



## Summary :

Byzantine Gangra was a city in the mainland of Paphlagonia, to the northeast of Ankara; it was also a metropolitan see. During the Middle Byzantine period it came successively under the jurisdiction of the theme of Armeniakon, of Boukellarion and of Paphlagonia. It was raided by the Arabs (8<sup>th</sup> century) and by the Turcomans (11<sup>th</sup> century). It became a possession of the Turcomans (1101-1133), of the Seljuks (1143, 1169-late 14<sup>th</sup> century) and then of the Isfendiyaroğulları, as well as the seat of the usurper (Pseudo) Alexios III Comnenos in 1169/1197. Gangra was conquered by the Ottomans in 1429.

## Other Names

Gangra, Gangrai, Germanikopolis, Germanikopolis by Gangra, Hangara, Gagra, Tzungra, Kângiri, Çankiri

## Geographical Location

northern Central Asia Minor, mod. northern Central Turkey

## Historical Region

Paphlagonia

## Administrative Dependence

Province of Bithunia and the Pontus, province of Paphlagonia, theme of Armeniakon, theme of Boukellarion, theme of Paphlagonia

## 1. Location-name

The city of Gangra in the mainland of [Paphlagonia](#) was located to the south of coastal Ionopolis and to the northeast of [Ankyra](#), on the road connecting the two cities. It also communicated with the cities of Neoclaudiopolis and [Amaseia](#) to the east, and Crateia and [Nicomedia](#) to the west, via the main [road networks](#) which crossed [Asia Minor](#). Through Ionopolis, Gangra communicated with the ports of [Sinope](#) and [Amastris](#). The city was built between the rivers Xanthos and Almyros, to the point where the valleys of the rivers were separated by a low mountain ridge with steep slopes. Gangra's citadel had occupied the small plateau and the later settlement extended towards southwest.

The citadel was always called Gangra, whereas the city itself was also known as "Germanikopolis" or as "Germanikopolis by Gaggra/Gaggrois" during Late Antiquity. The place name Gangra prevailed during the Byzantine period.<sup>1</sup> The place name Germanikopolis was not however completely forgotten.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1. Archaeological evidence

No monuments are preserved in Gangra. Two Muslim mosques in the modern "old city" were housed in churches of the Byzantine period. It is impossible to distinguish the older constructions. In Suleyman's mosque Byzantine architectural parts of unknown origin have been used in the masonry. The citadel's fortifications have been ruined by corrosion. The curtain wall had already collapsed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In certain points remains of plinth walls of the Ottoman period can be seen. To the acropolis' southeastern end, some unidentified architectural parts are preserved, as well as part of a tower of the Byzantine period, built with square stones fitted together with plaster.

## 2. Information about the administration

Under [Diocletian](#) (284-305) Gangra was elevated into a political and ecclesiastic metropolis of the [province of Paphlagonia](#), which was founded in the lands of the once wider Roman [province of Bithynia and the Pontus](#), and became the seat of the province's corrector and then of the [metropolitan of Gangra](#). During the Middle Byzantine period it successively came under the jurisdiction of the [themes](#) of [Armeniakon](#) (7<sup>th</sup> century), of [Boukellarion](#) (ca. 827) and of Paphlagonia (ca. 968).<sup>3</sup> During the 10<sup>th</sup> century it is



reported as the first among the cities of the theme of Paphlagonia, but it is doubtful whether it was also the seat of the theme's *strategos*.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. History: until the 12<sup>th</sup> century

#### 3.1. Gangra as a target for the Arabs

As a city of the theme of Armeniakon, Gangra is mentioned in relation to the Arab attacks of 712, of 727 and probably of 732. In the two first cases the raiders attacked Gangra on their way to Ankyra and [Nicaea](#). During the attack of 727, they caused damages to the city walls. The alleged conquest and following plundering of 732, if indeed took place,<sup>5</sup> was part of a looting raid in Paphlagonia, which however aimed at the conquest of Akroino in [Phrygia](#). During this period the cities of Gangra, Ankyra and [Amorion](#) were attacked as part of the usual course of the Arab raiders which afflicted the wider area. The three cities were connected by the road network and formed a common front of attack. As for the period during which Gangra formed part of the theme of Boukellarion, there is no information in the sources.

