



ČĀČ

ČĀČ (Ar. Šāš), the name of a district and of a town in medieval Transoxania; the name of the town was gradually supplanted by that of Tashkent (q.v.) from late Saljuq and Mongol times onwards.

The pre-Mongol period. The province of Čāč lay on the right bank of the Syr Darya or Jaxartes, with those of **Īlāq** to its south and of **Asfijāb** to its north, and through it ran the right-bank affluent of the Syr Darya, the Parak/Barak or Chirchik river (the name *nahr al-Šāš* was however, reserved in early Islamic times for the course of the Syr Darya itself after it had received various tributaries running down from the mountains, see *Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, tr. Minorsky, p. 73).

A settlement in the Chirchik oasis existed in pre-Islamic times. In his inscription on the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt at Naqš-e Rostam Šāpūr I lists Čāč (Parth. š'ss[tn?], Gk. Tsatsenes) as the furthestmost limit of the empire to the northeast (Maricq, pp. 306-07, 336-37). In Chinese sources of the T'ang period, we have Ši and Čeče for Čāč, and the Buddhist pilgrim Hsüan-Tsang visited it in the early 7th century (Bretschneider, II, pp. 55-56). In Sogdian script the form *c'cn'y* is attested (Henning, pp. 8-9). In the accounts of the Arab conquests in Transoxania in the early 2nd/8th century by Qotayba b. Moslem, there is mentioned a local ruler (*malek*) of Šāš (whether this man was Turkish or Iranian is unknown) with his capital at the otherwise unidentified town of Țārband (Balādorī, *Fotūh*, p. 421; Țabarī, II, pp. 1517, 1521; cf. Gibb, pp. 49, 51, and Grousset, p. 166). There were, in fact, several towns in the province, the most significant of which were **Banākaṭ** on the Syr Darya itself and Benkaṭ,



two *farsaks* away, normally described in the Islamic geographical literature of the 4th/10th century as the capital of the province and possibly lying on the site of the later, and modern, Tashkent (see Maqdesī [Moqaddasī], p. 276, and *Hodūd al-‘ālam*, tr. p. 118: Benkaṭ the *qaṣaba* of Šāš/Čāč; also mentioned *ibid.*, p. 117, is Jabgūkaṭ described as formerly the military camp of Čāč, and this name, obviously containing the ancient Turkish tribal title *Yabgū*, points to a strong Turkish presence in the region by this time).

Like Asfijāb, Čāč was in the first Islamic centuries regarded as a frontier region protecting the *dār al-Eslām* against the pagan Turks, and as in several other parts of Central Asia and the region to the southeast of the Caspian Sea, there existed there a protective rampart and ditch against the steppe dwellers, possibly built by the son of the ‘Abbasid governor of Khorasan Ḥomayd b. Qaḥṭaba (see Ebn Ḥawqal, ed. Kramers, p. 509, tr. Kramers, p. 486; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 172-73). A local ruler of Čāč and his Turkish followers joined the rebellion of Rāfe’ b. Layṭ against Hārūn al-Rašīd (Ṭabarī, III, p. 712), but later in the 3rd/9th century Čāč fell within the dominions of the Samanids, and one of the early members of the family, Yaḥyā b. Asad, was granted the governorship of Čāč as early as 204/819 by the governor of Khorasan Ġassān b. ‘Abbād (Ebn al-Aṭīr, ed. Tornberg, VII, p. 192; cf. Naršaḳī, ed. Modarres Rażawī, pp. 90-91, tr. Frye, pp. 76-77). Public works were then undertaken there, such as the restoring of a canal which had silted up, for which the caliph al-Mo‘taṣem grudgingly contributed a substantial sum (Ṭabarī, III, p. 1326, tr. Marin, p. 129, and ‘Awfī, quoted in Barthold, *op. cit.*, p. 212).

The classical Islamic geographers describe the province as fertile, populous and agriculturally prosperous, and its chief town Benkaṭ as a town with the classical division of a *madīna* with a citadel (*qaṭ‘a*) and Friday mosque, an inner suburb (*rabaż*) and an outer one, all surrounded by walls; the inhabitants were bellicose frontier fighters; and the specialties of the region included bows and arrows made of *kadang* (birch?) wood and saddles of shagreen (*kīmaḳt*) hide (Maqdesī [Moqaddasī], pp. 276-77, 325; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 507-09, tr. pp. 485-87; *Hodūd al-‘ālam*, tr. pp. 117-18, comm. p. 357; Yāqūt, *Boldān*, Beirut, III, pp. 308-09; Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 480-83; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 168-75; for *kīmaḳt/kīmokt* see Zeki Validi Togan, pp. 122-24).

It is in the 5th/11th century that the name for Čāč of Tashkent first appears in the *India* of Bīrūnī (ed. Sachau, p. 149, tr. I, p. 298), where the Khwarazmian scholar quotes the etymology of Turkish *taš* plus Iranian *kand*, lit. “stone city,” and identifies it with the “stone fortified town,” *lithos pyrgos*, of Ptolemy’s



Geography (cf. Marquart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 155); but Minorsky much more plausibly saw in the first element a dissimilated form of *čāč* (*Ḥodūd al-‘ālam*, comm., p. 357). It is in the later 5th/11th century and the 6th/12th century that coins, formerly in large part minted simply at Šāš (i.e., Benkaṭ), begin to be minted at Banākaṭ (Zambaur, pp. 79, 80, 156-57), and it may well be that, by this period, with the florescence of the Qarakhanids and K̲v̲ārazmšāhs, Banākaṭ had eclipsed Benkaṭ in importance; it is the former alone which is mentioned in the Mongols' attack on Čāč (Jovaynī, tr. Boyle, I, pp. 91-92), but it was to be Tashkent which, under the Great Khans and then the Chaghatayids, was to have the greater fame.

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