



ALBANIA

ALBANIA (Iranian Aran, Arm. Ałuank'), an ancient country in the Caucasus (for Albania in Islamic times, see [Arrān](#)). It was bounded on the north by the Ceraunian mountains, an extension of the Caucasus, on the east by the Caspian Sea, and on the south by the lower course of the Araxes (Aras); on the west its frontiers were unstable: The frontier along the Kura (Kor), affirmed by Strabo (*Geography* 11.14.5), was repeatedly overrun, to the advantage sometimes of the Albanians, sometimes of the Armenians. At the eastern end of the Caucasus range a defile opens up along the shore of the Caspian; this is the Darband pass, called the Gates of Albania and the Caspian Gates by the ancients, Pahak Čoray or Iuroy Pahak by the Armenians.

Albania in antiquity. The Albanians are mentioned for the first time at the battle of Gaugamela (331 B.C.), as being in a contingent composed also of Medes, Cadusii, and Sacae, under the command of Atropates, satrap of Media (Arrian *Anabasis* 3.8.4, 3.11.4), and then in the guard attending Darius III (*ibid.*, 3.13.1). The fact that the Albanians were under the leadership of the satrap of Media seems to indicate that this people, like the Cadusii and the Sacae, had been incorporated into his satrapy; according to one quite reasonable hypothesis, the Albanians would already have belonged to the Median Empire. During the last few decades, excavations have revealed several indications of Achaemenid influence, including bases of columns with palmette designs and cylinder seals (cf. I. G. Narimanov, *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, 1960/4, p. 162; G. A. Tiratsian, *ibid.*, 1964/3, pp. 72-74; I. Aliev, "K interpretatsii paragrafov 1, 3, 4 i 5 IV glavy XI knigi "Geografii" Strabona," *VDI*, 1975/2, p. 162; Dj. A. Khalilov



and I. A. Babaev, *Antichnye traditsii v material'noi kul'ture i iskusstve narodov Sovetskogo Vostoka*, Moscow, 1978, pp. 173ff.).

Although Alexander never penetrated as far as the Caucasus, the Albanians must have been included in the Macedonian Empire, since they belonged to the satrapy of Media. In the partition of 321 B.C., after the death of Alexander, the territory governed by Atropates was to be reduced to the part of Media in the northwest, later known as Media Atropatena or Atropatena. Between 286 and 281 the Macedonian Patrocles, general and admiral of Seleucus I and Antiochus I, undertook the circumnavigation of the Caspian Sea, beginning, it would seem, with the Albanian and Cadusian coast (Strabo 11.6.1; Pliny, *Natural History* 6.36; cf. F. Gisinger, *Pauly-Wissowa XVIII/4* (1949), cols. 2263-64; K. Trever, *Ocherki po istorii i kul'ture Kavkazskoï Albanii*, Moscow and Leningrad, 1959, pp. 55-59). It was probably the first time that the Albanians came into contact with the western world.

The Albanian tribes, each of which had its own chief, spoke a multitude of dialects (Strabo 11.4.6; cf. below). During the Hellenistic period they joined with other neighboring tribes to form a unified state under a single ruler (Strabo 9.7.6; cf. below). It has been supposed that the unification took place towards the end of the 2nd century B.C., by reason of the wars waged between the Arsacid Mithridates II and Artavazd I, king of Armenia (Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 175; O. G. von Wesendonck, "Über georgisches Heidentum," *Caucasica* 1, 1924, p. 51; Trever, *Ocherki*, p. 149). There are grounds for believing that the unification of the Albanians was a slow process which allowed the diversity of languages to continue for a long time.