#### 3.2. Gangra as a target for the Turcomans

In 1050, the city of Gangra suffered extended damages by an earthquake. During the third quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century the [Turcomans](#) started settling in the wider area of Paphlagonia and attacking the Byzantine settlements. Gangra is mentioned to have fallen to the [Danishmenids](#) in 1075/6. This information is considered contrived today by most scholars. Beginning of July 1101 is considered as a *terminus ante quem* for the fall of Gangra; it was during the Second Crusade when Raymond of Toulouse plundered the city, which was under the Danishmenids, but Raymond did not manage to seize the acropolis.

### 4. History: from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards

#### 4.1. Gangra as a Turcoman city

According to the Crusaders, the wider area of Gangra was deserted in the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, «*segetes et omnia sata regionis depopulantes*», because of the spreading of the Danishmenids.<sup>6</sup> Under the Danishmenids, during the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Christian people of Gangra was forced to move outside the city walls. Many chose to become Muslims whereas some were forced to convert. The following 12<sup>th</sup> century was for Asia Minor a period of continuous conflict between the Byzantines, the Turcomans, the [Seljuks](#), the Danishmenids but also the Crusaders. The unstable frontiers were defined by the cities of [Claudioupolis](#), Dadybra, [Kastamon](#) and Gangra to the west, Paurae, Amaseia, Komana and Oinaion to the east.

#### 4.2. Gangra as a target for the Byzantines

In 1132/3, [John II Komnenos](#) (1113-1143) captured the Danishmenid *emir* of Gangra during his first campaign in Kastamon and to the west banks of the river Alys. Next year he conquered Gangra. According to the sources, the Turcomans of Gangra joined his army. The defence of the city was undertaken by a garrison of 2,000 men and restoration of the city walls took place. In the next decade, however, in 1143, the Seljuks established themselves in Gangra and in Ankyra. Shortly later the taxes of Gangra became an income of the Seljuk leader Şahinşah, who assumed the administration of the city. Şahinşah was an ally of [Manuel I Komnenos](#) (1143-1180) around 1160/1. Gangra came once more under the control of the Danishmenids for a short period around 1163/4 and then, in 1169, it was retaken by the Seljuks of [Ikonion](#).<sup>7</sup> In 1196 the Seljuk governor of the cities of Ankyra and Gangra sided with the insurget known as (Pseudo) Alexios III Komnenos against [Alexios III Angelos](#) (1195-1203), with the approval of the Seljuk sultan.

#### 4.3. Gangra as an Ottoman possession



During the late 14<sup>th</sup> century Gangra was taken by the **Isfendiyaroğulları** rulers of Kastamon. Between the years 1392-1401, the city fell to the Ottomans; after returning to the hands of the hegemony of Kastamon, it was finally conquered by the Ottomans in 1429.

## 5. Economy-society

The economy of Gangra resided on the one hand on the fact that the city was a road hub on the network connected important cities of the coast of the **Pontos** with Ankyra and Amorion and on the other hand on the fact that it was the political and ecclesiastic capital of the province. The land of the city and of her suburbs, which was located in an altitude of 730 m., was not particularly fertile; it was however rich in mineral salt, known as the salt of Gangra (*gangrènon*) during the Byzantine period. In Late Antiquity, Gangra produced famous apples.

As a possession of the Danishmenids and then of the Seljuks, Gangra maintained the benefit of the immediate communication with Ankyra, which was also under the control of the Danishmenids and of the Seljuks during approximately the same period. In the period of the Seljuk dominion, and more specifically in the year 1207, there is a reference to a **Jewish** community in Gangra which is interpreted as an indication of an important merchant activity in the city.

The information preserved for the society of the Byzantine Gangra is mainly associated with figures of the ecclesiastic metropolis of Paphlagonia, of which the city was the see.

