



AMLAŠ I. GEOGRAPHY

This small town and district in the southeastern part of Gilān Province. The town is located at lat 37°05' N, long 50°11' E on the right bank of the Šalmānrud. After having been for long the center of a subdistrict (*dehestān*) of the same name within the sub-provincial unit (*šahrestān*) of Rudsar, it was designated as the center of a new *šahrestān* through the reform of administrative divisions of Iran implemented in 1998. This sub-provincial unit of Amlaš corresponds to the former subdistricts of Amlaš and Kojid, with an area of 408 km² and a population of 46,358 inhabitants according to the 2006 census. It is divided into two districts (*baḡš*), Markazi, with the two subdistricts of Southern Amlaš (Amlaš-e Janubi) and Northern Amlaš (Amlaš-e Šamāli), on the piedmont and first hills of the Alborz mountains, and Rānekuh in the mountain area to the south, including the three subdistricts of Somām, Šabḡoslāt, and Kojid.

The Gilak population speaks the *gilaki-gāleši* dialect, which is somewhat different from the *gilaki lāhijāni* spoken in the plain in Lāhijān and Rudsar (Bazin and Bromberger p. 14 and map 3). They can be divided into two groups, the fully sedentary peasants on the plain, piedmont, and lower valleys and the cowherds (*gāleš*) and shepherds (*čupān*) of the mountain area.

The sedentary peasants cultivate paddy cultivation in the plain and along valleys, irrigated by diversion ditches from the Šalmānrud and local streams or from small reservoirs, and tea plantations on the first slopes of the hills, covering, according to Bālāi (p. 107), respectively 4,435 ha (49.6 % of the cultivated area) and 3,224 ha (36 %) in 1986. Sericulture, once very active, has



sharply declined (only 245 ha, 1.5 %). Large estates have been divided among the peasants by the land reform, but the resulting holdings are extremely fragmented; half of the paddies area is cultivated in holdings smaller than one hectare (Bâlâi, p. 127).

Cowherds and shepherds combine pastoral life and work migrations resulting in especially complex migratory patterns (Pourfickoui and Bazin, pp. 62-67). On the one hand, they use four pastoral levels: winter pastures (*qešlāq*) in the low altitude forests, two intermediate levels (*nesferudkân*) between 1,600 and 2,000 m altitude around mountain villages like Omām, where they sow some wheat and barley, and highest summer pastures (*yeylāq*) at an altitude up to 2,400 m. Omām was also the summer resort of the khans of Amlaš, whose magnificent residences are still to be seen. On the other hand, they increase their income by going as workers to the piedmont and plain. Men take part in preparation works in paddy fields in late winter or in picking citrus fruit in the eastern part of Rudsar *šahrestān* from November to March, whereas women work in transplanting paddy seedlings in spring and picking tea leaves in summer. A number of specialized craftsmen press felt (*namad*) in villages around Amlaš, whereas weaving *šāl* (a woolen cloth pressed with soapy water to make it relatively waterproof) has almost disappeared. In the village of Eškar Meydān, 5 km to the northeast of Amlaš, a group of specialized (masculine) potters produce with a potter's wheel various earthenware vessels and churns (Achouri, pp. 34, 39, 45).

Amlaš itself was only mentioned as a big village with a weekly market on Tuesdays until the mid-20th century. Since then it has rapidly developed as a commercial center and an important tea-processing place, with four factories. Its urban status was officially recognized by the establishment of a municipality (*šahrdāri*) in 1970 and later on by its designation as the *šahrestān* center in 1998. Its population has grown from 5,350 inhabitants in 1966 to 9,488 in 1986 and 15,047 in 2006.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mohammad Taghi Achouri, "La poterie artisanale au Gilân," Ph D. diss., Aix-en-Provence, 1977.



Samad Bâlâi, “Aménagement hydro-agricole: développement de la région rurale de Roudsar (Guilan Oriental, Iran),” Ph. D. diss., University of Paris, I, 1991.

Marcel Bazin and Christian Bromberger, *Gilân et Âzarbayjân oriental: cartes et documents ethnographiques*, Paris, 1982.

Ja‘far Eshâqi Timuri, “Amlaš,” in *Dā‘rat-al-ma‘āref-e bozorg-e eslāmi X*, Tehran, 2001, pp. 234-36.

Markaz-e āmār-e Irān, *Sar-šomāri-e ‘omumi-e nofus o maskan*, Tehran, 1966-2006.

Ali Pour-Fickoui and Marcel Bazin, *Elevage et vie pastorale dans le Guilân (Iran septentrional)*, Paris, 1978.

Hyacinthe Louis Rabino, *Les provinces caspiennes de la Perse: le Guîlân*, Paris, *Revue du Monde Musulman* 32, 1916-17, pp. 197-208; tr. Ja‘far Kōmāmizāda, as *Welāyāt-e dār-al-marz-e Irān: Gilān*, Tehran, 1978, pp. 232-43.

Ḥosayn-‘Ali Razmārā, ed., *Farhang-e joġrāfiā‘i-e Irān II*, Tehran, 1949, p. 24.