



AMATUNI

AMATUNI, Armenian dynastic house, known historically after the 4th century A.D. (P'awstos Buzand, *Patmut'iw m Hayoc'*, 3.8, 14; 4.4) in the region of Artaz, between lakes Van and Urmia, with its center at Šawaršan, modern Mākū, and subsequently also at Aragacotn, west of lake Sevan, with the castle of Ōšakan. Of Caspio-Median origin, like the Mardpet, Mandakuni, and Murac'an dynastic houses, it is given a spurious Jewish genealogy by Movsēs Xorenac'i (2.57). The dynastic precedence and military potential of the Amatunis can be seen from the feudal aid of 500 horses they apparently owed to their suzerain, the king of Armenia. In 428 the Sasanians, in accord with certain of the Armenian dynasts, who had never regarded their king as more than a *primus inter pares* and had been impatient even of that primacy, abolished the Arsacid monarchy; Vahan (II) Amatuni was appointed by the Persian king as assistant governor to the Iranian *marzbān* of Armenia. Nevertheless, Vahan was among the dynasts who protested Yazdegerd II's attempt to impose Zoroastrianism on the Christians of Armenia in 448-49, were summoned to court at Ctesiphon, and, in 451, took part in the Armenian insurrection against Iran. As a result Vahan and several other dynasts of his house were banished to Gorgān. Yet, as preparations were underway for another insurrection in 482, it was an Amatuni, Varaz Šapuh, who revealed the plan to the *marzbān*. Finally, in the war of 572-91 between the Iranian and the Roman empires, Kotit Amatuni, together with other Armenian princes exasperated by the bureaucratic oppression of the emperor Maurice, sided with Kōsrow II. But Amatuni fell into disgrace ca. 596 at Ctesiphon, and the king had him put to death. The rigors of Arab rule after the fall of the Sasanians finally provoked the



Armenian revolt of 771-72, which was led by the dynasts. The revolt's failure forced many of its leaders to flee to Georgia or Byzantium; in 791, Šapuh Amatuni, his son Haman, and some 12,000 followers migrated to the Byzantine empire. In the following century, other Amatunis, though still reigning in Artaz, appear also among the vassals of the Arcrunis of Vaspurakan. In the 13th and 14th centuries, this house, under the name of Vač'utean, once more came to prominence in the Georgian sphere of influence; under the suzerainty of the Kamsarakan Pahlawunis, the Mxargrdzelis, it reigned again in Aragacotn, as well as in the neighboring lands of Širak (once a Kamsarakan and then a Bagratid principedom) and Nig, with its great fortress of Amberd. Thereafter it disappears from history, though in the 18th century a family of the same name was recognized as descended from it, and therefore as princely, in the kingdom of Georgia.

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