



## ARRĀN

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**ARRĀN**, a region of eastern Transcaucasia. It lay essentially within the great triangle of land, lowland in the east but rising to mountains in the west, formed by the junction of the Rivers Kur or Kura and Araxes or Aras. It was thus bounded on the north by Šervān; on the north west by Šakkī (Armenian Šak'e) and Kaxeti in eastern Georgia; on the south by Armenia and Azarbaijan; and on the southeast by the Caspian coastal province of Mūqān or Mūgān. Arrān's situation between these two great rivers explains the name *Bayn al-nahrayn* given to it by Islamic geographers.

In pre-Islamic times, Arrān formed the heart of the province of Caucasian Albania (to be distinguished of course from the Balkan Albania), which in fact embraced all eastern Transcaucasia, i.e. Arrān here was a wider concept than that of post-Islamic Arrān, and corresponded *grosso modo* with the modern Azarbaijan SSR. The Armenian term for this land was Ałvank' or Ğaneak', and the history of the region, from mythical times till the 10th century A.D., is given by the Armenian historian Movsēs Dasxuranc'i (formerly referred to as Kałankatwac'i) (Armenian text ed. M. Emin, Moscow, 1860, repr. Tiflis, 1912, annotated tr. C. J. F. Dowsett, *The History of the Caucasian Albanians*, London, 1961 ). The Greeks knew the people as Albanoi, and the Georgians knew them as Rani, a form taken over in an arabized form for the early Islamic geographical term al-Rān (pronounced ar-Rān). Early Arrān seems to have displayed the famed linguistic complexity of the Caucasus as a whole. Strabo 9.4, cites Theophanes of Mytilene that Albania had at least 26 different languages or dialects, and the distinctive Albanian speech persisted into early



Islamic times, since Armenian and Islamic sources alike stigmatize the tongue as cacophonous and barbarous, with Eṣṭakrī, p. 192, Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 349, tr. Kramers-Wiet, p. 342, and Moqaddasī, p. 378, recording that *al-Rānīya* was still spoken in the capital Barda'a or Barḍa'a in their time (4th/10th century). Hence Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 117, was doubtless correct when he spoke of Albania/Arrān as being pre-eminently a non-Indo-European land; the Albanian tongue must have belonged to the Eastern Caucasian linguistic family, as is indicated by the recently-discovered table of the 52 characters of the Albanian alphabet, in which a few inscriptions have also been found by Soviet archeologists (see V. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvān and Darband in the 10th-11th Centuries*, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 11-12; the present Udi language, surviving vestigially in Šakkī, is considered to be a remnant of it).

Albania became Christianized at approximately the same time as was Armenia; Movsēs Dasxuranc'ī places this event in the reign of King Ūrnayr in the mid-4th century, and states that St. Gregory, founder of the Armenian national church, was responsible for the monarch's baptism. The Monophysite Albanian church remained separate from the Armenian one till the end of the 7th century, when the two were united under stimulus from the Arabs. Until well into medieval Islamic times, Muslims must have been only a minority in Arrān; Moqaddasī, p. 376, writing towards the end of the 4th/10th century, describes the Christians as still a majority in the towns of Qabala and Šābarān (near Quba). In the Byzantino-Sasanian wars, the Albanian kings sometimes had to supply contingents for the imperial Persian army, and Ūrnayr participated with Šāpūr II in the siege of Āmed in 359, but more generally they combined with their fellow-Christian Armenian princes in resisting Persian expansion into Transcaucasia and Armenia, at times even paying tribute to the Byzantines.

Towards the end of the 5th century, the ancient ruling dynasty of Albania seems to have died out, and in the later 6th century and at the time of the Arab invasions some decades after then, Albania was ruled by princes of the Mihrān family, who claimed descent from the Sasanians but were probably of Parthian origin. Their most famous representatives in the 7th century were Varaz-Grigor, his son Juanšēr (Persian Javānšīr) and Varaz-Trdat I. The military exploits of the latter two potentates in the period of the first Arab invasions of Armenia and Arrān figure prominently in the 2nd book of Movsēs Dasxuranc'ī's chronicle. These princes bore the Persian title of Arrānšāh (in certain of the Arabic sources corruptly written as Līrānšāh), Armenian



Eranšahi' or Aranšahi'.

