared himself king at the city of Ray in northern Iran, while Peroz fled to the northeastern part of the empire and began raising an army in order to claim the throne for himself. Peroz was aided by his Mihranid tutor Raham Mihran, who in 459 captured and executed Hormizd, and then crowned Peroz as shahanshah. According to N. Janashia, the date of Peroz's accession to the throne is more likely to have upset Ghazar P'arpec'i than the course of the rebellion. Therefore, he dated the rebellion to 482 years.

The dating of the rebellion was done by Karen Yuzbashian, who studied the course of the rebellion in detail and concluded that the rebellion lasted less than 3 years. And since it ended with the death of Peroz in 484, he pointed to 482 as the date of the beginning of the rebellion.

Dating the beginning of the rebellion through the duration of the rebellion was not convincing for Manana Sanadze, who noted that Vakhtang Gorgasali rebelled not in 482, but in 484. Manana Sanadze believes that Vakhtang Gorgasali lived in 471-531.

According to German orientalist and scholar Theodor Nöldeke, the coins of King Peroz show that Peroz clearly wanted to end the previous two years in which he was only a pretender to the throne.

To determine where Peroz's rule in Sasanian Iran was counted, we searched for documents written in Sasanian Iran. Such a document is the act of the Council of Seleucia in 497, in which it is written: "We also admit, but only on this point, the assembly which took place in the country of Beit Houzaye, in the city of Beit Laphat, in the 27th year of Peroz, King of Kings". The Synod of Beit Laphat was held in April 484, Apparently, the reign of Peroz is counted from 457 year in this document.

According to the Persians who came to Armenia in 506, "unanimously, our country rigorously maintained this faith and not the slightest defilement was openly manifested until the twenty-

seventh year of the reign of Peroz". It is clear that these Persians counted the reign of Peroz from 457.

In a letter concerning the heresy of the Nestorians and Barsauma, Syrian bishop Simeon of Beth Arsham, who lived in Sasanian Persia, writes: "... they made various congregations among the Persians, first in Beth Lapat, the metropolitan city of the Huzites – this happened in the twenty-seventh year of Peroz, king of kings... all the Persians held (this faith) until the twenty-seventh year when the bishops of the Persians transgressed the anathema of all the bishops... Thus, we separated ourselves from communion with the Nestorians from the twenty-seventh year of King Peroz until today". It is clear that Simeon of Beth Arsham counted Peroz's reign from 457.

It is written in the act of the Synod of Mar Gregory in 605: "We will also recall that the divine assembly which took place in Beit Houzaye, in the city of Beit Laphat, in the month of Nisan in the 27th year of Peroz, King of kings, whose leaders and main characters were the blessed Mar Bar sauma, metropolitan bishop of Nisibis, and Nanai, metropolitan bishop of Pherat". In this document, the reign of Peroz is counted from 457.

From the sources we have verified, it is clear that Peroz's reign in Sasanian Iran was not counted from 459, when he actually became king, but from 457, when Yezdigerd II died. Thus, no mistake was made by Ghazar P'arpec'i regarding the date of the beginning of the rebellion. The 25th year of Peroz's reign, when Vakhtang Gorgasali killed Vazgen, was 481/482.

Thus, there is no reason to doubt the truth of the story of Ghazar P'arpec'i. From his history it is clear that in 482-484 Vakhtang Gorgasali was the king of Kartli and fought against the Persians. Therefore, it is a mistake to date his life to 471-531.

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