



GANJA

GANJA (Ar. Janza), the Islamic name of a town in the early medieval Islamic province of Arrān (the classical Caucasian Albania, Armenian Alvank'; see ARRĀN). In imperial Russian times, the town was called Elisavetpol after 1813; in Soviet times, when it came within the Azarbaijan SSR, it was first called Gandzha and then, after 1935, Kirovabad; now, in the independent Azarbaijan Republic, it has reverted to the old name of Ganja and is the Republic's second largest city after Baku (q.v.). It lies at latitude 40° 39' N. and longitude 46° 20' E. on a small, right-bank affluent of the Kor (Kura) River, the Ganja Čāy. It is not to be confused, in a pre- and early Islamic context, with the near-homonymous Ganjak (q.v.; Ar. Šīz) in Azarbaijan, the site of a famous fire temple (see Markwart, *Provincial Capitals*, pp. 108-10).

History. The post-Mongol historian Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī says that the Arab town of Ganja was founded in 39/659-60 (i.e., at the time of the first Arab incursions into eastern Transcaucasia) but gives no details (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, p. 91, tr. p. 93). A passage of the anonymous *Ta'riḵ Bāb al-abwāb* (extant in the Ottoman historian Monajjem-bāšī's *Jāme' al-dowal*) states that Ganja was founded in 245/859-60 by Moḥammad b. Kāled b. Yazīd b. Mazyad, of the family of Yazīdī governors in Šarvān, who was governor of Azarbaijan, Arrān, and Armenia for the caliph al-Motawakkel, and so-called because of a treasure unearthed there, obviously a piece of folk etymology (see below). Moḥammad resided there in his castle (*qaṣr*), presumably until his death in 247/861, making it the capital of Arrān (Minorsky, 1958, tr. pp. 25-26, comm. pp. 57-58; cf. idem, 1953, pp. 5-6). Moḥammad b. Kāled's role as founder (or rather, as re-



founder, see below) of Ganja is confirmed by the Armenian historian Movsēs Dasxuranc'i, where he says that the son of Xazr (for *Xald*, as explained by Marquart, p. 462) Patgos built Ganjak in the canton of Aršakašēn, with the date given in one manuscript as Armenian era 295/846-47 (bk. 3, ch. 20, tr. Dowsett, p. 218). The Persian name Ganja/Ganza (<*ganj* "treasure, treasury"; see MacKenzie, p. 35) points, however, to there having existed a much older, pre-Islamic town there.

The Islamic town of Ganja seems to have developed slowly, with Barḍa'a (q.v.) being the chief town of Arrān in 'Abbasid times. The earliest Muslim geographers like Ebn Ḳordāḍbeh, Ya'qūbī, and Ebn Rosta do not mention it, nor does Abū Dolaf in the account of his travels through the northwestern Persia. Eṣṭakrī (pp. 187, 193) and Ebn Ḥawqal (pp. 339, 341, 350, tr. Kramers and Wiet, pp. 332, 335, 343) mention Janza as a town on the Barḍa'a-Teflīs road nine *farsaks* from Barḍa'a (according to Yāqūt, *Boldān*, Beirut, II, pp. 171-72, sixteen *farsaks*), but it was already prosperous, and the *Ḥodūd al-ālam* (ed. Sotūda, p. 161, tr. Minorsky, p. 144) mentions Ganja's woolen cloths, for the manufacture of which it was to become famous internationally. The Saljuq vizier Neẓām-al-Molk describes how the military slaves of the Samanids in Transoxania received a cloak of Ganjavī cloth (*qabā-ye kanzī*) when they attained the grade of *woṭāq-bāšī* (p. 134, tr. p. 103; cf. Serjeant, pp. 70, 73, 99-100).

