

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MAMIKONYAN NAKHARAR FAMILY IN 452–482

ՄԱՄԻԿՈՆՅԱՆՆԵՐԻ ՆԱԽԱՐԱՐԱԿԱՆ ՏՈՀՄԻ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՆԵՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ 452–482 ԹԹ.

ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ НАХАРАРСКОГО РОДА МАМИКОНЯНОВ В 452–482 ГГ.

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Abstract – The sons of Hmayak Mamikonyan mentioned in the primary sources – Vahan, Vasak and Artashes, the son of the brother of the Sparapet Vardan (commander of the army) – Hamazasp, as well as Mushegh Mamikonyan, figured in the political life of the Marzpanate Armenia of the second half of the 5th century. The Mamikonyan brothers, arrested in the autumn of 450 by Vasak Syuni and sent as hostages to Persia in 455, were released from exile thanks to the efforts of Bidaxsh Ashusha and returned to their motherland in the early 460s. In the 460s of the 5th century, the Persian court again began to pursue a policy of oppression and persecution against Christians and the establishment of Zoroastrianism, which led to an uprising against Persian rule. In the second half of the 470s, Vahan Mamikonyan, who was the Sparapet, led the liberation struggle against Persian rule, and in 484, by the Treaty of Nvarsak, restored both the rights of the church and the nakharar system, receiving, among other things, the position of Armenian Marzpan. Vasak Mamikonyan, being one of the organizers of the uprising, in 482 during the Battle of Akori, defeated the Persian army with his small army. Prince Mamikonyan died in the Kingdom of Iberia (Virk) on the Charman field. The youngest of the Mamikonyan brothers, Vard, being a patrician, later replaced his brother Vahan, simultaneously occupying the positions of Sparapet and Marzpan. Hamazasp and Mushegh Mamikonyan, returning from Persian exile, led by Sparapet Vahan Mamikonyan, began the struggle against Persian rule. Mushegh Mamikonyan and his Sparapet went through this difficult path of struggle. Hamazasp Mamikonyan helped the historian Ghazar Parpetsi return to Armenia and begin writing the "History of Armenia".

Ամփոփում – V դ. երկրորդ կեսին սկզբնաղբյուրները մարզպանական Հայաստանի ռազմաքաղաքական կյանքում հիշատակում են Հմայակ Մամիկոնյանի որդիներին՝ Վահանին, Վասակին, Արտաշեսին, ինչպես նաև Վարդան սպարապետի եղբորորդի Համազասպին և Մուշեղ Մամիկոնյանին: 450 թ. աշնանը մարզպան Վասակ Սյունու կողմից ձերբակալված և որպես պատանդ պարսից արքունիք ուղարկված Մամիկոնյան եղբայրներն Աշուշա բդեշխի ջանքերով 455 թ. ազատվեցին գերությունից և 460-ական թվականների սկզբներին վերադարձան հայրենիք: V դ. 60-ական թվականներին պարսից արքունիքը տարածաշրջանում վերսկսեց բռնաճնշումները: Եվ քրիստոնեության վերացման, գրադաշտականության հաստատման քայլերը հանգեցրին ապստամբության պարսից տիրապետության դեմ: 470-ական թվականների երկրորդ կեսին սպարապետության գործակալությունը ստանձնած Վահան Մամիկոնյանը գլխավորեց ազատագրական պայքարը պարսից տիրապետության դեմ՝ ի վերջո, 484 թ. Նվարսակի պայմանագրով վերականգնելով թե՛ եկեղեցու, թե՛ հայ նախարարական համակարգի իրավունքները՝ ստանալով նաև հայոց մարզպանի պաշտոնը: Վասակ Մամիկոնյանը, լինելով ապստամբության գլխավոր կազմակերպիչներից մեկը, 482 թ. Ակոռիի ճակատամարտում փոքրաթիվ ուժերով ջախջախեց պարսկական մեծաթիվ զորաբանակին: Մամիկոնյան իշխանը զոհվեց Վիրքում՝ Ճարմանայի դաշտում: Մամիկոնյան եղբայրներից կրտսերը՝ Վարդը, ունենալով պատրիկի աստիճան, հետագայում փոխարինեց եղբորը՝ Վահանին՝ միաժամանակ զբաղեցնելով թե՛ սպարապետի, թե՛ մարզպանի պաշտոնները: Համազասպ և Մուշեղ Մամիկոնյանները, վերադառնալով պարսկական արքայից, Վահան Մամիկոնյանի գլխավորությամբ սկսեցին պայքարը պարսից տիրապետության դեմ: Մուշեղ Մամիկոնյանը սպարապետի հետ անցավ այդ պայքարի ամբողջ դժվարին ուղին: Համազասպ Մամիկոնյանն օգնեց պատմիչ Ղազար Փարպեցուն՝ վերադառնալու Հայաստան և գրելու «Հայոց պատմությունը»:

