



THE ISSUE OF DATING THE REIGN OF KING VAKHTANG GORGASALI

Manana Sanadze¹

¹*Professor, The University of Georgia, President, Chief Researcher, Director of Tamaz Beradze Institute of Georgian Studies, USA*

Abstract

In historiography, we encounter several different versions regarding the dating of the death of Vakhtang Gorgasali: 502-505, 490/491, 523, 532 (which is not shared and long-forgotten) and ours - 531. All the versions of Vakhtang Gorgasali's death mentioned above, except for 531, fail to establish a chronological order and provide a proper explanation for the main developments described in *The Life of Vakhtang*. One of the milestones of the king's life is his participation, alongside a large Persian coalition force, in the war against Byzantines. This war took place when Vakhtang was still a young man. Which Persian-Byzantine war could it have been, considering the complete absence of military conflict between Persia and Byzantium from 442 to 502? As for the Persian-Byzantine war of 502-507, it is worth noting that its commencement, progress, and the truce negotiations strangely coincide with the events that are narrated in *The Life of Vakhtang*. An explanation for this and many other important issues can be found if we accept the chronology of Vakhtang's life and reign offered by us.

Keywords

Vakhtang Gorgasali, Kavad, Darial Fortress, Procopius of Caesarea, Persian-Byzantine War, Caesar Anastasius, Khosrow Anushirvan

Introduction

Vakhtang Gorgasali was the greatest king of Georgia reigning during the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, who unified a significant part of the country under one kingdom, marking a pivotal moment in the history of the Georgian nation. The accurate determination of the timeline of his reign is one of the most important issues for scholars delving into the early Middle Ages of Georgia. That is why numerous researchers have attempted to shed light on this matter. However, the issue remains unresolved to this day. The reason why all the attempts were vain mainly lies in the fact that during the study of this issue, researchers paid less attention to the information preserved in the work of the Georgian historian Juansher (who was established as a ruler in Tbilisi by Persians around 589/90) *The Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali* and his sequence of events. Additionally, there has been a lack of comparative analysis of the accounts provided by the historian and those found in other contemporary Armenian, Syrian, and Byzantine sources.

Historiography of the Issue

The initial chronology of Vakhtang Gorgasali's life was put forth by Vakhushti Bagrationi (1696-1757), suggesting the years 439-499. Regrettably, in determining the king's lifespan, Vakhushti Bagrationi overlooked the correlation of the king's reign years that he proposed with the Persian-Byzantine wars. Subsequently, there were no endeavors (excluding that by M. Janashvili) to comprehensively examine Vakhushti Bagrationi's version. Nonetheless, because there was an obvious need to associate Vakhtang's life years with a Persian-Byzantine war (due to the fact that one of such wars was an important milestone in his biography), and because such a war close to the period of his demise (499, according to Vakhushti) took place in 502-507, it was commonly believed that Vakhtang passed away during the Persian-Byzantine war of 502-507. Different versions were proposed within this time range. 503 is the year offered by Gorgadze (1913, pp. 64-67), while 502 is favored by Javakhishvili (1979, p. 329), Lordkipanidze (1979, pp. 87-88), and Lomouri (1994, pp. 44-48). N. Janashia dates Vakhtang's death back to 502-506 (Janashia, 1973, p.

104), while G. Alasania argues that Vakhtang could not have died before 503 (Alasania, 2014, pp. 42-60). Proponents of this version believe that Vakhtang was born in 442/47, as his lifespan is known to be 60 years.

A. Bogveradze is inclined to believe that Vakhtang's death occurred in the 490s, although he also considers the beginning of the sixth century as a possibility (Bogveradze, 1979, p. 57). V. Goiladze specifically dates Vakhtang's death to 491 (Goiladze, 1988, p. 92; Goiladze, 1991, pp. 70-76). D. Muskhelishvili places Vakhtang's death before the onset of the Persian-Byzantine war - between the years 499 and 502 (Muskhelishvili, 2003, p. 185).