In 65 B.C. the Roman general Pompey, who had just subjugated Armenia and Iberia and had conquered Colchis, entered Albania at the head of his army. Crossing the arid province of Cambysenē (Kambičan)—recently seized from the Armenians by the Albanians—he turned in the direction of the Caspian Sea. In fording the Alazan river, he clashed with the forces of Oroezes, king of Albania, and eventually defeated them (Plutarch *Pompey* 35; Dion Cassius *Historia Romana* 37.3-4). Theophanes of Mitylene, who accompanied Pompey, was to write an account of what he had observed and heard said in the course of that campaign (W. Fabricius, *Theophanes von Mitylene*, diss., Strasbourg, 1888, pp. 184ff.; R. Laqueur, *Pauly-Wissowa V A/2*, cols. 2012ff; Aliev, "Interpretatsii," pp. 162ff.). Theophanes' testimony formed the basis for Strabo's discussion of Albania and the Albanians (*Geography* 11.4). He described the Albanians as semi-nomadic shepherds who were enthusiastic



hunters, knew little about agriculture, used no money, and practiced trading by barter (ibid., 11.4.4). Though they were subject to one king, they spoke twenty-six languages or dialects (ibid., 11.4.6). They were not very warlike, but were able to field up to 60,000 foot-soldiers and 22,000 horsemen; their cavalry was clad in iron (ibid., 11.4.4), a feature they may have borrowed from the Medes of Atropatena.

Strabo appears to have no knowledge of any city life in the Albania which he describes; not until the 1st century A.D. does Pliny refer to Cabalaca (= Kabala), the capital of Albania (*Natural History* 6.29), followed later by Ptolemy's list of twenty-nine cities of Albania, the most important being Gangara (Gaïtara), Albana, and Ossika (*Geography* 5.11.1-6, 8.19.7-9). Nevertheless recent archeological discoveries have supplied proof that at the time of Pompey's expedition towns already existed in Albania, or were in the course of being developed. Excavations conducted at Chuhur-Kabala, the site of the former Kabala, have yielded objects showing that relations existed with the Hellenistic world (Khalilov and Babaev, "O gorodakh drevneï Kavkazskoï Albanii," *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, 1974/4, p. 102 and fig. 3; Aliev, "Interpretatsii," p. 157); a hoard of coins dated from the 2nd century B.C. to the 1st century A.D. (cf. Babaev and S. M. Kaziev, *Epigrafiya i numismatika* 9, 1971). Vestiges of another city, Shemakha, the Chemachia of Ptolemy, are found near modern Khynsla (Khalilov and Babaev, loc. cit., pp. 103-05, figs. 6, 7). A study of the archeological remains of ancient Albanian cities, especially those of Kabala, has made it possible to observe features which also occur in the town planning and architecture of the Parthians, such as the use of unbaked bricks of the same type, wooden bases of columns, and buildings of great length (cf. A. M. Akopian, "Svyazi Armenii i Kavkazskoï Albanii s Parfiëi," *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, 1979/4, pp. 31ff.). Coins affirm the existence of a certain amount of commercial traffic with Parthia (cf. E. Pakhomov, *Monetnye klady Azerbaïdzhana*, Baku, 1966, p. 9); a hoard of 321 coins discovered at the site of Shemakha includes 159 Parthian coins (Kh. A. Mushegian in *Problemy antichnoï istorii i kul'tury* I, Erevan, 1979, p. 194). An important commercial highway linked eastern Albania with Ecbatana by way of the Araxes and the Kura (cf. K. V. Golenko and A. Radzhabli, *VDI*, 1975/2, pp. 74-75), a road referred to by Aelian (*On the Nature of Animals* 17.32). Otherwise the use of money does not seem to have affected the barter system of the primitive tribes (regarding the validity of Strabo's evidence on this point, see Aliev, "Interpretatsii," pp. 162ff.).