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1. It is worth mentioning the obvious continuity of the city's name from ancient times: Hangara for the Arabs, Gagra for the Jews and Tzungra or Kângiri or Çankiri for the Turks. In the language of the local Paphlagonian people, the word "gaggra" meant "goat".
  2. Schoell, R. – Kroll, G. (eds), *Corpus Juris civilis, III: Novellae* (Berlin 1959, repr. Dublin, Zürich 1972), nov. XXIX, p. 219, col. 1: Germanikopolis by Gangra is reported as one of the first twelve cities of the province of Paphlagonia. See also Honigmann E. (ed.), *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiéroklos et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre* (Bruxelles 1939), p. 34, 695.5: Gangra is mentioned as the first among the six cities of the province of Paphlagonia. As Germanikopolis by Gangra it is documented in a 12<sup>th</sup>-c. source, see Eustathius of Salonica, van der Valk, M. (ed.), *Eustathi archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis Commentarii ad homeri iliadem pertinentes*, vol. I-V (Lugduni Batavorum 1976-1986), p. 219.
  3. Pertusi, A. (ed.), *Constantino Porphyrogenito, De Thematribus* (Studi e Testi 160, Città del Vaticano 1952), p. 72.
  4. A clear reference of Gangra as the seat of the *strategos* of Paphlagonia is made in an 11<sup>th</sup>-c. Arab source of questionable validity as to the documentation of the Byzantine place names, see Belke, K. – Mersich, N. (eds), *Paphlagonien und Honorias* (Tabula Imperii Byzantini 9, Wien 1996), see «Gangra», p. 196.
  5. See Belke, K. – Mersich, N. (eds), *Paphlagonien und Honorias* (Tabula Imperii Byzantini 9, Wien 1996), see «Gangra», p. 196: the place name is read with reserve.
  6. Cf. Henny, M.F., *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c.300-1450* (Cambridge Mass. 1985), p. 42.
  7. In 1169 the Seljuk sultan Qilîtz Arslan took Gangra from the Seljuk governor Şahinşah and not from Manuel I Komnenos, as it has falsely been sustained. Between 1163/4 and 1169, Şahinşah ruled the city under Danishmenids dominance, see Chalandon F., *Les Comnènes, Études sur l'empire byzantin au XIe et au XIIe siècles, II: Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel Comnène (1143-1180)*, vols. 2 (Paris 1912), p. 494; Belke, K. – Mersich, N. (eds), *Paphlagonien und Honorias* (Tabula Imperii Byzantini 9, Wien 1996), see «Gangra».

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	<b>Runciman S.</b> , <i>A History of the Crusades 1-3</i> , London 1951-1954
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	<b>Chalandon F.</b> , <i>Les Comnènes, 1. Alexios I Comnène (1081-1118), 2. Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel Comnène (1143-1180)</i> , Paris 1900-1912
	<b>Σαββίδης Α.</b> , <i>Βυζαντινά στασιαστικά και αυτονομιστικά κινήματα στα Δωδεκάνησα και στη Μικρά Ασία 1189 - c. 1240 μ.Χ.</i> , Αθήνα 1987

## Webliography :

	CHURCH FATHERS: Synod of Gangra (4th Century) <a href="http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3804.htm">http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3804.htm</a>
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## Glossary :

	<b>emir</b> (from Arabic amir) Emir meaning "commander" or "general", later also "prince". Also a high title of nobility or office in some Turkic historical states.
	<b>Isfendiyar Oğulları</b> A Turkmen dynasty, which established its dominion around Kastamone (Castamonu) in the late 13 <sup>th</sup> c., under Mongol suzerainty. In the period of 1301-1340, they expanded their dominion as far as Sinope, as independent sovereigns. By 1460 they had passed under Ottoman suzerainty, and so their territory was absorbed in the Ottoman Empire.
	<b>strategos ("general")</b> During the Roman period his duties were mainly political. Office of the Byzantine state's provincial administration. At first the title was given to the military and political administrator of the themes, namely of the big geographic and administrative unities of the Byzantine empire. Gradually the title lost its power and, already in the 11th century, strategoi were turned to simple commanders of military units, responsible for the defence of a region.

## Sources

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## Quotations

### 1. Gangra, or Germanikopolis by Gangra, a city of Paphlagonia

#### a. 6th c.

ἐν δὲ Παφλαγόσιν αὐτοῖς ἔξει δικαιοδοσίαν πόλεων ἐτέρων ἐκ τῶν ἄνωθεν ἐκείνη προσηκουσῶν τῇ χώρᾳ, φαμὲν δὲ Γερμανικοπόλεως τῆς πρὸς Γάγγραν καὶ Πομπηίουπόλεως καὶ Δαδύβρων καὶ Σωρῶν καὶ Ἀμάστριδος καὶ πρὸς γε τῆς Ἰωνοπολιτῶν δώδεκά τε ἔσσονται πόλεις ἅπασαι τῆς ἐπαρχίας ἀπάσης

Schoell, R. – Kroll, G. (eds), *Corpus Juris civilis, III: Novellae* (Berlin 1959, ανατ. Dublin, Zürich <sup>10</sup>1972), nov. XXIX, p. 219.

