

Nakhçivan

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MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN  
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

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## Nakhchivan

**Nakhchivan** is a city and historical region in the South Caucasus; it is now the capital of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan. The city lies on the right bank of the Nakhchivan river (Azerbaijani, Naxçıvançay) in the Aras valley in the Transcaucasian highlands.

### 1. THE NAME

According to a local legend, Nakhchivan was the first city founded after the biblical flood, at the foot of the mountain atop which Noah's ark landed; Noah himself lived here the rest of his life. The folk etymon of the city's name is the Armenian *nakh-ichevan* (the first landing or resting place). Romano-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (first century C.E.) analogously called the city Apobaterion (Ἀποβατήριον, landing place). A more probable etymon for the toponym is the combination of the Armenian proper name Naχič and the word *avan* (place), that is, "the place of Nahich." Another widely accepted etymon is Nakhtcha-van (ancient Armen., land of the Nakhtcha clan).

### 2. HISTORY

Nakhchivan is first mentioned, as Naxuana (Ναξουάνα), in the second century C.E. in the *Geography* of Ptolemy (bk. 5, chap. 13 §12, *Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia*, ed. Karl Friedrich August Nobbe, Leipzig 1845, 2:52). On Sāsānid money in the sixth century C.E., Nakhchivan was called Nahch; early Islamic sources (al-Balādhurī, d. 279/892; Ibn Khurdādhbih, d. 310/912; Ibn Rushd, d. 595/1198) called it Nashawā and attributed its foundation to the Sāsānids. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi (Evliyā Çelebī, d. after 1096/1685) supposed that the founder of Nakhchivan, whom he called Naqş-ı Cihan (Naqş-ı Cihān, decoration of the world), was Afrāsiyāb, the king of Turan known from Iranian mythology. Mediaeval Armenian and Persian sources date the founding of the city to 1539 B.C.E. In 2017, excavations of the ancient town Nakhchivan Tepe within the city revealed that people had lived there for seven thousand years.

In the ninth-seventh centuries B.C.E. Nakhchivan was ruled by the Mannaeans (a people of ancient Asia Minor,