Like the Iberians, the Albanians were not slow to revolt against Rome; in A.D. 36 Antony found himself obliged to send one of his lieutenants to bring an end to their rebellion. Zober, who was then king of Albania, capitulated and Albania thus became, at least in name, a Roman protectorate. A king of Albania appears in the list of dynasties whose ambassadors were received by Augustus (*Res gestae divi Augusti* 37.1; ed. J. Gagé, Paris, 1935, pp. 138-39). In A.D. 35 King Pharasmanes of Iberia and his brother Mithridates, with the support of Rome, confronted the Parthians in Armenia; the Albanians proved effective allies, contributing to the defeat and temporary eviction of the Parthians (*Tacitus Annals* 6.33-35). Vespasian was determined to restore the authority of Rome in the Caucasus as far as the Caspian. The presence of a detachment of the XII Fulminata at a distance of several kilometers from the shores of that sea (69 km south of Baku) is attested by an inscription drawn up between A.D. 83 and 93 in the reign of Domitian (Z. Dzhamposkii, *VDI*, 1950/1, p. 272; *Année Epigraphique*, Paris, 1951, p. 75, no. 262; F. Grosso, *Epigraphica* 16, 1954, pp. 117ff.). Despite the growth of Roman influence, Albania never ceased to remain in close commercial and probably also cultural contact with Parthia. A hoard discovered at 'Alī Bahrāmī provides a good illustration of the continuity of this relationship (Golenko and Radzhabli, *VDI*, 1975/2, pp. 61ff.); the silver coins of the Parthian king Gotarzes II (about A.D. 40-51) were widely distributed over Albania.

The Sasanian period. In about A.D. 252-53 Šāpūr I made himself lord of Great Armenia, which was turned into a Sasanian province; Iberia and Albania were also soon conquered and annexed. Albania appears among the Sasanian provinces listed in the trilingual inscription of Šāpūr I at Naqš-e Rostam (Parthian version, 1.2; Greek version, 1.3; see A. Maricq, *Classica et Orientalia*, Paris, 1965, p. 47). The vicissitudes of Sasanian policy under Narseh were to have no repercussions on the political situation of Albania; although the treaty of Nisibis stipulated the reestablishment of the Roman protectorate over Iberia, Albania remained an integral part of the Sasanian Empire.

Towards the beginning of the 4th century, at a date which is still under discussion, the Arsacid king of Armenia, Tiridates III, officially adopted Christianity, having been converted by St. Gregory. According to Movsēs Kałankatuac'i (or Dasxuvanc'i, *History of the Albanians*, ed. J. Emin, Moscow, 1860; repr. Tiflis, 1912; and ed. Chahnazarian, Paris, 1960, 1.11; tr. J. F. Dowsett, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians by Movsēs Dasxuranc'i*, Oxford, 1961, pp. 11-12), Urñayr the king of Albania soon arrived in Armenia with his



dignitaries for the purpose of being baptized by St. Gregory. Christianity spread in Albania only gradually. Grigoris, a grandson of St. Gregory, consecrated bishop of Iberia and Albania, came to Albania, built a church, and established priests in the city-fortress of Tri (or Tsri), but the inhabitants killed the priests and revolted against the king of Albania, with the help of the king of Persia. The city was taken by the Argesacik' Persians (Movsēs, *History* 1.14, tr. pp. 22-23; cf. H. Manandian, *Beiträge zur albanischen Geschichte*, Jena, 1897, p. 25).

In A.D. 359 Šāpūr II was joined by the king of Albania on his march on Amida; the Albanians were deployed to the north of the city (Ammianus Marcellinus *Res gestae* 18.2.3, 18.6.12). King Ūrnayr of Albania (the above, or his successor) was still an ally of the Sasanian ruler when the latter invaded Armenia in 372. The battle took place near Bagavan on the Arsanias, but Ūrnayr was wounded by the Armenian general Mušel Mamikonian, who allowed him to flee (P'awstos Biwzand, *History* 5.4, in V. Langlois, *Collection des historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie*, 2 vols., Paris, 1877, I, p. 282). On his return to Albania Ūrnayr secretly informed Mušel that Šāpūr was preparing to attack him (*ibid.*, 5.5, in Langlois, *Collection* I, p. 283). The more or less self-interested loyalty of the Albanians explains why the Sasanians helped them to seize from the Armenians the provinces (or districts) of Uti (with the towns of Xaḵxaḵ and P'artaw), Šakašēn, Koḵ', Gardman, and Arc'ax (P'awstos Biwzand, *History* 5.12, 13, in Langlois, *Collection* I, p. 288; *idem*, *Armenian Geography*, tr. A. Soukry, Venice, 1881, p. 39; cf. Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 118; H. S. Anassian, "Mise au point relative à l'Albanie caucasienne," *Revue des études arméniennes* 6, 1969, pp. 306ff.). These territories were to remain in the possession of Albania; a reconquest by Mušel (cf. P'awstos, *ibid.*) was unlikely.

