



OŠNUYA

OŠNUYA, OŠNU, OŠNOH (now OŠNAVIYA), a small town of southwestern Azerbaijan. It lies near the southwestern corner of Lake Urmia on the Qādar-Čay river; it is some 32 km from the lakeshore and also some 32 km from the meeting-place of the modern frontiers of Iran, Turkey, and Iraq. The medieval geographers reckoned its distance from Tabriz as 16 farsangòs. It lies on a historic route from the Urmia basin over the Kela-Šin Pass to Ravānduz and the plains of northern Iraq. In the pass, southwest of the town, is the site of an Urartian stele dating from ca. 800 B.C.E. (Minorsky, p. 917; Ritter, pp. 934, 1023-26; see [Azerbaijan, MONUMENTS](#) in Supplement). Ošnuya was an early center of Nestorian Christianity (with the name in Syriac of Ašna, Ašnoḳ), and after the Mongol invasions of the 13th century was for a time the seat of the Nestorian metropolitan of Assyria, according to Assemani (cited by Minorsky, p. 917).

The medieval geographers of the 10th century describe Ošnuya as a fair-sized town, administratively attached to the town of Urmia, in a fertile and well-watered region, producing much fruit and grapes in its orchards and having good pasturage in the surrounding steppeland for sheep and cattle. The Haḏbāniya Kurds of Erbil came in summer and pastured their flocks in the vicinity of Ošnuya, exchanging the products of pastoralism for the town's manufactures and textiles (Eṣṭakri, p. 181; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 333, 336, tr. Kramers and Wiet, 326, 329). From it were exported sheep and beasts of burden, honey, almonds, hazel nuts and wax, to Mosul, Ḥadiṭa and other towns of the Jazira. These two authors call the town Ošnoh Ādariya, and Ebn



Ḥawqal says that it was formerly linked with Dāḡarraḡān (Deh Ḳvārḡān) to form the district of the Rodayni family (‘Omar ebn ‘Ali, called Ebn al-Rodayni, an Arab commander, had been appointed governor of Azarbaijan in 260/873-4; Ṭabari, III, p. 1886). But in the time of the geographers, it must have come within the dominions of the Kurdish Rawwādids of Tabriz. In these centuries, Ošnuya continued to flourish, and Sam‘āni (ed. Yamāni, I, pp. 273-6) records a good number of scholars and Traditionists who came from there (bearing the *nesbas* Ošnāni, Ošnohi, Ošnā‘i, according to Yāḡut, *Boldān* (Beirut) I, pp. 199-200).

Ebn al-Aṭiir (Beirut, XII, p. 237) records that in 602/1205-6 the Ildegozid Atābeg Abu Bakr ebn Bahlawān [Pahlavān] Moḡammad handed over the two towns of Urmiya and Ošnuya to the Aḡmadili ruler of Marāḡa, ‘Alā’-al-Din Qara Sonḡor, but in 623/1226 these two towns are described as being in the hands of the Ivā‘iya Kurds until these last were crushed by the Ḳvārazmšāh Jalāl-al-Din Mengübirti (ibid., pp. 462-63). It was probably as a result of all the unsettling events of this period that Yāḡut, when he passed through Ošnuya en route from Tabriz in 617/1220-1, found the town in ruins (Beirut, I, p. 199). However, it had clearly revived by Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi’s time (14th century), for he describes it as a medium-sized town, largely Sunni in population, set in a rural district of 120 villages and producing a total revenue of 19,300 dinars a year (*Nozhat al-qolub*, ed. Le Strange, p. 86; tr., p. 87).

The Ottoman Turkish traveler Evliā Čelebi visited Ošnuya (as he spells it; latinized as Eşnuye, 1971, Book 4, p. 191) in the 17th century, and it was visited by various British travelers in the 19th century. Fraser was entertained there by Şamaż Khan, chief of the local Zarzā Kurds (whose presence in the area is perhaps attested, under the name Zarzari, as early as the time of Ebn Fażl-Allāh al-‘Omari, in the 14th century; see Minorsky, pp. 916-17). The travelers of the 1830s noted that the population of Ošnuya had recently been much reduced by the ravages of plague, and in 1838 Rawlinson counted only 200 houses. An early 19th-century Persian visitor, ‘Abd-al-Razzāḡ Eşfahāni, states that the district of Ošnuya comprised 32 villages and yielded a revenue to the central government—when the Kurds deigned to pay it—of 6,000 tomans (Bittner, p. 97). Rawlinson found only nine Nestorian families left in the town, the remainder having moved to Urmia; the whole Christian population of the Urmia region has now of course disappeared as a result of the Kurdish and Turkish massacres during the First World War (1917-1918). In present-day Iran, Ošnaviya (as it is currently pronounced) is a district (*baḡš*) of the county



(*šahrestān*) of Urmia (in the Pahlavi period, *Rezā'īya*); in 1950 the district had a population of 14,370, and the town, of 2,212 (Razmārā, *Farhang* IV, p. 24); in 1991 the census count for the district was 23,875. Local products included cereals and tobacco.

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