Аннотация – В политической жизни марзпанской Армении второй половины V века фигурировали упомянутые в первоисточниках сыновья Амаяка Мамиконяна – Ваан, Васак и Арташес, сын брата спарапета Вардана – Амазасп, а также Мушег Мамиконян. Братья Мамиконян, осенью 450 г. арестованные Васаком Сюни и в качестве заложников отправленные к персам в 455 г., были освобождены из ссылки благодаря усилиям Бдешха Ашуша и в начале 460-х гг. возвратились на родину. В 460-х годах V века персидский двор вновь стал проводить политику гнета и гонений в отношении христиан и утверждения зороастризма, что привело к восстанию против персидского господства. Во второй половине 470-х гг. Ваан Мамиконян, стоявший во главе спарапетства, возглавил освободительную борьбу, направленную против персидского господства, и в 484 г. по Нварсакскому договору восстановил как права церкви, так и нахарарской системы, получив в том числе должность армянского марзпана. Васак Мамиконян, будучи одним из организаторов восстания, в 482 г. во время битвы при Акори своим малочисленным войском разгромил персидскую армию. Князь Мамиконян погиб в Вирке, на поле Чармана. Младший из братьев Мамиконян – Вард, являясь патрицием, в дальнейшем сменил брата Ваана, одновременно заняв должность спарапета и марзпана. Амазасп и Мушег Мамиконяны, вернувшись из персидской ссылки, во главе со спарапетом Вааном Мамиконяном начали борьбу против персидского господства. Мушег Мамиконян вместе со спарапетом прошел весь этот трудный путь борьбы. Амазасп Мамиконян помог историку Лазарю Парпеци возвратиться в Армению и приступить к изложению «Истории Армении».

Keywords – Mamikonyans, Vahan, Vasak, Ghazar Parpetsi, Persia.

Հիմնաբառեր – Մամիկոնյաններ, Վահան, Վասակ, Ղազար Փարպեցի, Պարսկաստան:
 Ключевые слова – Мамиконяны, Ваан, Васак, Лазарь Парпеци, Персия.

Introduction

The culmination of the Armenian people's struggle for liberation from Persian rule, which had commenced in 450 AD, was marked by the largest battle of the period, fought on 26 May 451 AD on the Avarayr Plain, along the banks of the Tghmut River. Following the death of the sparapet (commander-in-chief) Vardan Mamikonian during the battle, the Armenian forces continued to fight until evening, after which they withdrew from the Tghmut and entrenched themselves in Tayk, Khaghtik, Tmorik, Artsakh, and other impregnable fortresses throughout the country. The resistance persisted until the end of the year. Ultimately, in light of the Armenians' continued resistance, the defeats suffered by Persian forces at the hands of the Kushans in Central Asia, and the incursion of the Huns into the Transcaucasus, the Persian court was compelled to make concessions. It withdrew its forces from Marzpanate Armenia and abandoned the pursuit of its more ambitious objectives.

The Mamikonians in Persian Captivity

Trusting the assurances of the Persian court and the newly appointed marzpan, Atormizd Arshakan, thirty-seven senior and junior Armenian nakharars (ministers) who had participated in the Battle of Avarayr presented themselves to the marzpan. Among them were the Mamikonian princes Hamazaspian, Hamazasp, Artavazd, and Mushegh (Եղիշեն 1989, 389; cf. Փարպեցի 1982, 205). Atormizd sent them to Ctesiphon, where, in early 452 AD, following their trial, they were exiled – first to Vrkanats land and subsequently to the city of Nyushapuh in the Apar land (present-day Khorasan, in northeastern Persia) (Անանուն [Է. դար] 2013, 164; Ашхарацуиц 2023, 124–125).

Prior to this, in the autumn of 450 AD, the marzpan Vasak Syuni, seeking retribution against his political rivals – the Mamikonians and the Kamsarakans, ordered the arrest of the descendants of those leading the Armenian resistance (Փարպեցի 1982, 157). At his command, the sons of Hmayak – Vahan, Vasak, and Artashes Mamikonians, along with the sons of Arshavir Kamsarakan – all grandchildren of Vardan Mamikonian, were taken into custody and sent to the Persian court as hostages (Փարպեցի 1982, 153; cf. Կյուլեսերյան 1909, 384–385; Կոզյան 1926, 66, 97). In doing so, he sought to influence the subsequent activities of the Mamikonians and the Kamsarakans, who were leading the movement, most likely attempting to induce them to make concessions in the implementation of his political agenda.