Under Yazdegerd II (438-57) a royal edict requiring Christians of the empire to adopt Mazdaism was addressed, among others, to the Armenians, Iberians, and Albanians (Łazar P'arpec'i, *History of Armenia*, ed. in Venice, 1891, 20; tr. S. Chesarian in Langlois, *Collection* II, p. 281; Ehišē Vardapet, *Histoire de Vardan et de la guerre des Arméniens*, ed. in Venice, 1950, 2; tr. in Langlois, *Collection* II, pp. 190-91). The Albanians sought the aid of the Armenians, who had revolted on the announcement of the proscriptive measures. In a battle near the city of Xaḵxaḵ, in Uti, the Persians were defeated and took flight; the Armenians then launched an attack on the cities and fortresses occupied by the Persians in Albania, and took possession of the "pass of the Huns" (*pahak Honac*), which must have been the defile of Čor (see, however, Trever,



Ocherki, pp. 209, 271, according to which it was the defile of Barmak). The Persian guards were killed and the pass was placed under the custodianship of Vahan, an Albanian prince (Łazar P'arpec'i, 28-30, in Langlois, *Collection II*, pp. 292-93; Ekišē, 2, in Langlois, *Collection II*, p. 208). Nevertheless, Mazdaism continued to make progress in Albania; the king Vačē, son of Arsvaghen and grandson on his mother's side of Yazdegerd II, was converted to the official religion.

But Vačē quickly reverted to Christianity. On the accession of Pērōz in 459 he opened the pass of Čor (Darband) to the Massagetes and, with their support, attacked the Persian army. Pērōz replied by letting the Huns through the Darial pass, and Albania was devastated. After a period of negotiation the two kings eventually reached an agreement: In return for handing over his mother (the sister of Pērōz) and his own daughter, both of them Christians, Vačē obtained from the Sasanian the 1,000 hearths (families) formerly granted him by his father as his share of the inheritance. He then withdrew from the world (Ekišē, 8, in Langlois, *Collection II*, p. 249; Movsēs, *History* 1.10, tr. pp. 9ff.).

After the death of Vačē, Albania was to remain for thirty years without a king. It was the Sasanian Balāš (r. 484-88) who decided to reestablish the Albanian monarchy in the person of Vačagan, son of Yazdegerd and brother of the previous king Vačē (Movsēs, *History* 1.16, tr. p. 25). According to this version, Vačagan Barepaš (the pious) must have been descended from the royal family of Persia. He demonstrated great zeal for Christianity, commanding the nobles who had apostatized to return to the Christian religion and waging war not only on Magianism but also on pagan practices, idolatry, and sorcery (notably against the sect of the *matnahatk'* or "finger-cutters;" cf. below). He took the initiative in convening a church council at Aghuen (between 484 and 488); its canons were endorsed by high civil dignitaries and a certain number of nobles (Movsēs, *History* 1.26, tr. 50-54).

It is not impossible that, after the disappearance of the monarchy, certain dynasties may have asserted their authority on a regional basis and secured recognition of themselves by the Sasanian government (cf. Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 119). This would have been the position of the Mihrakan family, which claimed to be of Sasanian extraction (for genealogy, see Movsēs, *History* 1.17, tr. p. 109; on its doubtful authenticity, cf. N. Akinian, *Handes Amsorya*, Venice, 1953, p. 68; Dowsett, tr. of Movsēs, *History*, p. 107, n. 3).