M. Janashvili proposed a different version: first - 477-537 (Janashvili, 1903/b, p. 99), and later - 472-532 (Janashvili, 1906, pp. 207-226). At the same time, he identified Vakhtang with Gurgen, referred to as the king of Iberia by Procopius of Caesarea in 523. A few decades later, K. Toumanoff echoed this perspective on the sameness of Gurgen and Vakhtang, though without reference to Mose Janashvili. Unlike Janashvili, Toumanoff placed Vakhtang's demise in 523 (Toumanoff, 1963, pp. 199-200; Toumanoff, 1976, p. 286).

Initially, we also entertained the Janashvili-Toumanoff perspective regarding the sameness of Vakhtang Gorgasali and Gurgen as plausible. However, contrary to both, we determined the death of Vakhtang as 528 (Sanadze, 2013, pp. 369-375). Further research in this area made it clear to us that considering Vakhtang Gorgasali and Gurgen to be the same person was a fallacy. There is no correlation between the names of the family members of the purported "basileus" (king) Gurgen of Iberia mentioned in Procopius of Caesarea's account and the names of the members of Vakhtang Gorgasali's family. Gurgen I, referred to as "basileus" in Byzantine sources, in our analysis, must have been the pitiakhsh of Kartli, and not the basileus. Procopius of Caesaria calls him "basileus" because pitiakhshes ruled their countries as their estates given to them by inheritance. Likewise, Byzantine sources also refer to the rulers of Egrisi (Lazica) as "basileus". However, from *The Georgian Chronicles* it is evident that they were not independent rulers, but rather the pitiakhshes of the kings of Kartli. In around forty years, from Byzantine sources we learn about another Gurgen (Gurgen II) who was the ruler of Kartli appointed by Persians following the 562-year peace treaty between Persia and Byzantium, and who sat in the newly-established administrative center – Tbilisi in the 70s and 80s of the 6th c. (Sanadze, 2017, pp. 373-376). This Gurgen II must have been the grandson or another close relative of Gurgen I and a member of the family of Kartli pitiakhshes known as Perozians in Georgian sources.

Research of *The Life of Vakhtang* and the juxtaposition of the information contained in the work with the works of Byzantine authors afforded us the opportunity to significantly specify the chronology of Vakhtang Gorgasali's life and reign: the years of life: 471-531; the years of reign: 478-485 under his mother's regency, and independent reign: 486/87-531. Out of these, 485-487 marks Vakhtang's confrontation with Persia following the assassination of the Pitiakhsh of Karti Varsken (484). In 488, Kavad ascends the throne of Persia. Most likely, he reconciles with the rebellious subject and sends him on a campaign to Ossetia and Abkhazia (around 493).

Methodology

The work employs an *analytical method*, which involves the juxtaposition and analysis of information from various sources.

Basic Content 1.

As already mentioned, 502/3 is generally regarded as the year of Vakhtang's death, due to the desire to associate Vakhtang's death with the Persian-Byzantine war of 502-505. This is notably inconsistent with the data preserved in *The Life of Vakhtang* and its sequence. First and foremost, we must note that according to *The Life of Vakhtang*, the Persian-Byzantine war in which Vakhtang participated, and which occupies a central place in the work, took place when he was relatively young. If we consider 502-507 years of the Persian-Byzantine war period as the time of Vakhtang's death, the question arises as to which Persian-Byzantine war should be associated with Vakhtang's campaign against Byzantium as part of the Persian army, before embarking on a campaign to India. As chronicled, after the truce of 441 until 502, there was peace between Persia and Byzantium. Furthermore, the chronicler recounts a clearly pre-planned, large-scale military campaign which cannot be qualified as a random border skirmish: in the military operation orchestrated by the command of the Shah of Persia and overseen directly by the Pitiakhsh of Ran (Albania) Varaz-Bakur alongside Vakhtang, the pitiakhshes of Armenia also participate - they are individually listed by their names. A separate mention is made of Borzo, the king of Movakan (actually, the pitiakhsh), and the king of Daruband, the same as the king of Leks – Ipajaj. We cannot regard this highly representative coalition army as a random assembly. Moreover, the geographical scope of the campaign is too extensive to classify it as an incidental and unintentional border skirmish: the campaign originates from Armenia, with the city of Carnipora – Karnu-kalaki, also known as Theodosiopolis, coming under siege. This is how the Persian-Byzantine war of 502-507 starts. According to *The Georgian Chronicles*, Persia and its South Caucasian allies fail to seize Karnu-kalaki (Theodosiopolis), and the besieging army consisting of 12 000 is compelled to maintain its position there. Subsequently, the coalition cavalry advances further into Byzantine territory. According to Syrian-Greek sources, this is exactly how the Persian army behaves in 502. The number of besiegers left at Theodosiopolis also aligns with these accounts.

