



## ŠAKKI

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**ŠAKKI**, a district of eastern Transcaucasia, now within the northwesternmost part of the present-day Republic of Azarbaijan, where the modern town of Sheki or Shaki (lat 41°12' N, long 47°10' E) perpetuates its older name; in 2008 the town had a population of 65,000. The usual boundaries of pre-modern Šakki comprised, on the north to northeast, the southern slopes of the main Caucasus range; on the east, separating it from Širvān (Šarvān/Šervān), the Gök Čāy river; on the south, the Kur or Kura river (q.v.); and on the west, the Alazan river and its left-bank tributary the Kaska Čāy, which separated Šakki from Georgia.

In classical antiquity, it formed part of Caucasian Albania, which, according to Strabo (xi.4.6), was a confederation of twenty-six tribes speaking different languages; the name of one of these tribes, the Udi, survived into Islamic times (Balāḍori, p. 203: Ud), and their language is the modern Udi, one of the southeastern Daghestan group of languages. The Albanians were early converted to Christianity by the Armenians, and Armenian religious and cultural influences came to be strong in Šakki (in Armenian, Šak'ē; cf. Markwart, p. 118).

The Muslim Arabs appeared in Šakki during the caliphate of 'Oṭmān (r. 23-35/644-55), when Salmān b. Rabi'a Bāheli crossed the Kur river, conquered Qabala just to the east of Šakki, and concluded a peace treaty with the chiefs of Šakkan and Qamibarān in the region of Šakki (Balāḍori, p. 203). However, Arab authority in the whole of this part of Transcaucasia remained light for several centuries to come, with local power in the hands of indigenous chiefs.



In the first half of the 3rd/9th century, Šakki and Arrān were in the hands of the indigenous chief Sahl b. Sonbāṭ (Minorsky, 1953b, pp. 505-10). In the mid-4th/10th century, Mas‘udi described the people of Šakki as Christian but with some Muslims in their midst who were engaged in commercial and artisanal activities, and its ruler (*malek*) was one \*Āḍar-narseh b. Hammām (on this name, see Minorsky, 1953b, p. 511), whilst neighboring Qabala’s capital was Muslim but the surrounding countryside Christian (Mas‘udi, sec. 500; cf. Minorsky, 1958, p. 162). At this time also, Ebn Ḥawqal (p. 354; tr., p. 347) numbers amongst the potentates of Arrān in 344/955-56 paying tribute to the Mosaferid Marzobān b. Moḥammad of Āḍarbāyjān (see [MOSAFERIDS](#)) the ruler of Šakki called “Ešjāniq known as Abu ‘Abd al-Malek”; Vladimir Minorsky (1953b, pp. 511-12, 521-22) identified this as a typical Armenian princely name. In the later part of this century, the *Ḥodud al-‘ālam* (p. 162; tr., p. 144) describes the population of Šakki as a mixture of Muslims and infidels (*kāferān*).

In the mid-5th/11th century, Šakki was largely controlled by the Georgian lord of the province to its west, Kakhetia, who was Aḳsartān (II), son of Gagik (1058-84). The powerful king of Georgia, Bagrat IV, resisted the invasion of Arrān and the attack on Georgia in 460/1068 by the Saljuq sultan Alp Arslān’s commander Sawtegin, but Aḳsartān, to save his position, became a Muslim, according to Ṣadr-al-Din Ḥosayni (pp. 44-45; tr., p. 35). From now onwards, the special history of Darband and Šarvān (Šervān/Širvān), the *Ta’riḳ Bāb-al-Abwāb*, provides information on Šakki as one of Šarvān’s western neighbors and as a region whose control was now disputed between the Yazidi Šarvānšāhs and the Christian kings of Georgia (see Minorsky, 1958, pp. 83-84 and index). In 622/1225, the Šarvānšāh Fariborz (III) b. Garšāsp complained to Jalāl-al-Din K̄vārazmšāh about the loss of Šakki and Qabala to the Georgians, and the Šarvānšāh came and retook them in about 626/1229 (Nasawi, pp. 247, 289).

In the time of Timur, a certain Sidi ‘Ali of the Čaġatāy tribe of the Arlāt is recorded as being governor of the province (*welāyat*) of Šakki. He was driven out by Timur’s troops in 796/1393, but in about 801/1398-39 his son, Sidi Aḥmad, was back again in Šakki (Yazdi, I, p. 731; II, pp. 204, 213, 222). In the opening years of the 10th/16th century, it was ruled by Ḥosayn Beg, described as a descendant of the Šarvānšāhs, and his son Darviš Moḥammad, who resisted the invasion of Šarvān by the Safavid Shah Ṭahmāsb. In the warfare between the Ottomans and Safavids over possession of Transcaucasia and



Azərbaycan, Sultan Morād III's commander Lāla Moştafā Pasha in 984/1576-77 invaded Arrān, and the Ottomans' Georgian ally, King Alexander II of Kakhetia, occupied Šakki, which briefly became an Ottoman administrative division (*sanjaq*; see Minorsky and Bosworth). Shah 'Abbās I retrieved the Safavid position in Transcaucasia, and Šāhmir Khan became governor of Šakki as vassal of Shah 'Abbās's governor over Šarvān, the Georgian prince Constantin (Constandil) Mirzā, appointed in 1014/1605-6. Yet once again, after ŠāhmirKhan's death, Šakki became virtually independent under local potentates. When the Turkish traveler Evliyā Čelebi visited Šakki in about 1057/1647, the town had 3,000 houses. In the 12th/18th century, local magnates opposed the campaigns of Nāder Shah in Transcaucasia (1147/1734-35 and 1154/1741-42), and out of them arose the energetic and forceful figure of Hāji Čelebi (d. 1172/1758-59) as Khan of Šakki, with his progeny forming a local dynasty which endured until the Russian takeover (Minorsky, and Bosworth).

In 1805, Hāji Čelebi's descendant Salim Khan became tributary to the Russians, and by the Treaty of Gulistan (see [Golestān Treaty](#)) of 1813, Fath-'Ali Shah Qājār ceded Persian suzerainty over Šakki and neighboring khanates to imperial Russia. In 1824 General Yermolov incorporated Šakki as a separate province of the Russia empire, a province which at that time covered 7,600 sq. miles and had a population of 98,500, of whom some 84 percent were Azərbaycani Turks and the rest mainly Armenians. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, the Red Army appeared in the region in 1920 and suppressed what had been briefly the independent Azərbaycan Republic, and the old khanate of Šakki came within the Soviet Republic of Azərbaycan. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Šakki has been within the independent Republic of Azərbaycan.

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