In about 575, after a raid by two Byzantine generals on Albania, a delegation



of Albanians presented itself in Constantinople to ask the Emperor Justinian II for their country to be reattached to the Empire. Justinian, however, advised them to remain under Sasanian rule (Menander Protector, *Excerpta de legationibus*, ed. Bonn, 1829, p. 394). It appears from the account of Movsēs Kałankatuac'i that there was a rebellion of Albanian noblemen against Ƙosrow II at the beginning of the 7th century. The rebels were apparently held for twenty-five years at the Sasanian court; the Catholicos Viroy, who was one of them, took advantage of this long period of detention to acquire a thorough knowledge of Pahlavi. He was liberated by Kavād II (Movsēs, *History* 2.14, tr. pp. 93ff.).

Arriving from Azarbaijan in 624, Heraclius decided to spend the winter in Albania. On the orders of Ƙosrow, the Albanian nobles were obliged to abandon P'artaw in order to entrench themselves in fortified positions. Heraclius pitched his camp in the province of Uti and the Persian generals Šahrvarāz and Šahēn took their stand, one facing him and the other at his rear. In the battle which followed Heraclius gained the advantage (Sebeos, *History of Heraclius* 26, tr. Macler, Paris, 1904, pp. 82-83; Movsēs, *History* 2.12, tr. pp. 76-81). In 626 the Khazars, who had just concluded an alliance with Heraclius, threatened to invade Albania. Ƙosrow sent to P'artaw a governor named Gayšak, with the responsibility of fortifying the city. Gayšak acted in full cooperation with the nobles and the townspeople; the Khazars, however, breached the Darband pass, and Gayšak fled to Persia (Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, Leipzig, 1883-85, p. 316; Movsēs, *History* 2.11, tr. pp. 83ff.; cf. Trever, *Očerki*, pp. 239-40). In 628 there was a fresh invasion by the Khazars. The *marzbān* Sema Vštinas (Gošnasp?) refused to answer the summons of their leader, Shath. The Catholicos Viroy presented himself at the Khazar camp established in Uti and came to an understanding with Shath, which did not prevent the latter from declaring himself lord of Albania and of Čor (Movsēs, *History* 2.14, tr. pp. 92-100; cf. Trever, *Očerki*, pp. 239-40). In the following year the Khazar leader levied a tax on the fishermen of the Kura and of the Araxes, and also on the merchants; this tax was fixed "in accordance with the landsurvey of the kingdom of Persia" and was paid in silver coinage (Movsēs, *History* 2.16, tr. p. 104). At about the same time, mention is made of Varaz Grigor, a member of the Mihrakan family, consecrated "prince of Albania" by the Catholicos Viroy; he was to send his son Juanšēr, whose deeds are the subject of legend and epic, to represent him in Ctesiphon at the court of Yazdegerd III (Movsēs, *History* 2.18-16, 28, 34; tr. pp. 109-26, 127-30, 142-45).



Half-way through the 7th century, under the caliphate of ‘Otmān, the Arabs invaded Albanian territory and the eastern Caucasus and took possession of Paythakaran (Baylaqān), P’artaw (Barda‘a), Shakashēn, Kabala (Kapaghak), Šervān, Shaporan (Šāberān), and Čor (Darband); Aran was to be reunited with Armenia under a single governor.

Internal organization. The king of Albania was one of the chief vassals of the King of Kings, but exercised only a semblance of authority and was accountable to the *marzbān* who held the real civil, religious, and military power. The *marzbāns* had their seat at P’artaw, the capital, where in the 5th and 6th centuries they minted silver coinage (cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, p. 251). There appears also to have been a *marzbān* of Čor (Darband) in the reign of Yazdegerd II (Movsēs, *History* 2.2; tr. p. 66). It should follow from the inscriptions of Darband (see below) that at a certain period the financial administration of Albania was under the jurisdiction of the *āmārgār* (tax-collector) or Ādurbādagān.