The fact that Vakhtang was with his army in the depths of Cappadocia and presumably participated in the siege of Amida is supported by his return from Nazianzin (Andzoreti/Andziadzor), a journey that would have required passage through all of Cappadocia. This sequence of events could only have unfolded in 502-504. The campaign into the heart of the Byzantine Empire described in *The Life of Vakhtang* could not have taken place at any other time. Indeed, Vakhtang Gorgasali and his army begin their march back (and not forward, as V. Goiladze mistakenly believes) from the town of Nazianzin, Andzoreti of *The Georgian Chronicles*. Andzoreti, also known as Andziadzor, is the present-day Turkish village of Neniz situated west of the town of Aksaray (Nikolozishvili, 2008, pp. 87-102). Returning from there, Vakhtang passes by Eklets (Acilisene, Ekegheats) and Satala (For the identification of **Ster** mentioned in *The Life of Vakhtang* with the city of Satala, see Sanadze, 2017, pp. 213-214). He then besieges Trebizond. The military campaigns portrayed in *The Life of Vakhtang* are so large-scale, including instances of direct involvement of the Byzantine Caesar himself riding an elephant, that all of this could only have taken place within the context of the Persian-Byzantine war of 502-507.

The truce negotiation, in which, according to Juansher's writings, Jazira (Jazireti of *The Georgian Chronicles*, meaning Upper/North Mesopotamia) appears, is also highly significant. The cities of northern Mesopotamia were indeed one of the main issues in the Persian-Byzantine truce of 507.

2.

Determining the year of Vakhtang's death as 502/3 and, accordingly, his birth year as 442 years, contradicts the years of reign of Vakhtang's predecessor kings, leaving them with no years of reigns. As previously demonstrated, Peter the Iberian's father the king of Kartli Mirdat, also known as Buzmarios - the High Mithra by Rufus (Mirdat was the great grandson of Mirian and at the same time, the grandson of Mirian's son Rev and the son of Rev's son Mirdat), was the king preceding Archil - the grandfather of Vakhtang, according to the line of kings of *The Georgian Chronicles* (Sanadze, 2017, pp. 137-178).

Mirdat gave his only son - the future Peter the Iberian - as a hostage already in 422, when he was still the king of Kartli. Later, King Mirdat was taken hostage by Persians. Close to 422, in 428 Persia abolished kingship in Armenia. So, we consider this date (428) to be the most favorable time for Mirdat's capture (Sanadze, 2017, p. 154). Mirdat was a prisoner in Persia for three years, and according to *The Georgian Chronicles*, there was an era of kinglessness in Kartli (428-430). After Mirdat's death (430), Trdat's son Archil (the grandson of Varaz/Boar/Great Bakur) ascended the throne. Indeed, according to Koriun's *Life of Mashtots*, for the second time, Mashtots was in Kartli before the Council of Ephesus (431), and during this visit to Kartli he was already welcomed by king Archil. However, even before that, from the time of the capture of Mirdat (428), Archil probably served as the ruler of the country. All this provides further evidence against those researchers who consider the date of Vakhtang Gorgasali's death to be 502-07, or even 490. In such a case, it turns out that Vakhtang was born in 442/47 or 430. However, when Vakhtang was born, his father Mirdat was already a king. So, when did Archil reign? Moreover, considering that Archil's reign lasted quite a long time - during his reign three archbishops held office, and the fourth one commenced his duties.

3.