With the decline of the 'Abbasid caliphate, Ganja became the chief town of Arrān, replacing Barḍa'a, and it was the capital of the senior branch of the Kurdish Shaddadids of Arrān and eastern Armenia after their move from Dabīl or Dvin (q.v.; Minorsky, 1953, tr. pp. 5, 12, 25, comm. pp. 28-29, 39, 48-50, 55). The Shaddadids defended it against incursions by Caucasian mountain folk such as the Alan and Dido and, on one occasion, against the Byzantines, until the Turkish commander of the Saljuqs, Sāvtegīn, occupied Ganja in 468/1075 (Bosworth, p. 95). It thus came under Saljuq control and, in the later 6th/12th century under that of the Atabeg line of Ildegizids (see ATĀBAKĀN-E ĀZARBĀYJĀN). It suffered from raids by the Georgians and Abkāz (q.v.). After one of these raids, in addition to a violent earthquake in 533/1138-39 or 534/1139-40 which caused great loss of life, it had to be rebuilt by the Saljuq governor Qara Sonqor (Bondārī, II, p. 190; Ebn al-Aṭīr, Beirut, XI, p. 77). The new town became the focus of a great period of efflorescence, seen in the laudatory verses quoted by Mostawfī (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, pp. 91-92) and its nurturing of the great poet Neẓāmī Ganjavī.



The Mongols appeared before Ganja in 618/1221, found it strongly fortified and defended, and were bought off. Four years later it was occupied by the Sultan Jalāl-al-Dīn K̄vārazmšāh. The inhabitants rose against the Khwarazmian garrison shortly afterwards; Jalāl-al-Dīn returned and in 628/1231 executed the ringleaders of the revolt (Nasavī, p. 239, tr. pp. 254, 265-67). Then in 632/1235 the Mongols re-appeared and burnt down the town (Spuler, *Mongolen*¹, pp. 30, 34, 36). Ganja was rebuilt, but seems to have never regained its former glory. Under the Il-Khanids it continued to be the capital of their province of Arrān, and it is from Mongol times that there begins the series of coins minted at Ganja, which was to extend up to early Qajar times (Zambaur, p. 212). Toward the end of the 9th/15th century it came within the Āq Qoyunlu (q.v.) confederation at the time of its greatest extent, but was shortly thereafter taken over by Shah Esmā‘īl I (q.v.), and for over two centuries it substantially formed part of the Safavid realm. The Safavids left Arrān to local Turkish khans, so that we find Ganja in 961-62/1554 governed by Šāhverdī Solṭān Ziād-oḡlū Qājār (whose family came to govern Qarabāḡ in southern Arrān) when Shah Ṭahmāsb I passed through it on his return from campaigning against the Georgians (Röhrborn, p. 4).

The Ottoman commander Farhād Pasha invaded Qarabāḡ and Ganja in 996/1588 while Shah ‘Abbās I was preoccupied with affairs in Khorasan, and it was held by the Ottomans until Shah ‘Abbās reconquered it in 1015/1606 after a six-month siege (Jalāl-al-Dīn Monajjem, pp. 300-306; Eskandar Beg, tr. Savory, II, pp. 582-83, 901, 905-7). In the disturbed 12th/18th century, Ganja was again captured by the Turks (1135/1723); *tapu* or land and revenue registers survive for Ganja from both periods of Ottoman occupation (see Lewis, p. 261). Nāder Shah regained it from Ganj-‘Alī Pasha in 1148/1735-36; Marvī, pp. 403-409; cf. Avery, pp. 32-33), and towards the end of the century it passed briefly under Qajar rule (Hambly, pp. 126-27).

Falling within the battle zone between imperial Russia and Persia, Ganja was stormed in 1804 by a Russian army led by the Georgian Prince Zizishvili, and was definitively ceded to Russia in 1813 under the terms of the Golestān Treaty (q.v.). Now renamed Elisavetpol, it became part of the “Muslim governorate” of Baku till 1861, and thereafter was the capital of a newly-created governorship (*guberniya*) of Elisavetpol. Under the Soviets, the town expanded from a population of 35,000 in 1913. It continued to be a center for agriculture, with some industrial development, while the town’s ancient tradition as a producer of fine cloth was perpetuated with an expansion of



cotton-growing. In 1990 Ganja had an estimated population of 281,000, which, with an inflow of refugees, has now risen to over 300,000.

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