



GANZAK

GANZAK (Ganja, Gk. *Gazaca*, Lat. *Gaza*, *Ganzaga*, Ar. *Janza*, *Jaznaq*), a town of Achaemenid foundation in Azarbaijan. The name means “treasury” and is a Median form (against Pers. *gazn-*), adopted in Persian administrative use (Hübchmann, pp. 231-32; Marquart, p. 160 n. 2; Henning, pp. 196-98). Like other towns similarly named, notably *Ġazna* (q.v.) in Afghanistan, and *Gazioura* in Pontic Cappadocia (place of the treasury; Russell, pp. 28 n. 24, 73-74), *Ganzak* was presumably the satrap’s seat. Little is known of Achaemenid Azarbaijan (Kleiss, p. 218), but Iranian settlement was probably then mainly in the fertile lands around the south of Lake Urmia, where *Ganzak* stood. Its site has been identified with impressive ruin-mounds near *Laylān* in the *Miāndōāb* plain (Minorsky, pp. 244 n. 2, 254). It was presumably the capital of *Atropates* (q.v.) and his descendants, under whom, it seems, the chief Median sacred fire *Ādur Gušnasp* (q.v.) was established on a hill nearby. Later developments show that the fire became closely associated with both *Ganzak* and Lake Urmia (identified by the Median magi with Av. Lake *Čaēčasta*, see *Tafažžolī*), all three being probably on a planned pilgrimage route (Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism*, III, pp. 70-77); and this would have brought wealth and fame to *Ganzak*.

Thereafter Azarbaijan became a vassal kingdom of the Arsacids; and the first mention of *Ganzak* (*Gazaca*) is by Strabo (11.13.3), in connection with Mark Antony’s attack on Parthia in 36 B.C.E. (Schippmann, “Arsacids,” p. 528; on corruptions in the passage, see idem, *Feuerheiligtümer*, pp. 311-12). A reference in Ptolemy’s *Geography* (4.2) to “*Zazaca*” has been emended to “*Gazaca*”



(Minorsky, pp. 261-62). Pliny (*Natural History* 6.42-43) names “Gaza” as a town in Atropatene, and Ammianus Marcellinus (23.6.39) calls “Gazaca” one of Media’s three greatest cities.

In the early 5th century C.E., it seems, Ādur Gušnasp was moved from near Ganzak to Taḳt-e Solaymān, where its priests maintained the connection with Čaēčasta by giving this name, in its evolved colloquial form of Šēz/Šīz (< Ūē± by dissimilation) to the little hilltop lake there (Boyce and Grenet, *Zoroastrianism* III, pp. 77-78). A town grew up which was presumably called the “town of/by Šīz,” and then simply Šīz; and because of Ganzak’s centuries-old association with Ādur Gušnasp, some confusion occurred, with Ganzak being occasionally identified in written sources as Šīz. (All texts concerned with Ganzak and Šīz are brought together in translation by Schippmann, 1971, pp. 311-25. That by Abu’l- Fedā’, referring to “Janza,” is expressly said, however, to be to Janza (Ganza) in Arrān (Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 178). An occasional confused linking of Šīz with “al-Rān” has been shown to be due to a textual corruption, see Minorsky, p. 247).

Ganzak appears in the late Pahlavi text *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērān* (sec. 56) as one of Azarbaijan’s two cities (the other being then probably Ardabīl, Markwart, *Provincial Capitals*, pp. 22, 106). It figures also in two late episodes of Sasanian history. In 590 Ḳosrow II Parvēz finally defeated Bahrām Čōbīn (q.v.) in a battle nearby; and in 628 Ganzak itself was taken by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, who reported it to be a large town, with “about 3000 houses” (Minorsky, p. 251; Schippmann, 1971, p. 316). It survived into Islamic times, and is last mentioned by Yāqūt (III, pp. 353-55; Schippmann, *Feuerheiligtümer*, p. 323) as “a fairly flourishing small town in Azarbaijan, near Marāḡa, where are to be seen ruins of edifices built by the ancient kings of Persia, and a fire temple;” but whether this was the situation in Yāqūt’s own day, and when and by whom Ganzak was devastated, is not known. Mostawfī, writing in the 14th century, knew only its successor, the unremarkable Laylān/Nīlān, then inhabited by Mongols (Nozhat al-qolūb, ed. Le Strange, p. 87; Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 165).



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