In the 460s-470s of Persian Shah Peroz's rule, there were indeed long, multi-year battles against Hun-Hephthalites. However, before that, there was no Persian-Byzantine war, and therefore, no truce negotiations took place. At the time, as early as 505, between the end of the war with Byzantium and the signing of the truce, Kavad invaded Kartli and Albania, and engaged in fighting against the invading Huns who were encouraged by the Byzantines (Пирулевская, 1941, p. 149) and their stronghold in the region, King Vakhtang of Kartli (Alasania, 2014, p. 58). Yet, Vakhtang does not necessarily perish during this time. Rather, he embarks on a campaign to India alongside the Shah of Persia. Indeed, after ending the war with Byzantium in 505 and signing a truce with it in 507, Kavad promptly launched an offensive against the Hun-Hephthalites (507), engaging in an eight-year-long fighting with them (507-515). *The Georgian Chronicles* recounts exactly the same stories and, most importantly, in the same chronological sequence: following Vakhtang's return from his war against the "Greeks", the Persian king invades Kartli, starting a war with Vakhtang, which seemingly ends in a truce between Vakhtang and "Khwasro" somewhere around 507. Meanwhile, "King Khwasro" reaches a truce with Byzantium. Subsequently, "King Khwasro" of Persia invites Vakhtang to join a campaign: "against the Hindus, Sindels, the Abash, and Gorgans". Together with the Shah of Persia, Vakhtang spends eight years in this campaign.

Returning from India, Vakhtang marries a Byzantine princess named Helen. If we date this story to 516/17, then we will see that the sons born to Helen (especially if the first child born to Helen and Vakhtang was a daughter) in 518, in 531 would have been underage and unable to fight alongside Vakhtang in his last battle, as recounted by *The Georgian Chronicles*. *The Georgian Chronicles* mentions that Helen and her children were in the Ujarma Fortress at the time when Vakhtang's elder son Darchil and even his sister's son participated in the war.

If Vakhtang returned from his campaign to India and married Helen around 470, naturally, his children would have reached adulthood long ago and, like Darchil, would have fought alongside their father, etc.

4.

Here, based on the article's format, we will focus on only one more significant fact. *The Georgian Chronicles* informs us that in his final battle, Vakhtang fought against the Shah of Persia, who had recently ascended to the throne following his father's recent demise.

The former Shah, with whom Vakhtang campaigned in India, passed away, and his son sought to clarify his relationship with Vakhtang. It could happen only in 531 when the Shah of Persia, Kavard, passed away, and his son Khosrow I Anushirvan (531-579) ascended to the throne. Khosrow I initiated a campaign to Kartli to subjugate it and invade Egrisi. It was during this battle that Vakhtang Gorgasali was killed. Following this, in 532, the so-called "Eternal Peace" was concluded between Persia and Byzantium.

5.

In Historiography, there is an opinion that Kartli did not participate in the rebellion of Armenia and Albania in the 440-450s (Dondua, 1953, p. 314; Janashia, 1962, pp. 128-129; Bogveradze, 1979, pp. 36-37; Suny, 1944, p. 23; Muskhelishvili, 2003, p. 87), supposedly because of Vakhtang's young age. This viewpoint was opposed from the very beginning (Eremian, 1951, p. 55; Trever, 1959, pp. 206-228). Recently, G. Alasania expressed her opinion about the participation of Kartli in this rebellion. (Alasania, 2008, pp. 32-33).

In reality, the struggle of King Archil and his son Mirdat against the Pitiakhsh of Ran and Adarbadagan, as described in *The Georgian Chronicles*, reflects the struggle of Georgians against Persia during the rebellion of South Caucasian countries in 440s-450s (Sanadze, 2017, pp. 165-172). Against the backdrop of the defeat of this rebellion, we should consider the marriage of Archil's son Mirdat to Sagdukht (Sahak-dukhti), the daughter of the Persian official of Ran and Adarbadan - Pitiakhsh Sahak Barzabod¹, as an important link in the agreement of Kartli with Persia, which seems to have happened around the time of Peroz's (459-484) ascension to the throne (approximately early 460s). Mirdat and Sagdukht spent a few years in Samshvilde, which was allocated specially for the heirs to the royal throne. This substantiates the claim that Archil remained king throughout the early 460s.