During the time of the orthodox caliphs, and in particular during 'Otmān's caliphate, such Arab commanders as Salmān b. Rabī'a al-Bāhelī and Ḥabīb b. Maslama led raids into Armenia and Arrān, and in ca. 24/645 conquered the chief town of Arrān, Partaw (Arabic Barda'a, q.v.). Henceforth, Barda'a was always to be the bastion of Islam in these parts, though Muslim garrisons were placed in other urban centers such as Baylaqān, Šamkūr, and Qabala, and these were used as bases for raids northwards to Darband or Bāb al-Abwāb and the Khazar lands (see D. M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton, 1954, pp. 46ff., and Minorsky, *A History of Sharvān and Darband*, pp. 17ff.). Nevertheless, Arab control over these Caucasian march lands was of necessity light and often uncertain, in the face of periodic invasions by such northern peoples as the Alans and Khazars. Arrān remained essentially a frontier province, left to its native princes, who were led by the Mihranids (these last being accorded by the Arabs the title of *Baṭrīq* or *Patricius*, cf. Ya'qūbī, II, p. 562), on condition of the payment of tribute to the Muslim exchequer. In practice, the princes of Arrān in the time of Varaz-Trdat I (d. 705) paid tribute simultaneously to the Arabs, the Byzantines and the Khazars, according to Movsēs Dasxuranc'i (3.12; in regard to the first two powers, probably as a result of the treaty of 685 between Justinian II and 'Abd-al-Malek providing for the division between the two empires of the tribute of Armenia and Arrān), an indication of the confused state of affairs in eastern Transcaucasia.

Since the people of Arrān remained substantially Christian, they were treated in Islamic law as *Ahl al-Demma*, hence liable to the poll-tax or *jezya*. This was paid in coins with Islamic superscriptions, and under the Omayyads sporadically and under the 'Abbasids regularly, *dirhams* were issued from a mint called "Arrān" (probably either Barda'a or Baylaqān), in the case of the 'Abbasids, from 145/762 onwards, continuing into the 3rd/9th century (see E. von Zambaur, *Die Münzprägungen des Islams, zeitlich und örtlich geordnet I*, Wiesbaden, 1968, p. 39; coins were also minted with the name "Arrān" under the Il-khanids in the first half of the 8th/14th century). There was also in Arrān, as in the whole Caucasian region, much intermarriage between Christians and Muslims, and Movsēs Dasxuranc'i (2.32) inveighs against those Albanian nobles who polluted the race and their faith by marriages with the infidels.

The Mihranids were extinguished through the assassination of Varaz-Trdat II



by Nerseh Pīlīppean in 207/822-23, and the Armenian prince of Šakkī to the north of Arrān, Sahl i Smbatean (Arabic, Sahl b. Sonbāt), extended his power over Arrān. The province was in these years much disturbed by the revolt of the Ḳorramī rebel Bābak, whose center was at Baḍḍ just to the south of the Araxes, and it was Sahl who delivered up Bābak to the caliph al-Mo'taşem in 223/837-38 (see Minorsky, "Caucasica IV. 1. Sahl ibn-Sunbāt of Shakkī and Arrān," in *BSOAS* 15, 1953, pp. 504-14). The middle years of this century saw an intensification, however, of the policies of Islamization under al-Motawakkel's governor in Armenia Boḡā al-Kabīr, when various Armenian and Albanian local princes were deported to Baghdad and Samarra. But in 247/861-62 the caliph recognized as supreme prince in these regions the Bagratuni Ašot I (Arabic, Ašūt), who in 272/886 received the title of king. As 'Abbasid control over the outlying parts of the caliphate decayed, so its authority in the Caucasian region weakened, allowing local Muslim military commanders and adventurers, like the Iranian Sajids (q.v.) of Azarbaijan and then, in the 4th/10th century, the Daylamī *Mosaferids*; also called Sallarids or Kangarids to assume control in eastern Transcaucasia south of Šervān (which now had its own line of Šervānšāhs, the Arab Yazīdīs, based on the town of Šervān). The northern branch of the Mosaferids, a family originally from Ṭārom in Daylam, ruled in Arrān under Marzobān b. Moḡammad b. Mosāfer (330-46/941-57), followed by his son Ebrāhīm, extending momentarily as far north as Darband, but failing to maintain their position in Azarbaijan and Arrān under pressure from the Kurdish Rawwadids of Tabrīz. It was during the Mosaferids' rule in Arrān that the Scandinavian Rūs mounted their celebrated raid up the Kur valley to Barda'a (332/943-4).

