



## ATRUŠAN

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**ATRUŠAN**, the Armenian word for “fire temple,” a loan-word from Parthian (see H. Hübschmann, *Armen. Etymologie*, p. 110 and more recently H. W. Bailey, *Dictionary of Khotan Saka*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 309, s.v. *byuvāre*). Armenian Zoroastrians worshipped at both fire temples and image-shrines, the latter called *bagin-k’*. In the first century B.C., Strabo described the Magian temple cult of fire in Cappadocia, to the west of Armenia (Geography 15.3.15), and in the fourth century A.D. the Armenian historian Agathangelos referred to the *moxrapaštuṭ’iwn naxneac’ meroc’* “ash-worship of our ancestors” (*History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson, Albany, 1976, par. 89). This is apparently a reference to the mounds of ash heaped upon fire-altars to keep the living coals hot between temple services, when the fire was made to blaze up, or it refers to the Zoroastrian practice of bringing ashes from hearth fires to the fire temple. Pits filled with wood ash have been excavated next to the sites of pre-Christian shrines at Duin (Dvin)), the capital of Persian Armenia in the sixth century A.D. The shrines were probably fire temples, for we are told by the historian Yovhannēs of Drasxanakert that two prominent Armenian noblemen, Šawasp Arcruni and Vndoy of Duin, apostasized Christianity and built *zmeheann Ormzdakan ew ztun hrapaštuṭ’ean* “the Temple of Ormizd and the house of fire-worship” (Drasxanakertc’i, *Patmuṭ’iwn Hayoc’*, Tiflis, 1912, p. 59; on the excavations, see A. A. K’alanṭ’aryan, *Dvini nyuṭ’akan mšakuyṭ’ə 4-8 dd.* (Material culture of Dvin in the 4th-8th centuries), Hayastani hnagitakan hušarjannerə (Armenian archeological monuments) 5, Erevan, 1970 and K. G. Łafadaryan, “Dvin k’alak’i himnadrman žamanaki ev miĵnaberdi heṭ’anosakan mehyani masin,” *Patmabanasirakan Handes*, Erevan, 1966, p. 2). The form



Ormizd above, corresponding to Sasanian Middle Persian rather than the Parthian form Aramazd of the Armenian pre-Christian cult, indicates that the fire temple at Duin was built under Persian auspices. The remains of a fire-altar, constructed most likely during the proselytizing campaign of Yazdegerd II in the mid-fifth century against the Christian Armenians, were found directly beneath the main altar Ējmiacin Cathedral, the Mother See of the Armenian Church (see A. Sahinyan, “Recherches scientifiques sous les voûtes de la Cathédrale d’Ētchmiadzine,” *Revue des études arméniennes*, N.S. 3, 1966). According to the Armenian historian Movsēs Xorenac’i (*History of the Armenians*, tr. R. W. Thomson, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, II, p. 277), Ardašīr I (224-41) invaded Armenia, destroyed the *bagink’*, but commanded that the *hurn ormzdakan* “fire of Ormizd” be kept burning continuously. No fire temple has been found in Armenia which can be assigned definitely to pre-Sasanian times, before the iconoclastic movement of the third century (see M. Boyce, “Iconoclasm among the Zoroastrians,” in J. Neusner, ed., *Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty IV*, Leiden, 1975, pp. 93-111), but a tenth-century writer mentions a fire temple called Hurbak; Hübschmann (op. cit., p. 181) suggests that this is the Armenian rendering of the name of Ādur-Farnbag, but more likely it is an Armenian form of a Pahlavi term for a fire temple, *dar-ī ātaxšān*, found in *Dēnkard VI* (ed. S. Shaked, *The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages*, Boulder, 1979, pp. 128-29 and xxvii), “court of the fire(s).”

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