In 455 AD, the Iberian prince Ashusha was released from captivity. Through his intercession, Vahan, Vasak, and Artashes Mamikonians (Փարպեցի 1982, 267), along with the Kamsarakan brothers, were freed from Persian imprisonment. As is well known, the Mamikonians, the Kamsarakans, and Ashusha Pitiakhsh were con-

nected through affinal relations. Hmayak Mamikonian and Ashusha were married to the daughters of Vahan Artsruni, while the Mamikonian brothers were sons of Ashusha's sister-in-law. Ashusha's son Vazgen was married to Shushanik, the eldest daughter of the sparapet, while the Kamsarakan brothers were sons of Shushanik's sister. The Mamikonian princes spent their youth in the domains of Ashusha Pitashkh, under the supervision of their mother, Princess Dzviki.

In 465 AD, Hamazasp, Artavazd, and Mushegh Mamikonians returned to their homeland. Without dwelling on the activities of Hamazaspian or Hamazasp – the younger brother of the sparapet Vardan Mamikonian, which formed the subject of our recent study (Վարդանյան 2024, 54–55), it should be noted that the primary sources provide no direct information about the descendants of Hamazasp Mamikonian. However, in the 480s AD, Ghazar Parpetsi refers to a younger Hamazasp as "the great benevolent and honourable nakharar of the Mamikonians" (Փարպեցի 1982, 449). If Hamazasp was referred to as a nakharar during the tenure of Vahan Mamikonian as marzpan, sparapet, and tanuter (lord) of Armenia, it is highly likely that he belonged to the elder branch of the family.

B. Ulubabyan, though without detailed explanation, rightly observed that this Hamazasp was either the son or grandson of Hamazasp, the brother of Vardan Mamikonian. Among the medieval Armenian noble houses, it was customary to name grandsons after their grandfathers (Փարպեցի 1982, 512, fn. 4). Moreover, in the Mamikonian dynasty, not only grandsons but also sons were often named after their fathers: in the 4th century AD, the son of the patriarch Vardan bore the same name, and in the early 5th century AD, the third son of the sparapet Hamazasp Mamikonian was also named Hamazasp or Hamazaspian. It is most likely that the younger Hamazasp was his son and had accompanied him during the thirteen-year Persian exile. This younger Hamazasp returned in 465 AD and, following the successful liberation struggle of 482–484 AD, played a role in enabling Ghazar Parpetsi to return from the city of Amid and begin work on his History of the Armenia (Փարպեցի 1982, 449).

During the same period, both Yeghishe and Ghazar Parpetsi mention Mushegh Mamikonian, who had fought at the Battle of Avarayr and, like many of his kinsmen, had been exiled – spending many years in Central Asia. Further mention of Mushegh Mamikonian appears during the Vahanants War (482–484 AD), where he actively participated in the military engagements. In an effort to weaken the resistance and more easily suppress the rebellion, Persian agents spread false rumours in the winter of 483 AD that Vahan's brother, Vasak Mamikonian, and the marzpan Sahak Bagratuni had survived the Battle of Charmana. In response to pleas from the relatives of the fallen, General Vahan Mamikonian dispatched Mushegh Mamikonian to Iberia at the head of a large regiment (Փարպեցի 1982, 349). After spending several months in Iberia and eventually realising that they had been deceived, Mushegh Mamikonian returned to Armenia with his cavalry and joined Vahan Mamikonian,

who was then retreating to Tayk (Փարպեցի 1982, 353; cf. Լեո 1967, 121–122). In the subsequent months, Mushegh – a Mamikonian sepuh, continued to take part in the Armenian–Persian confrontations until the signing of the Treaty of Nvarsak in 484 AD.

