



AHAR

AHAR, the name of a county (*šahrestān*) and town in Azarbaijan. Situated between the Aras river on the north and the counties of Tabrīz on the south, Sarāb, Mešgīn and Moḡān on the east and Marand on the west, Ahar is one of the ten counties of eastern Azarbaijan. Except for the subdistrict (*dehestān*) of Garmādūz and villages and hamlets on the banks of the Aras and Darāvard rivers, the climate in the rest of the county is healthy, with cool summers. Spring and autumn have abundant rain, and snowfalls are heavy in the winter. Generally the region is mountainous, surrounded by the Sabalān range in the southeast, Qowša-dāḡ, Gūja-bīl, Āq-dāḡ, and Pīr Saqqā in the south, Jalā-dāḡ in the southwest, Peyḡām, Kamtāl, Jomhūr in the north, and Barzegī and Hašt Sar in the northeast. Of the numerous rivers in the district, the most significant after the Aras itself are the Ahar, Salīn, Şawfī, Alqanā, Kaḡ-rūd, and Qūrī-čāy, all of which flow into the Aras, and the Sarand river, which joins the Ājī-čāy (Razmārā, *Farhang* IV, pp. 60-61; Ḥ. Bāybūrdī, *Tārīḡ-e Arasbārān*, Tehran, 1341 Š./1962, pp. 22-25). Most inhabitants of the county, which embraces seventeen subdistricts, are occupied with agriculture, animal husbandry and carpet and *gelīm* weaving. Nowadays most of the villages and even the tribal population benefit from some educational and health facilities and basic agricultural training (M. J. Maškūr, *Naẓar-ī be tārīḡ-e Ādarbāyġān*, Tehran, 1349 Š./1970, pp. 30, 437, 461-506).

Many archeological and historical sites are found in the district, including a rock inscription from the Urartian period in the village of Seqendel; the fortresses of Peyḡām, Now Dez, Qahqaha, Baḡḡ or Jomhūr, Kordašt, Jūšīn, and



Āvārsīn; the bridges of Ḳodā Āfarīn and Vanyār; the old mosque and bath in the village Ḳarvānaq; the shrine (*boq'a*) in the village of Gūy Gonbad-e Dīzmār and those of Shah Qāsem in Pīrlar, Shah Ḥaydar in Keyvān, Sayyed Jebrā'īl in Āstāmāl, and Shaikh Moḥammad Anṣārī in Ūzī Kalībar (see *Tārīḳ-e Arasbārān*, pp. 49-58; M. Ḥ. Anwarī, "Tārīḳča va ātār-e bāstānī-e Arasbārān," *Našrīya-ye āmūzeš va parvareš-e Arasbārān*, Ahar, Bahman, 1351 Š./January-February, 1972, p. 3). In the dialect of Azarbaijan the county of Ahar is known as Ārāzbār or Arasbārān.

