



JOWZJĀN

JOWZJĀN, the Arabicized form of the Persian Gowz-gān(ān), a district of what was in early Islamic times eastern Khorasan, now roughly corresponding to the northwest of modern Afghanistan, adjacent to the frontier with the southeastern fringe of the Turkmenistan Republic. Vladimir Minorsky surmised that the Persian name was not an ethnic designation but simply “[land of] walnuts [gowz], walnut trees” (*Ḥodud al-‘ālam*, tr., “Second series of addenda,” p. xxv).

Jowzjān was probably under the control of the Hephthalites (q.v.) before the arrival of the Arabs, and is notable as being one of the regions, together with Rob (modern Ruy) to its east, in the upper valley of the Kōlm River, from which there emanate the so-called “Bactrian documents” (actually also including some Arabic language ones, as well as Bactrian language ones), recently brought to light (Sims-Williams, pp. 1-7).

The region was known to the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang as *Hu-ši-kien* and claimed by the Chinese emperors as, theoretically, part of their “Western Lands” (Markwart, pp. 80-81). The Arabs conquered the region of Gowzgān in 653-54, during the governorship of Khorasan and the East of ‘Abd-Allāh b. ‘Āmer, through the agency of Aḥnaf b. Qays’s general Aqra’ b. Ḥābes Tamimi (Balāḍori, p. 407, Pers. tr., pp. 161-62; Ṭabari, I, pp. 2897-2902, tr., XV, pp. 102-6; Gibb, p. 15). The information of the early Muslim geographers does not allow us to define the boundaries of medieval Gowzgān very closely, but on the east it stretched towards Balk and Toḳārestān, in the north almost to the Oxus River, in the west to Marv al-Ruḍ and the Morḡāb, and in the south



towards the upper Harirud River, abutting on Ġarčestān and Ġur (qq.v.). They mention it as a populous region, with fertile agricultural lands and several significant towns, including Yahudiya/Jahudān (modern Meymana; *Ḥodud al-ālam*, p. 97, tr. p. 107), Ošborqān/Šaburqān, Anbār (q.v., probably the modern Sar-e Pol), Fāryāb (q.v.), Andkudò/Andkuy (q.v.), and Kalān. Of these, Anbār was the winter residence of the reigning line of Farighunids, agriculturally rich and larger than Marv al-Ruḍ, whilst the princes had their summer capital at Gorzovān/Jorzovān (EsĀṭakri, pp. 270-71, tr. pp. 284-85; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 442-44, tr. pp. 428-29; Moqaddasi, p. 298; *Ḥodud al-ālam*, pp. 95-98, tr. pp. 104-11; Le Strange, p. 423).

This information can be considerably supplemented by that of the late-10th-century anonymous *Ḥodud al-ālam* (q.v.), whose author seems to have been a native of the province and who certainly wrote for the Farighunid amir, Abu'l-Ḥāreṭ Moḥammad b. Aḥmad (see [ĀL-E FARĪĠŪN](#)), hence it was natural that he should expatiate at some length on Gowzgān. It seems that the power of the Farighunids had made it a larger principality than it had been in earlier Islamic times. In early Islamic period the region had apparently been administratively a dependency of Tokārestān and its Arab governors had resided at Anbār, whilst the local Iranian princes (given by Ebn Kordāqbeh, p. 40, the title of Gowzgān-koḍā) were at Yahudiya; but by the 10th century this distinction was no longer valid and the Farighunid princes now ruled from Anbār (see above) as vassals of the Samanids (q.v.). Their borders now extended as far north as the Oxus River, and on the south, the rulers of Ġarčestān (i.e., the Šērs/Širs) and those of Ġur (named by the author as the Ġuršāhs) were in turn the Farighunids' vassals. On the headwaters of the Morḡāb, their frontiers marched with "the ruler of Bost," who must have controlled the eastern part of Ġur and Zābolestān (q.v.). Arab nomads in the steppes along the Oxus, numbering 20,000 and described as especially rich, also paid tribute to the prince of Gowz-gān and had their chief nominated by the prince. The products of Gowzgān are enumerated as horses, felts, saddlebags, and wood from the *konj* tree (*Ḥodud al-ālam*, pp. 95-98, tr. pp. 105-8, comm. pp. 328-37, map at p. 329; see also Barthold's Preface, pp. 4-7, and, Minorsky's revised tr. and comm. in "Second series of addenda," pp. xxi-xxxix, map at p. xxix, and Yate, p. 344).

In the opening years of the 11th century, Gowzgān was incorporated into the Ghaznavid Empire (see [ĀL-E FARĪĠŪN](#)). Its history now forms part of the general history of the region of northern Afghanistan under the Ghaznavids,



Saljuqs, Ghurids, Il-khanids, and Timurids. In the 13th century it produced the historian of the Ghurids, Menhāj-e Serāj Jowzjāni (q.v.). The name was still used in the 14th century, and Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī mentions its towns as Yahuda, Fāryāb, and Šoburqān (p. 155, tr., p. 153), but thereafter the name gradually dropped out of use until it was revived in the 20th century as the name of a province of Afghanistan after the 1964 administrative re-ordering, with Šebarḡān as its *chef-lieu* (Dupree, map at p. 157).

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