6.

Now let's examine the date of Varsken's death. Curiously, Georgian historiography commonly cites 482 as the accepted date. However, little attention is paid to the fact that Ghazar Parpetsi dates the killing of Varsken according to the years of reign of Peroz:

"... Vakhtang killed the faithless bdeskh Vazgen in the twenty-fifth year of King Peroz" (Parpetsi, 1962, p. 243)

The 25th year of Peroz's reign corresponds to 484 (Peroz is believed to have ascended the throne in 459). Peroz himself hears this news while on his way to confront the Hun-Hephthalites. Remarkably, Peroz passes away in the same year. The point is that the chronology of events appears somewhat confused in Parpetsi's narrative, which may be due to multiple instances of rewriting the text. After describing the killing of Varsken, Parpetsi continues the narration with the rebellion. Through the narration, we learn that two winters and summers, i.e. two more years, have passed. A few battles took place during this period, and suddenly Ghazar notes that Hazaravukht, a Persian commander, receives a letter from Peroz, wherein Peroz writes:

"He was marching against the Hephthalites with all the might of the Aryans, commanding Hazaravukht to proceed to Kartli and either capture Vakhtang, the king of Kartli, or to kill him, or to expel him from the land." (Parpetsi, 1962, p. 263).

The chronological confusion is evident. It appears as though there were battles in Kartli and Armenia for two years (two winters and two summers), yet Peroz remained unaware of them until he was marching against the Hun-Hephthalites! Of course, such a scenario is impossible. Rather, sections of the text have likely been misplaced over the centuries. In reality, the 25th year of Peroz's reign corresponds to the year of Varsken's assassination, coinciding with Peroz's campaign against the Hun-Hephthalites and his demise there. As we later learn, the Persian army that had entered Kartli returned to Persia upon learning of Peroz's death. Balash, Peroz's brother, ascended to the throne. After that, for two winters and two summers there were battles (as mentioned by Parpetsi approximately five pages earlier!), spanning the years 485-486.

The Syrian author Joshua the Stylite places the Armenian revolt in the 490s. The dating of the Georgian-Armenian uprising was specially examined by K. Yuzbashian, who analyzed data from various sources regarding the Armenian rebellion. Yuzbashian arrived at a conclusion that Joshua mistakenly placed information on the Georgian-Armenian rebellion against Persians in the events of the 490s (Uzbashyan, 2002, pp. 318-327). However, it is apparent that the chronology of Vakhtang's life and that of his children, which Yuzbashian overlooks entirely,

¹ Regarding the name Barzabod, see Sanadze, 2017, pp. 183-184; see also, 2019, pp. 496-497.

and, most significantly, the narrative of Ghazar Parpetsi himself (which contains chronological errors, albeit ones that can be corrected, allowing for the restoration of the chronological sequence of events), indicate that Vakhtang killed Varsken in 484 and revolted against the Persians. In the same year, Peroz, who learned about the rebellion while en route to fight against the Hephthalites, and issued an order to capture, kill, or expel Vakhtang from the country, was killed. Peroz's death hindered the campaign against Vakhtang, prompting the Persian commander who had entered Kartli with this task to quickly return. Two years passed thereafter (485, 486 - winter, summer, winter, summer...) (see Parpetsi, 1962, pp. 248-249, 251, 258-260), and thus the year 487 dawned. It is probable that the situation in Kartli remained unresolved during this period. Ghazar also informs us that Vakhtang sought refuge in western Georgia at one point (presumably appealing to Emperor Zeno for assistance). Meanwhile, Kavad dethroned Valarsh and thus put down the rebellion himself. Thus, Kavad likely visited the South Caucasus around 490 (or sent an appropriate official) to address the post-rebellion arrangement of the region. It is reasonable to consider that during this time, Vakhtang was given the opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to Persia, leading to his campaign against Ossetians (Huns) and the campaign to Abkhazia to liberate the fortresses of Egrisi (Lazica) occupied by Byzantium, which he carried out in 492/93. In light of the victory achieved in these campaigns, Persia finally acknowledged Vakhtang as the king of Kartli and fulfilled his desire to marry a woman from the Persian royal family. The primary achievement of this campaign for Persia was the restoration of control over the Darial Gorge and fortress.