#### b. 10th c.

πρώτην μὲν μητρόπολιν Γάγγραν, δευτέραν δε Ἀμαστραν, τρίτην Σῶρα, τετάρτην Δαδύβραν, πέμπτη Ἰωνόπολιν, ἕκτην Πομπηίουπολιν

Pertusi, A. (ed.), *Constantino Porphyrogenito, De Thematibus* (Città del Vaticano 1952), p. 72.

#### c. 12th c.

φαμὲν δὲ Γερμανικοπόλεως τῆς πρὸς Γάγγραν καὶ Πομπηίουπόλεως καὶ Δαδύβρων καὶ Σωρῶν καὶ Ἀμάστριδος καὶ πρὸς γε τῆς Ἰωνοπολιτῶν

Van der Valk, M. (ed.), *Eustathi archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis Commentarii ad homeri iliadem pertinentes I* (Leiden 1976), p. 219.

### 2. The Byzantines regain Gangra, 12th c.:

#### a. The campaign in the region, 1132/3

[ο Ἰωάννης Β' Κομνηνός] κατὰ τὸ πόλισμα ἐναυλισάμενος, ὃ περὶ τὸν Ρυνδακὸν ποταμὸν αὐτὸς ἐδείματο, αὐτὸς πάλιν τῆς κατὰ τοῦ Μουχούμετ ἀκμαιοτέρου ἡψατο καὶ Ῥωμαίοις ἐπανασωσάμενος Κασταμόνα οὐδὲ τῆς Γάγγρας ἀπέσχετο, μία δὲ ἔστιν αὕτη τῶν περιφανῶν καὶ μεγίστων Ποντικῶν πόλεων, οὕτω πρώην Πέρσαις καθυποκύψασα

Van Dieten, I. A. (ed.), *Nicetae Choniatae, Historia 1*. CFHB 11.1 (Berlin 1975), p. 20.

#### b. Reconquest of Gangra, 1134

διὰ ταῦτα τοῖνον καὶ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως δὲ προσεδρεῖαν οὐχ ἦττον, ἐπὶ δὲ μάλιστα τὴν ὀλίγω πρότερον μαλακῶ θανάτω ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀφάνισιν τοῦ τῆς Γάγγρας ἐπιστατοῦντος Τανισμανίου ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τὴν πόλιν τῷ αὐτοκράτορι ἐνεχείρισαν. ὁ δὲ αὐτὴν εἰσιῶν καὶ τὸ πολὺ τῶν Περσῶν ἐκείθεν ἀπαγαγὼν καὶ δισχιλίους ὀπίτας Ῥωμαίους φρουροὺς τῇ Γάγγρᾳ ἐγκαταστήσας τὴν βασιλεύουσα εἴσεσιν

Van Dieten, I. A. (ed.), *Nicetae Choniatae, Historia 1* (CFHB 11.1, Berlin 1975), p. 21.

## Chronological Table

**under Diocletian's reign (284-305):** Subjugation of Gangra in the province of Paphlagonia

**7th century:** Gangra comes under the jurisdiction of the theme of Armeniakon

**712:** Gangra is conquered by the Arabs



727: Gangra falls to the Arabs

732: Alleged fall of Gangra to the Arabs (it is uncertain whether it really happened)

827: Gangra comes under the jurisdiction of the theme of Boukelarion

968: Gangra comes under the jurisdiction of the theme of Paphlagonia

1050: An earthquake afflicts Gangra

1075/6: Possible conquest of Gangra by the Danishmenids

**Before the beginning of July 1101:** Gangra is conquered by the Danishmenids

**Beginning of July 1101:** Raymond of Toulouse attacks Gangra, leading the Crusaders of the second Crusade

1132/3: Gangra is taken by the Byzantines

1143: Gangra falls to Seljuk hands

1155: The taxes of Gangra become an income of the Seljuk governor Sahinsah

1163/4: Gangra is conquered by the Danishmenids

1169: Gangra is conquered by the Seljuks

1196: The Seljuk governor of Gangra (and Ankara) becomes an ally of the mutineer (Pseudo) Alexios III Comnenos

**Late 14th century:** Gangra is conquered by the Isfendiyarogullari rulers of Kastamon

1392: Gangra is conquered by the Ottomans

1401: Gangra is conquered by the Isfendiyarogullari rulers of Kastamon

1429: Gangra definitely in Ottoman hands