Stepanos Taronetsi Asoghik, who wrote during the period of the Bagratuni Kingdom's ascendancy, notes while mentioning the release of the Armenian nakharars by King Peroz, that the office of the Armenian sparapet (commandership) had remained vacant until the years 464–465 AD. According to Asoghik, upon the release of the nakharars from Persian captivity, this administrative position was assumed for a period of twenty years by Mangnos, the son of Vardan Mamikonian (Ստեփանոս Տարոնեցի Ասողիկ 2011, 687). As K. Yuzbashyan has noted, "This information regarding the heir of Vardan Mamikonian is puzzling, since no author prior to Asoghik mentions this Mangnos" (Յուզբաշյան 1989, 210). Even Ghazar Parpetsi, who discusses all the Mamikonians of the period, makes no reference to such a figure. He would certainly have mentioned the son of the martyred sparapet, who, according to B. Kyuleseryan's assessment, would have already reached the age required to command a regiment during the liberation movement (Կյուլեսերյան 1909, 380, fn. 1). Both Yeghishe and Ghazar Parpetsi, who conscientiously record the names of the nakharars and sepuhs who were martyred at Avarayr or were exiled to Persia, would undoubtedly have mentioned Vardan Mamikonian's son, especially if he had led part of the liberation movement. Yet, no such reference exists in their works. M. Chamchians, addressing this issue, suggests that the error stems from later scribes who relied on a highly inaccurate colophon. According to him, the account does not concern Vardan Mamikonian's son Mangnos, but rather his nephew, Vahan (Չամչյանց 1984, 459). M. Ormanian shares this view, noting that Asoghik confused Mangnos with Vahan (Օրմանյան 2001, 514).

The above considerations make it evident that not only did Mangnos not hold the office of sparapet, but that no such Mamikonian is attested in historical sources. As K. Yuzbashyan has further pointed out, Vahan Mamikonian already held the title of sparapet by the year 482 AD (Յուզբաշյան 1989, 211), and likely assumed this role from the second half of the 470s AD onward.

The Mamikonians on the Threshold of the People's Struggle

Ghazar Parpetsi provides no information regarding how long the Mamikonians and their steadfast allies, the Kamsarakan brothers, remained in Gugark, nor does he specify when they returned to their homeland. Likewise, there is no indication of the precise moment when Vahan Mamikonian assumed the leadership of his clan. It is likely that the new generation of the Mamikonian clan returned to Armenia in the early 460s AD (Օրմանյան 2001, 515), by which time the throne of the Armenian Catholicosate had already been occupied by Gyut Arahezatsi (461–478 AD).

Shortly thereafter, he began to consolidate patriotic forces, planning – if not to cast off Persian rule in Marzpanate Armenia, then at least to restore the pre-Avarayr state of affairs, when power in the country belonged to the Armenian nakharars, the bearer of statehood remained the nakharar system (ministerial nobility), and the key offices were held by representatives of the Armenian Council of Elders. The Catholicos succeeded in taking certain steps in that direction; however, the maghkhaz Gadisho Khorkhoruni accused him of anti-state activity before King Peroz (Փարպեցի 1982, 273). As a result, Gyut was deprived of the Catholicosal throne, and the Christian nobility rallied around Vahan Mamikonian, who, following the Catholicos's deposition, became the country's leading political figure (Յուզբաշյան 1989, 219). Not content with the removal of the spiritual head, the nakharars aligned with the Persian orientation turned to a familiar tactic – this time accusing Vahan Mamikonian.

Given the situation, Vahan Mamikonian departed for Ctesiphon, where he converted to Zoroastrianism in an attempt to allay Persian suspicions (Փարպեցի 1982, 283). Delighted by this decision, the Persian royal court entrusted him with the collection of taxes throughout the country (Լևոն 1967, 108). However, before long, Vahan was compelled once again to travel to Ctesiphon and appear before the King of Kings, as his associate Vriv had denounced him at the Persian court, claiming that Vahan, having a large amount of gold in his possession, was using it to win over allies. In the interest of fairness, it must be noted that Vriv's accusation had some foundation, and as K. Yuzbashyan observes: "The rebellion that broke out shortly thereafter must have had its prelude, even if only in the secret plans of the sparapet" (Յուզբաշյան 1984, 96). Continuing the course set by Catholicos Gyut, Vahan Mamikonian had likely begun secret negotiations both with the Byzantine Empire and with tribal groups of the North Caucasus. The large amount of gold was, in all probability, intended to enlist their support in the anti-Sasanian struggle.

Nonetheless, once again, the Mamikonian prince succeeded in outmanoeuvring his adversaries. Realising that the affair was taking a dangerous turn, he took the gold he possessed and set out for Ctesiphon to dispel King Peroz's suspicions – a task in which he succeeded (Փարպեցի 1982, 283, 285). It was likely at this very time, on the eve of the uprising, that the Mamikonian prince was granted the office of sparapet. It is noteworthy that in the period preceding the rebellion, Ghazar Parpetsi does not yet refer to Vahan Mamikonian as sparapet. In this regard, the first time Ghazar refers to Vahan is as "commander of the Armenians" (hayots zoravar) (Փարպեցի 1982, 295), when, through his will, Sahak Bagratuni was appointed marzpan of Armenia. In subsequent events, however, the Mamikonian prince is already referred to as sparapet.