7.

In 491, Ambazuk, the proprietor of the Darial fortress, presumably upon learning of Kavad's directive to Vakhtang and his uncle, Pitiakhsh Varaz Bakur, to advance against Darial, was alarmed. Consequently, he composed a letter to Anastasius, expressing his willingness to surrender the Darial fortress to Byzantium in exchange for compensation. Procopius of Caesarea elucidates Ambazuk's readiness to relinquish control of the gorge and fortress of Darial to Anastasius in return for payment, attributing it to Ambazuk's old age and illness. With regret, Procopius also remarks that Anastasius failed to appreciate Ambazuk's proposal, resulting in the occupation of the fortress and the gorge by Kavad (Procopius of Caesarea, 1965, pp. 46-47).

It is evident that Ambazuk's decision was prompted by the difficulty of maintaining control over the gorge and the fortress, rather than by old age. He likely made this decision upon learning of Kavad's intentions. This entire period marks the early phase of Vakhtang's reign, at least the period of his independent rule, and not the later period, as mistakenly believed in Georgian historiography today. One thing is absolutely clear: the Darial fortress and gorge remained under the control of Ossetians/Huns until 491. And Vakhtang's campaign against Ossetia, which resulted in the Darial gorge falling back under Vakhtang's, and, consequently, Persian authority, could only have occurred after 491.

8.

The only argument upon which V. Goiladze bases his assertion that Vakhtang died in 491 revolves around *The Martyrdom of Piran Gushnasp*. According to the historian, one passage in this text alludes to an unknown Persian-Byzantine truce agreement around 490/91. Goiladze posits that since there was a truce, there must have been a preceding war in which, the historian believes, Vakhtang must have perished (Goiladze, 1988, p. 92; Goiladze 1991, pp. 70-76). In reality, Goiladze's conclusions rely on a fragment of the text that is provided within square brackets as it has been restored by the German translator and publisher Hoffmann. And if not for the erroneous restoration of the term "peace" by Hoffmann, there would be nothing to discuss. Hoffmann's translation of the fragment reads: "Lange Zeit darauf machte Gott zwischen diesen beiden Reichen Frieden. Im Jahre vierzig [des Friedens] kam der König Khosrau zur Regierung" (Hofman 1880, p. 80)².

As we can see, if we remove the restored "des Friedens" ("of peace") given in square brackets, the following will be left: "In the fortieth year Khosrow ascended the throne." However, what serves as the starting point for the calculation of the fortieth year?

This issue was extensively discussed by G. Alasania, who drew attention to the fact that all the dates in *The Martyrdom of Piran Gushnasp* are calculated based on the years of reign of the shahs of Persia. In this case, we should be dealing with the fortieth year of Kavad's reign, when Kavad passed away and Khosrow ascended the throne. Indeed, by subtracting the three years of his brother Jamasp's reign (496-498) from the total years of Kavad's reign (488-531), we will get exactly the 40 years of Kavad's reign, as announced by the author of *The Martyrdom*. Therefore, according to G. Alasania, the relevant section of Piran Gushnasp's text should be restored as follows: "In the fortieth year [of Kavad's reign] (and not of "peace," as previously interpreted by Hoffmann, M. S.), Khosrow ascended the throne" Finally, the researcher concluded that Vakhtang could not have died earlier than 503 (Alasania 2014, pp. 52-54).

² English translation: "Long time thereafter, God made peace between the two states. In the fortieth year [of peace] Khosrow ascended the throne" (Hoffmann, 1880, p. 80).

Florence Jullien, the English translator and publisher of *The Martyrdom of Piran Gushnasp*, fully supports the restoration of the mentioned section of the text proposed by Alasania.

The conclusions reached by both G. Alasania and F. Jullien expose the fallacy of Hoffmann's "restoration" and the unfounded nature of Goiladze's perspective, which relies on this restoration.

9.

