

**THE ROYAL AND PRINCELY HOUSES OF PROPER ALBANIA AND EASTERN
REGIONS OF ARMENIA FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE 13TH CENTURY
(HISTORICAL AND SOURCE STUDY EXAMINATION)**

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The monograph of A.Hakobyan is an attempt to study the royal and princely houses of Proper Albania and Eastern regions of Armenia from antiquity to the 13th century.

Proper Albanian Lezgian-speaking tribes (according to Strabo - 26 of them) who live on the left bank of the River Kura created a united kingdom only at the very beginning of the 1st century BC. Apparently, its governing family line was actually ethnically Albanian.

The eastern, coastal half of the Albanian kingdom had been separated from it in the first half of the 3rd century AD where the kingdoms of Masquts, Balasakan, etc. came into existence. Thereafter, the sources stop calling the inhabitants of these areas as "Albanians", which leads the author to the conclusion that the process of consolidation of proper Albanian tribes in a single kingdom was not yet completed and the term "Albanians" continued to be a collective name, describing only meta-ethnic community, which united the entire population of this administrative-territorial unit as an exonym.

A change of the royal dynasty took place in the Albanian kingdom at the end of the 3rd century replacing the ancient dynasty which was originated from one of the proper Albanian tribes, by representatives of Parthian royal lineage of Arsacides. They, probably, were akin to the Arsacid dynasty from the neighboring Masqut kingdom. In the 4th century the kingdoms/viceroyalties of the Eastern side of Armenia - on behalf of the king of Greater Armenia, performed military Bdeskh functions with respect to the Albanian and Balasakan kingdoms on the left bank of the Kura, bearing supreme responsibility for the protection of their external (northern) borders.

In 428 AD Shahanshah of Iran Bahram (Varahran) Gur abolished the Arsacid kingdom of Greater Armenia, and formed a new marzpanate instead. The Sassanids then cut off from Armenia the northeastern province of Utik' and approximately two decades later Artsakh (in 450-451) in order to include them in the newly formed neighboring marzpanate of Aran/Albania. By the end of the 5th century new names of that kingdom were accepted by the Armenian population on the right bank of the Kura, who even attempted to represent the meaning (semantics) of the names on the Armenian linguistic and cultural grounds (the legend of Sisak and Aran Haykids per Khorenatsi). It leads to the conclusion that at this point the process of consolidation of proper Albanian meta-ethnic population still was not completed with the formation of a single ethnic group within the endonym "Albanians" and its exonym continued to remain

collective one. The creation and outspreading of the Albanian alphabet by Mashtots and Albanian priest Beniamin could have facilitated the completion of Albanian ethnic consolidation. However, the development of the new alphabet apparently was less successful than in neighboring Armenia and Iberia (Kartli).

At the beginning of the 6th century the administrative and ecclesiastical center of the Albanian marzpanate had been moved from the left bank of the Kura to the ethnically Armenian right bank. This led to a further development of this “country” primarily on the basis of the Armenian ethno-political, cultural and linguistic traditions. Established at the beginning of the 7th century the “Albanian prince” self-government institute was entrusted to the right-bank Armenian princely family of Gardmanatsi, a branch of the descendants of the legendary Aran Haykid. In the 9th century the title moved to the Armenian Bagratids from Shaqi and “Aranshahiks” from central Artsakh (Khachēn), dating back to the early medieval Armenian princely family Tsavdēatsi, another branch of the descendants of the legendary Aran. The new family name “Aranshahiks” was created on literary grounds as a result of the erroneously associated matching of the half-forgotten official Iranian name of the position of the last Arsacid Albanian king Vachagan the Pious (“Aranshah”) with the name of the eponym for Aran per Movsēs Khorenatsi.

In the period of feudal fragmentation a kingdom status was given not only to the Duchies Shaqi/Herethi (in Proper Albania) and P'arisos (early medieval region Gardmanatsik', on the right bank of the Kura), but also to Gorozu (in southern Artsakh, later -Dizak) and Khachēn. The first kingdom led by a local Armenian royal family of Bagratids was founded (according to the restored original text of “The History” by Mashtots Eḫivardetsi) in 894, and the last three were founded in the second half of the 10th century. Whereas the kingdom of Shaqi or “The Second Albanian kingdom” ceased to exist by the end of the 10th century, the three kingdoms on the right bank of the Kura lasted until the second half of the 11th century, and fell under the onslaught of Saljuks. Thus, we can conclude that the existed erroneous assumption of kinship between the royal family of Bagratids in Shaqi and Aranshahiks of the right bank of the Kura in the literature has already been overcome, as it is clarified that “Albanian prince” Yovhannēs mentioned in 838 and 853 was not the son of Sahl Smbatean Aranshahik, and he was the homonymous grandfather of Yovhannēs-Hamam Bagratid (Hamam Areveltsi), the founder of the Shaqi kingdom.

The separation of Duchies of Lower and Upper Khachēn at the end of the 12th century should be associated with the two elder homonymous sons of Hassan Great the Hermit (also known as – Hassan from Gerakar or from Khachēn, the last king of Baḫ' - Siunik'), who married twice and named both his firstborns after his father (Vakhtang from Khokhanaberd and Vakhtang from Hatherk'). Their mothers Kata and Mamakhathun were daughters of, respectively, the penultimate king of Baḫ' Grigor II and one of the last kings of Kiurikids from Tawush, Matsnaberd Kiurikē III.

The founder of the West Khachēn princely family of Dop'eans was another son of the same Hassanthe Hermit - Grigor I from Tsar, whose son Hassan I married Princess Dop' - the sister of famous amirspasalars Zak'arē and Ivanē and the mother of Grigor II from Tsar.

The title of princely family Sakreants/Sakareants appearing in the literature (but not in authentic sources) owed its origins not to the name of Hassan the Hermit's grandfather or uncle, but his grandson Zak'arē-Nasradola who was the younger brother of Hassan-Jalal Dola - the famous churchwarden of the Gandzasar temple. The father of the latter - Vakhtang from Khokhanaberd (Hassan the Hermit's eldest son), was married to Khorishah, the daughter of amirspasalar Sargis - the son of Zak'arē I, and the third name (nickname) of junior Zak'arē was apparently related to the non-standard form, unattested in the sources that reached us, of his name or his maternal great-grandfather.

Ivanē-Athabak, son of Hassan-Jalal Dola and Mamqan (who, apparently, was the daughter of Aslanbēk son of Martspan Mamikonean from Dseł), also had the third, "Mongolian sounding" name - Kherkhan, attested in lapidary inscriptions in Koshik-anapat monastery, which was in the possession of his brothers-in-law Khachēn Mamikonids.