Sebeos also refers to Vahan Mamikonian as sparapet and the leading figure of the Armenian marzpanate (Սեբեոս 1979, 45), rather than Sahak Bagratuni, as B. Harutyunyan attempts to present (Հարությունյան 2016, 101), portraying the latter as the leader of the rebellion, and shortly thereafter adding that Sahak was elected

king of the country by the nakharars, and not as marzpan (Հարությունյան 2016, 103). It is needless to say that the sources contain no reference to the proclamation of a kingdom either on the eve of the Vahanants War or during its course, nor is there any evidence confirming such a claim. It should be noted that the Bagratuni prince assumed the office of marzpan solely through the will of Vahan Mamikonian and his supporters, and during the battles he generally served as the commander of one of the military wings under the sparapet. For the Persian royal court as well, as K. Yuzbashyan has noted, "Vahan was the foremost figure in Armenia; it must be concluded that it was he who was recognised as sparapet and presented himself to King Peroz in that capacity" (Յուզբաշյան 1989, 262–263, fn. 4), and he was re-confirmed in this role by the Persian court during the second half of the 470s AD, during his second visit to Ctesiphon.

The next Mamikonian to be active in the latter half of the 5th century AD was Vahan sparapet's younger brother, Vasak, who, upon returning from captivity, supported his brother in his undertakings. In 482 AD, the marzpan Adervshnasp set out against the rebels with a force of seven thousand men, and he was met by an Armenian contingent of only four hundred soldiers under the command of Vasak Mamikonian (Փարպեցի 1982, 301). In the autumn of 482 AD, near the village of Akori at the foot of Mount Masis, the first battle between the opposing forces took place. Without delving into the details of the battle, it should be noted that the small Armenian force, despite the betrayal of Garjoyl Khorkhoruni, commander of the left flank of the Armenian army, who defected to the Persians with his hundred men, performed a military miracle by defeating an enemy that outnumbered it tenfold (Փարպեցի 1982, 301, 303, 305). This stands as one of the rarest instances in the history of world battles.

We next encounter Vasak Mamikonian in May 483 AD in the canton of Artaz, near the village of Nersehat, not far from Avarayr, where a battle took place. He is mentioned as an assistant to the supreme commander Vahan Mamikonian and was expected to provide support to one of the military wings during the engagement. In this battle, the Armenian army achieved a decisive victory, crushing the numerically superior Persian forces (Փարպեցի 1982, 317). The Armenian triumph was complete: the large Persian army was annihilated, having failed even to accomplish the most minimal of its objectives.

However, the Armenians were not able to enjoy the fruits of victory for long. At the request of the Iberian King Vakhtang Gorgasal (446–502 AD), the Armenian army rushed to his aid and fought a battle in early autumn of 483 AD on the plain of Charmana. In this engagement, the united Armenian-Iberian army, under the command of Vahan Mamikonian, suffered a defeat at the hands of the overwhelmingly superior Persian forces, due in part to the treachery of some Armenian and Iberian nobles who had secretly entered into agreement with the Persians (Փարպեցի 1982, 325, 327, 329; Essays on the History of Georgia 1988, 72). Vasak Mamikonian was heroically martyred in this battle.

As for Artashes, the third son of Hmayak Mamikonian, the primary sources, particularly Ghazar Parpetsi, provide no information concerning him following his release from Persian captivity.

Conclusions

During the post-Avarayr period, the Mamikonians, having managed to restore their place and status among the Armenian nobility, once again rose to confront the external threat, attempting to restore at least the internal autonomy, if not the full independence, of Marzpanate Armenia. The Mamikonian princes, particularly Vahan, Vasak, and their other kinsmen, who had endured Persian captivity and enforced religious conversion, were able to revive the nationwide resistance against Persian domination, which culminated in the victorious peace treaty of Nvarsak in 484 AD. As a direct consequence of this treaty, Vahan Mamikonian (485–505 AD) assumed the office of marzpan of Armenia, and the political situation of pre-Avarayr Armenia was reinstated, with the Armenian nakharar system remaining the bearer of national statehood. Nevertheless, Persian supreme authority was not abolished.

Upon returning from captivity, Hamazasp Mamikonian assisted Ghazar Parpetsi in returning from the city of Amida and in beginning the writing of the History of Armenia. Following his release from Persian captivity, Mushegh Mamikonian participated in the victorious Vahanants War, serving as one of the sparapet's closest allies. Vasak was heroically martyred in the battle of Charmana in 483 AD. Due to the scarcity of primary sources, little is known about the other Mamikonians of this period – Artavazd and Artashes, who were also present on the political stage.

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