The Martyrdom of Davit and Costantine authored by an unknown hagiographer around 1058, along with *The Life Mir and Archil* and *The Martyrdom of Archil* by Leonti Mroveli (which actually recount the lives and deeds of the sons of Vakhtang Gorgasali, [D]archil and Mir (Mirdat), refer to Persians and the Persian-Byzantine war of 541-562 in Egrisi (Lazica), rather than the invasion of Marwan the Deaf (Sanadze & Arakhamia, 2013, pp. 14-31; Sanadze, 2020, pp. 26-110).

The analysis of both works clarifies that when Khosrow Anushirvan entered Egrisi and engaged in fighting against Byzantium there, Vakhtang Gorgasali's sons Darchil and Mir (Mirdat) were in Egrisi and Abkhazia fighting against the Persians. *The Martyrdom of Davit and Costantine* explicitly identifies the sons of Vakhtang Gorgasali, Darchil and his brother Mir, as being fortified in the Anacopia Fortress. The Persians advanced through Anacopia to Abkhazia (Sebastopolis, Pitiunt) during the initial stages of the Persian-Byzantine war of 541-562, around 542/3 (Procopius of Caesarea, 1965, pp. 136-137). If Vakhtang died at the age of 60 in 502 or even earlier in 490, then it raises questions about how his son Darchil could have fought at Anacopia in 542/43, given that he was born during Vakhtang's young age.

The chronology of Vakhtang's life years suggested here is also confirmed by *The Georgian Chronicles*! All three lists of the Mtskhétian edition, as well as the Chalashvili list of Ann's edition, name 157 years "from King Mirian up to King Vakhtang". The list of Anna proper names 147 years. The death of Mirian is placed in the second half of the 30s of the 4th c. If we hypothetically take the year 339, we would calculate that Vakhtang ascended the throne in $339+157=496$, or $339+147=486$.

Conclusion

The advantage of the chronology of Vakhtang's life suggested here is that it is the only one that provides explanations for all the previously unexplained and seemingly insurmountable contradictions in the information about Vakhtang, his closest ancestors and descendants preserved in sources (For more details, see Sanadze, 2017, pp. 299-340; Sanadze, 2019, pp. 391-402; see also, Sanadze, 2020, pp. 7-182), while 502/07 and, even more so, 490/91, considered as the year of his death, cannot withstand criticism at all.