The Islamic geographers of this period give descriptions of Arrān in general and of its towns (Barda'a, Baylaqān, Ganja and Šamkūr or al-Motawakkeliya) in particular, describing their agricultural fertility and their importance for commerce across the Caucasus, despite their vulnerability to attacks from the Georgians and the Rūs. The *Ḥodūd al-'ālam*, (tr. Minorsky pp. 142-45, commentary pp. 396-403), considers Azarbaijan, Arrān, and Armenia as the pleasantest of all the Islamic lands. It is also interesting that Ebn Ḥawqal (pp. 349, 356, tr. pp. 342, 348) speaks of "the two Arrāns," apparently meaning Arrān proper to the south of the Kur and also Šervān to its north. The native princes of Arrān were in the later 4th/10th century and early 5th/11th century hard-pressed by the Kurdish Shaddadids established in Ganja from 360/970 onwards, who also captured the Armenian city of Dvin. It seems that certain of the princes of Arrān tried to preserve their position by marriage alliances with



the Rawwadids. Also, after this time, when the Shaddadids were in full occupation of Arrān, the Persian poet Qaṭrān (q.v.), who flourished in the middle decades of the 5th/11th century and was the eulogist of various Muslim potentates of Azarbaijan and Arrān, praises the Shaddadid Amīr Faḏlūn b. Faḏl II b. Abi'l-Aswār (465-67/1073-75) for his descent on the maternal side from the Bagratunis, indicating further Muslim-Christian alliances (see Minorsky, *Ḥodūd al-ālam*, pp. 396-97, and idem, *Studies in Caucasian History*, London, 1953, chaps. i and ii). The last known native prince of Arrān from the old families mentioned by a continuator of Movsēs Dasxuranc'i (3.23) is the ruler Senek'erim of Yovhannēs son of Iṣṣan, king of the Armenian province of Siwnik' or Sisakan (the mountainous region lying between Lake Sevan, later Turkish Gökçe, and the Araxes, hence to the west of Arrān, see Markwart, *Ērānšahr*, pp. 120-22, and Minorsky, op. cit., pp. 68-70) in the last years of the 11th century (according to Brosset, ca. 1080-1105).

The eastern Caucasus came under Saljuq control in the middle years of the 5th/11th century, and in ca. 468/1075-56 Sultan Alp Arslān sent his slave commander 'Emād-al-dīn Savtigin as governor of Azarbaijan and Arrān, displacing the last Shaddadids. From this period begins the increasing Turkicization of Arrān, under the Saljuqs and then under the line of Eldigüzid or Ildeñizid Atabegs, who had to defend eastern Transcaucasia against the attacks of the resurgent Georgian kings. The influx of Oghuz and other Türkmens was accentuated by the Mongol invasions. Barda'a had never revived fully after the Rūs sacking, and is little mentioned in the sources. It seems to have been replaced as the capital of Arrān by Baylaqān, but this was in turn sacked by the Mongols en route for Šervān and Darband in spring 1221 (Jovaynī, tr. Boyle, I, pp. 148-49); after this, [Ganja](#), the later Elizavetopol and now Kirovābād, rose to prominence, the southern part of Arrān now becoming known as Qarabāg. The old name Arrān drops out of use, and the history and fortunes of the region now merge into those of [Azarbaijan](#).

See also [ALBANIA](#).



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