The small town of Ahar, the center of the county, is located 95 km northeast of Tabrīz. In the surrounding mountains are numerous examples of pre-Islamic remains, particularly from the Sasanian period. From the end of the second/eighth century until 222/836-37 it was part of the territory of Jāvedān and Bābak (Ebn al-Aṭīr, V, p. 240) and in the third/ninth century it was the centre of the Mīmaḍ region (*Ḥodūd al-'ālam*, tr. Minorsky, p. 143). In 334/945-46 during the reign of Abu'l-Ḥayjā' Ḥosayn b. Moḥammad b. Rawwād it was a prosperous town with abundant springs, lush gardens, huge trees and many kinds of inexpensive fruits (Ebn Ḥawqal, Persian tr. by J. Še'ār, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966, p. 54). In the fifth and sixth centuries, like other towns and cities of Azarbaijan, every so often it was under the control of a new ruler. Towards the end of the sixth century the town became the center of the Aharid rulers (Molūk-e Ahar). In 587/1191-92 Pīštakīn b. Moḥammad struck a coin in his own name, and after him his descendents Ozbak, Abū Bakr and Noṣrat-al-dīn Maḥmūd ruled Ahar until 623/1226. Yāqūt (d. 626/1228-29), referring to the local ruler as "Ebn Pīškīn," praises the town for its prosperity and adds that a number of jurists and scholars of Hadith originated there (I, 409). Both Abu'l-Fedā' and Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī relate similar accounts, but the latter adds that Ebn-e Pīškīn was from Georgia (*Taqwīm*, Persian tr. by 'A. Āyatī, Tehran, 1349 Š./1970, p. 537; *Nozhat al-qolūb*, p. 95). Le Strange gives an incorrect date for the reign of the Pīštakīn (or Pīškīn) dynasty (p. 169). During the Mongol period, Ahar and its surroundings became a summer resort for the Īlḳāns (W. W. Barthold, *Taḍkera-ye joḡrāfiā-ye tārīḳī-e Īrān*, tr. by Ḥ. Sardādvar of *Istoriko-geograficheskiĭ ocherk Irana*, St. Petersburg, 1914; Tehran, 1308 Š./1929, p. 270). On 4 Ša'bān 683/17 October 1284, Ḳvāja Šams-al-dīn Moḥammad Jovaynī, entitled Šāḥeb Dīvān, was executed there by order of Argūn, son of Abāqā Khan, and later buried in Čarandāb cemetery at Tabrīz (Jovaynī, I, introduction, p. lxi). Local events in Ahar under the Timurids, Chupanids, Jalayerids, Qara Qoyunlū and Āq Qoyunlū are fully discussed in chronicles such as *Rawzat al-ṣafā* and *Ḥabīb al-sīar*. Under the Safavids, Ahar received



royal attention and Shah ‘Abbās I erected a shrine, a *zāwīa*, and a large garden for the tomb of Shaikh Šehāb-al-dīn Maḥmūd ‘Atīqī Tabrīzī (‘A. ‘A. Kārang, “Boq’a-ye Šayḵ Šehāb-al-dīn Aharī,” *Yağmā* 27, 1353 Š./1974, pp. 76-81). He himself visited the shrine in 1014/1605 and again in 1020/1611-12 (Eskandar Beg, pp. 682, 849). In 1018/1609-10 Shaikh Bahā’-al-dīn ‘Āmelī and a number of Safavid notables paid a visit; a memorial in Shaikh Bahā’ī’s own hand is preserved in a framed inscription on the wall of a small mosque in the *zāwīa* of ‘Atīqī (Kārang, “Boq’a,” p. 80). Almost to the end of the Safavid period the governorship of the Ahar region was entrusted to the descendants and relatives of Ḳalīfa Elyās Qarāja-dāgī (Eskandar Beg, p. 756), but from early Qajar times it was in the hands of Qajar princes and nobles such as ‘Abbās-qolī Khan, Ḥājj Moḥammad Khan Qarāgūzlū, Sayf-al-molūk Mīrzā, Moḥammad Mīrzā (later Moḥammad Shah), Morād Mīrzā Ḥosām-al-salṭana, ‘Azod-al-dawla and ‘Ayn-al-dawla (*Tārīḵ-eArasbārān*, p. 96). Under the new provincial divisions after the constitution, Arasbārān was incorporated into the county of Tabrīz; in 1323 Š./1944 it became the center of the county of Arasbārān and the seat of the governor. According to the official census of 1345 Š./1966 Ahar had a population of 24,063. The three major historical sights inside the town are the shrine of Shaikh Šehāb-al-dīn, the tomb of Shaikh ‘Emād-al-dīn and the Jāme’ mosque. The tomb of Shaikh ‘Emād-al-dīn was repaired in 1271/1854-55, and the Jāme’ mosque three times in the years 1023/1614-15, 1052/1643-44 and 1218/1803-04 (*Tārīḵ-eArasbārān*, pp. 51-58).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text.