References

- Alasania, G. (2008). *Kartvelebi da islamamdeli turkebi* [Georgians and preislamic Turks], Tbilisi.
- Alasania G. (2014). *The Relations between Pre-Islamic Turks and Georgians from the Third to the Ninth Century: A History of Byzantine-Persian Politics in the Caucasus*, The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Bogveradze, A. (1979). *Kartlis p'olit'ik'uri da sotsialur-ek'onomik'uri ganvitareba IV-VIII sauk'uneebshi* [Political and Social-economic development of Kartli], Tbilisi.;
- Dondua, V. D (1953). *Nekotorye zamečaniâ po povodu sbornika – istoriâ armânskogo naroda* [Some comments about the collection - the history of the Armenian people] – Reviewer, Tbilisi.;
- Eremian, S. (1951). *Osvoboditel'naâ vojna armân protiv persov v 450-451* [Liberation war of Armenians against Persians in 450-451] - Herald of Ancient History, N4, M.;
- Goiladze, V. (1988). *Piran gushnasp'is mart'vilobis tsnobata mnishvneloba V-VI sauk'uneebis sakartvelos ist'oriisatvis*. [The importance of notices of Firan Gushpan's martyrdom for V-VI century Georgian History]- Matsne (Historical Issue), 2;
- Goiladze, V. (1991). *Vakht'ang gorgasali da misi it'orik'osi* [Vakhtang Gorgasal and his historian], Tbilisi.;
- Gorgadze, S. (1913). *Ts'erilebi sakartelos ist'oriidan* [Letters from Georgian History], T. II, Tbilisi.
- Javakhishvili, Iv. (1979). *Kartveli eris ist'oria* [The history of Georgian nation]- collected works, T. I, Tbilisi.;
- Janashvili, M. (1903). *Kartvelta mat'iane* [The Georgian Chronicle] - „Moambe“, 5, part V, Tbilisi.;
- Janashvili, M. (1906). *Sakartvelos ist'oria* [Georgian History], T.I;
- Janashia L-N. (1962). *Lazare parp'etsis tsnobebi sakartvelos shesakheb* [Lazare Farpets' notes regarding Georgia], Tbilisi.;
- Janashia L-N. (1973). *Kartli V sauk'unis meore nakhevarshi. Vakht'ang gorgasali* [Kartli in the second half of V century. Vakhtang Gorgasali] – The Georgian history chronicles, T. II, Tbilisi.;
- Jullien F. (2023). *The Martyrdom of Mar Grigor Piran-Gušnasp and The Martyrdom of Mar Yazd-panah*.
- Lomouri, N. (1994). *Sakartvelos da bizant'iis urtiertoba V s-shi* [Georgian and Byzantium relationship in V century], Tbilisi.;
- Lortkipanidze, (1979). *Kartli V sauk'unis meore nakhevarshi* [Kartli in the second half of V century], Tbilisi.;
- Martyrium des Zeugen Herrn Grigor, der in den tagen des Königs Khosrau Zeugniß ablegte. (1880). G. Hoffmann, Auszuge aus syrischen Akten persischen Märtyrer, Abhandlungen Für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Leipzig;
- Muskhelishvili, D. (2003). *Sakartvelo IV-VIII sauk'uneebshi* [Georgia in IV-VIII centuries], Tbilisi.;
- Nikolozishvili, N. (2008). *Andziadzoris lok'alizatsia da misi mnishvneloba kartlis samepos ist'oriisatvis* [The Localization of Andzianori and its importance for the history of Georgian kingdom] – The issue of mid-century Georgian history, N9, Tbilisi.;
- Pignulevskaya, N. (1941). *Sirijskie istočniki po istorii narodov SSSR* [Syrian sources on the history of the peoples of the USSR.] M-L;
- Prokopi Kesarieli. (1965). *Omi sp'arselebtan* [War with Persians]- Georgica (The notes of Byzantian writers regarding Georgia), T. II, Tbilisi.;
- Sanadze, M. & Arakhamia, G. (2013). *VI s-is kronik'is k'vali davitisa da k'ost'ant'ines ts'amebashi* [The trace of VI century chronicle in suffers of David and Konstantine], Tbilisi.;
- Sanadze M. (2017). *Chronology of Georgian Kings and Patricians of the Ancient Period and the Early Middle Ages. Volume 2, The Christian Georgian Kings and Patricians*, The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Sanadze, M. (2019). *Shesavali kartvelta tskhovrebashi* [The introduction in The Georgian Crhronicles]. – The Georgian Chronicles Book I, Tbilisi.;
- Sanadze, M. (2020). *Kartlis mepe darchili (vakht'ang gorgaslis vazhi) da misi tskhovrebis amsakhveli kronik'ebi* [Georgian King Darchil (the son of Vakhtang Gorgasali) and Chronicles of his life], Tbilisi.;
- The Georgian Chronicles*. (1955). (The text is identified according to all main manuscripts by S. Kauchashvili, T. I);
- Suny R. (1944). *The Making of the Georgian Nation*. Indiana Universiti Press, Blumington and Indianapolis;
- Toumanoff C. (1963). *Iberia between Chosroid and Bagratid Rule - Studies in Christian Caucasian History*, Georg town University press;
- Toumanoff C. (1976). *Manuel de geneologie et de chronologie pour l'histoire de la Caucasic chretienne*;
- Trever, L. (1959). *Očerki po istorii i kul'ture Kavkazskoj Albanii v IV do n. è. -VII v. n. è.*, [Essays on the history and culture of Caucasian Albania in IV BC. e. -VII century n. Uh], M., L.
- Uzbashyan, K (2002). *Iešu Stilit ob armânskom vosstanii protiv Sasanidov* [Yeshu Stylite on the Armenian revolt against the Sassanids]. – Christian East, 3 (IX), SPb-M.