The Albanian court must have been reorganised from the very beginning on the model of the court of Armenia, with the addition of direct borrowings from Parthian Iran. Among the dignitaries of king Vačagan who were signatories at the Council of Aghuen may be noted the *hramanatar* (*framādār*) and the *hazarapet* (*hazārabād*), who took precedence over the “clan-chieftains” (*azgapetk’*) and the “nobles” (*azatk’*) (Movsēs, *History* 1.26, tr. p. 54; cf. above). The first of these dignitaries was equivalent to the *wuzurg framādār* of the Sasanians, a kind of prime minister. As regards the *hazarapet* (also mentioned under Yazdegerd II, see *ibid.*, 2.2, tr. p. 65), it is not known exactly what were his prerogatives in Albania; it is possible that, as in Sasanian Armenia, he was immediately subordinate to the *marzbān*.

Cities and fortifications of Sasanian Albania. P’artaw (a name not related to Parthia, Parthian, cf. H. Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik* I, Leipzig, 1897, p. 65), a former Armenian town situated on the Terter in the province of Uti, was set up as the capital of Albania perhaps at the end of the 4th century (cf. Hübschmann, *Die altarmenischen Ortsnamen*, repr. Amsterdam, 1969, pp. 275, 277, 343; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 237-42, 251, 252 and *passim*; W. Barthold, *ET*¹, p. 656). In the reign of king Vačē, P’artaw was rebuilt by Pērōz under the name of Pērōzabād (Movsēs, *History* 1.15, tr. p. 55); later the city was fortified by Kavād, who was to call it Pērōzkavād (victorious Kavād). P’artaw was at the same time both a powerful stronghold and a prosperous center for trade and crafts. Another city which had formerly been Armenian, Xaxaxā, also situated



in Uti, but near to the Iberian border, became the winter residence of the kings of Albania after having been that of the Armenian kings (cf. Hübschmann, *Ortsnamen*, pp. 272, 273 and n. 1). Also in Uti was Diwatakan, the “royal market town,” mentioned on many occasions by Movsēs Kałankatuac’i (*History* 1.21, 23; 2.10; tr. pp. 38, 40, 48, 81; cf. tr., p. 80, n. 2). Ałuen (Pahl. Alwān) was the royal summer residence (ibid., 1.26; tr., pp. 50-51). The market town of Tigranakert in the canton of Gardman (Sebeos, *History of Heraclius* 26, tr. p. 82) had probably been founded by Tigranes the Great (1st century B.C.). Kabala (Arm. Kapalak), the former capital, retained a certain political importance and became, in the 5th century, the see of a bishop. Excavations on the site (Chuhur-Kabala) have brought to light a fortress and enclosure walls which probably date from the 5th-6th centuries (cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 255ff.). Shemakha was still flourishing; a gilded silver dish found there in a grave in 1968, depicting a Persian dignitary (*marzbān?*) in a hunting scene (mid. 4th cent.?) points to the Sasanian rule (Khalilov, *VDI*, 1976/1, pp. 146-49, figs. 1-3).

