



ALVAND KŪH

ALVAND KŪH, mountain range near Hamadān, an isolated massif at a point of junction between the Zagros folds and the central Iranian plateau. It consists mainly of intrusive granites and diorites, which were thrust through geosynclinal sediments in tectonic processes connected with the orogenesis of the Zagros in late Jurassic and early Cretaceous times, with several peaks over 3,500 m and a summit of 3,580 m. An important watershed, it has always acted as a geographical and cultural barrier. About 50 km long, its maximum north-south breadth is 30 km. It is deeply gashed by valleys and falls steeply to its forelands on all sides. The original vegetation was probably a sparse oak forest, but this is now largely destroyed, and trees no longer regenerate naturally; the higher levels have a thin grass cover, while dense growths of grass are found only in the proximity of springs and streams.

The highlands are the traditional grazing grounds of various nomadic groups. The Torkešvand, Lors who speak the Lak dialect, use the western flank of the range as their *yeylāq* (summer pasture); their *qešlāq* (winter pasture) is in the district of Gīlān-e Ġarb near the Iraqi frontier. The eastern flank is used for summer pasture by the Yarīmtoghlū, who have their winter quarters north of Dezfūl in the foothill zone between the Zagros and the plain of Kūzestān and Mesopotamia. A third group, said to belong to the Šāhsevan, also comes to the east side of the Alvand Kūh, but has only a small number of tents. The range is devoid of permanent settlements, but is encircled by villages in the valleys and forelands whose economy is based on intensive exploitation of the irrigable valley bottoms and on wheat-growing and stockbreeding (sheep, goats, and



cattle) on the forelands. As a result of the land reform, both agriculture and stockbreeding have extended far into traditional nomad territory, greatly restricting resources for nomadic subsistence.

On the margins of the Alvand Kūh lie many urban settlements, including Hamadān, Malāyer, and Serkān or Tūyserkān. Their ecological and economic bases were the ample water supply provided by Alvand Kūh, the good climate due to the high altitude, and the resultant agricultural potentiality. The trilingual (Old Persian, Neo-Elamite, and Neo-Babylonian) inscriptions called the Ganj-nāma, 10 km south of Hamadān at the foot of the Alvand range, bear witness to the area's historic importance. The range was a vital strategic point on the Median royal road and subsequent lines of communication between the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia right up to the 20th century; it is still a zone of transition between Turkish, Kurdish, Lori, and Persian-speaking peoples.

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