



ŠERVĀN

ŠERVĀN (ŠĪRVĀN, ŠARVĀN), a region of Eastern Transcaucasia, known by this name in both early Islamic and more recent times, and now (since 1994) substantially within the independent Azarbaijan Republic, being bounded by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the south, the independent Armenian Republic on the west, and Daghestan of the Russian Federation of States on its north.

Geography and topography. Šervān proper comprised during the early Islamic centuries, as its northern part, the south-easternmost spurs of the main Caucasus range (which here rises to 4,480 m/13,655 ft), and then as its southern part the lower lands sloping down to the course of the Korr/Kura river, this last in its lower reaches below sea level. Hence to the south of this river boundary and of its confluent the Aras or [Araxes](#), lay the region of Muqān (see [MOĠĀN](#)), whilst to the northwest of Šervān lay the region of Šakki (q.v.) and to its west that of [Arrān](#) (see the maps in Minorsky, 1953, p. 78, and idem, 1958, p. 174). However, throughout much of its history, the rulers of Šervān, and especially the Šervānšāhs who ruled from the beginning of the 9th century to the beginning of the 17th century, strove to extend their boundaries northwards into the mountain region of Layzān, and eastwards to the Caspian shores, to Qoba and to Masqat or Maškat in the direction of Bāb al-abwāb or Derbend (see [DARBAND](#)) and further southwards to [Baku](#). The lowland regions of Šervān were exposed to pressure from powerful neighbors like the Alans or Ossets of the central Caucasus, the Hashimid rulers of Bāb al-abwāb, the predatory Rus from the Caspian waters, and Kurdish and Daylami powers to the south like the Šaddādids and Mosāferids (qq.v.).



The towns of Šarvān included Šāvarān/Šābarān, the ancient center of the southern Qoba district, but above all, Šammāka or Šammākiya, which is said to have been named after an Arab governor of the region, Šammāk b. Šojā', a subordinate of the governor of Azarbaijan, Arrān and Armenia for Hārūn-al-Rāšid, Sa'īd b. Salm b. Qotayba Bāheli (see Balāḍori, *Fotuḥ*, p. 210). Soon afterwards it became the capital for the founder of the line of Yazidi Šervānšāhs, Yazid b. Mazyad Šaybāni (d. 185/201), and is described by the 10th century Arab geographers as a town built of stone in the midst of a fertile, corn-growing region (see Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 179-80). In 306/918 it was apparently temporarily renamed Yazidiya, but it has been the old name that has survived (cf. Yāqut, *Boldān* [Beirut] III, p. 361; V, p. 436), and at the present time Shemakha is the administrative centre of this district of the Azarbaijan Republic.

History. For the Šervānšāhs, various lines of whom reigned there from the late 8th century till the end of the 16th centuries, see [ŠERVĀNŠĀHS](#).

With the decline of the Safavids in the early 18th century, Šervān again came under Ottoman rule, but Peter the Great's expansionist policies were now a new factor, as Russian ambitions in Eastern Caucasia became apparent. By the Russo-Turkish treaty of 1724 the coastal region of Baku was for the first time severed from inland Šervān, which was left to the Turkish governor in Šemāka (see Shaw, pp. 299-300). This arrangement was held firm after Persian control was reasserted by [Nāder Shah](#), who captured Šemāka in 1734, and by the Russo-Persian Treaty of Ganja of 1735, Nāder's control over Darband, Baku, and the coastal lands was conceded by the Empress Catherine I (see Kazemzadeh, pp. 323-24). However, Persian influence in the eastern Caucasus receded after Nāder's death in 1160/1747, and various local princes took power there, including in Šervān and Darband. Russian pressure increased towards the end of the 18th century. Moṣṭafā Khan of Šervān submitted to Tsar Alexander I in 1805, whilst still continuing secretly to seek Persian aid, and in 1806 the Russians occupied Darband and Baku. The Golestān Treaty of 1813 between Russia and Persia definitively allocated Darband, Qoba, Šervān. and Baku to the Tsar (Kazemzadeh, p. 334). In 1820 Russian troops occupied Šemāka, Moṣṭafā Khan despairingly fled to Persia, and Šervān was definitively incorporated into the Russian Empire.

Under Tsarist rule, Šervān and Šemāka came within various administrative divisions of the empire. Many of the older Islamic buildings of the city were damaged in an earthquake of 1859, but as late as this time, Šemāka still had a



larger population (21,550) than Baku (10,000), before the latter's demographic and industrial explosion as a centre of oil exploitation over the next two or three decades. After the Bolshevik Revolution, these regions came within the nominally Soviet Azarbaijan, with Šemāka becoming the centre of a *raïon* or administrative district, though its estimated population of 17,900 in 1970 was still well below the 19th century level. (See also Barthold and Bosworth).

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