All along the Caspian coast the Sasanians built powerful defense works, enclosing the space between the mountain and the sea and designed essentially to bar the way to invaders from the north. Firstly, north of the Apsheron peninsula, the two parallel walls of Barmak rise up, 220 meters apart; these are known from the *Armenian Geography* of Pseudo-Moses (ed. Patkanian, St. Petersburg, 1877, pp. 30-31) by the name of Xorsbēm (cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 274ff.). Next are the walls of Šervān (or Šabran), remarkable for their 30 km length (cf. Pakhomov, “Krupneišhie pamyatniki sasanidskogo stroitel’sstva v Zakavkaz’e,” *Problemy istorii material’noĭ kul’tury*, 1933/9-10, pp. 41-43 and fig.; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 269-71). To the north of Samur a third line of defense works could be the wall referred to as Āfzūt-Kavād in the *Armenian Geography* (p. 31) and thus have been built by Kavād (cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 271-72). The most celebrated of these fortifications are those of Darband, which shut off the pass of Čor (2-3 km between the mountain and the sea). The contribution of the Sasanians to the defense of this pass (mentioned in classical sources from the 1st century A.D.) covered a considerable area. Movsēs Kałankatuac’i (*History* 2.11, tr. p. 83) speaks of “magnificent walls built at great expense by the kings of Persia.” Yazdegerd II undertook the construction of a mighty wall of unbaked brick mixed with straw which extended from the sea to the slopes of Darband (cf. A. A. Kudryavtsev, “O datirovke pervykh sasanidskikh ukrepleniĭ v Derbente,” *Sovetskaya Arkheologiya*, 1979/2, pp. 243ff.). Ķosrow II Anōšīravān—and perhaps his



father Kavād I before him—set himself to reinforce the existing works with a solid wall of stone provided with iron gates (on Darband, cf. Geiger and Kuhn, *Grundr. Ir. Phil.* II, pp. 535-36; Barthold, *Er*¹ I, pp. 940-45; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 274ff.). Twenty inscriptions dated 700, are found on the northern wall (cf. Pakhomov in *Izvestiya obshchestva obsledovaniya i izucheniya Azerbaïdzhana* 8/5, 1929, pp. 3-22; H. S. Nyberg, *ibid.*, pp. 23ff.; Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 346-53). If this date is related to the Seleucid era, it should correspond to A.D. 386 (G. Gropp, “Die Derbent-Inschriften und das Adur Gušnasp,” *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg* I, *Acta Iranica* 4, Tehran and Liège, 1975, pp. 317ff.); but there are other, later datings (Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 350ff.; Gropp, “Derbent-Inschriften,” p. 317, n. 4; V. G. Lukonin in Kudryavtsev, “O datirovke,” pp. 256-57).

The religion of the Albanians. Strabo gives interesting details about the Albanian religion, which was centered on the worship of three divinities: the Sun, Zeus, and the Moon (*Geography* 11.4.7). Though it is customary to associate this triad with the three great divinities of Iranian and Armenian Mazdaism—Mithras, Ahura Mazdā, and Anāhitā (cf. Wesendonk, *Caucasica* I, p. 54; Trever, *Ocherki*, p. 151)—this approximation is imprecise. Without denying the fact that the Albanian religion was penetrated by Mazdean influence from Armenia, it is necessary to bear in mind other external factors and the existence of an indigenous substratum. The sanctuary of the Moon, situated near the Iberian border, possessed a vast sacred territory administered by the high priest, who was second in rank in the whole kingdom. The temple slaves (*hierodules*) were apt to fall into trances and to make prophecies (Strabo, *loc. cit.*). These features are characteristic not so much of the cult of Anāhitā as of practices current in certain sanctuaries of Cappadocia and Pontus dedicated to lunar divinities (*ibid.*, 12.2, 3, 3.31; cf. Trever, *Ocherki*, pp. 150ff.). A distinctive element in the cult of the Moon in Albania was the performance of human sacrifice, described by Strabo (*Geography* 11.4.7).

It is probable that the cult of the Moon had existed for a long time, at least locally. However, the tradition of the Sasanian epoch reveals traces of other quite different beliefs, which were so deeply rooted that, towards the end of the 5th century, King Vačagan III had to take vigorous measures to deal with them. There was the sect of the “finger-cutters,” already proscribed by the *marzbāns*, and that of the Poisoners; in each case the victim was designated by the Demon in person. According to another belief, the Demon blinded those who refused to make sacrifices to Evil, etc. (Movsēs, *History* 1.18, tr. pp. 30-32).



There was thus a collection of practices of an essentially demoniac nature, far removed from the principles of Mazdean law and difficult to reconcile with what is known of the most ancient religion of the Albanians.

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