



‘ANBARĀN

‘ANBARĀN, a township and district (*baḵš*) in the Namin sub-provincial district (*šahrestān*) of Ardabil Province, located at lat 38°30' N, long 48°22' E. This small area constitutes the only enclave of Ṭāleš (or Tāleš) population overlapping onto the interior, semi-arid side of the Ṭāleš range, just below the ridge that marks the boundary between Iran and the Republic of Azarbaijan (Bazin, II, pp. 85-87). It originally included a group of seven villages located in the valleys of a number of small streams tributary of the Qarasu River, at rather high elevations between 1,500 and 1,720 meters, marked quite conspicuously on the map drawn by Jacques de Morgan (1905, inset map “Carte du Tâlyche,” 1/300,000): from the east to the west are Minābād, Mirzānaq, Jeyd, Kolaš, Aminjān, ‘Anbarān-e Soflā, and ‘Anbarān-e ‘Olyā, plus two tiny *qešlāq* (winter pasture) settlements linked to the latter (Bazin, II, p. 85).

Almost all the inhabitants, except for a small Turkish and Shī‘ite minority in Jeyd and Aminjān, are Shafī‘ite Sunni Muslims and have kept *ṭāleši* as their mother tongue, a dialect apparently very close to northern *ṭāleši* as described by B. V. Miller. The presence of some *ṭāleši*-speaking families in neighboring villages such as Pilejavār, Kalandaraq, and Soluṭ may imply a greater extension of this Ṭāleš area in the past. In fact, Namin, the district center lying at a distance of about 10 km to the South, which is now an area of 100 percent Turkish-speaking inhabitants, was in the early 19th century, according to James Baillie Fraser (p. 144), the residence of the most powerful khans of Ṭāleš, who owned a significant part of the land of the ‘Anbarān area. Even if



they were themselves turcophones like the khans of Kargānrud or Asālem, a part of the local population must have been Ṭāleš, according to Eugène Aubin (p. 116), who states “At the extremity of the Ardabil plain, the district of Velkidj (Vilkič), called for this reason ‘Turkish Talyche,’ has already been almost completely turkicized.” Nowadays, all this Ṭāleš population is bilingual, speaking both *ṭāleši* and Turkish, and increasingly becoming trilingual by using Persian as well.

The rural economy is quite similar to that of the neighboring Turkish villages; dry farming (*deym*) cultivation of wheat, barley, lentils, and vetch following a biennial rotation with fallow is complemented by more or less extensive (depending on water resources provided by the streams and a few *qanāts*) irrigated orchards of temperate fruits (apples, pears, apricots) and patches of alfalfa. Animal husbandry includes cattle, with a sharp decrease of oxen in consequence of mechanization, and sheep taken to pastures around and above the villages and at lower parts of the valley in winter. Formerly, some families from ‘Anbarān used winter pastures (*qešlāq*) on the humid eastern side of the range, in the lower valley of Āstārā Čāy, where a part of them settled and started rice cultivation in the 1930s, founding the place now called ‘Anbarān Maḥalla in the vicinity of Āstārā. Dairy products are mostly consumed locally, and the majority of families weaves and sells kilims (*gelim*) with bright colors and two or three geometric central motives in a rectangular frame.

Since the combination of these various resources proved to be insufficient for a great part of the families, work migrations developed early from this area. During the cold season, a great number of young men used to go to the forestry zones of Māzandarān, where they worked as sawyers, but now they are mostly attracted by various job opportunities in the construction industry, where they are hired as joiners and carpenters and the like.

In recent years, ‘Anbarān-e Soflā, which was already the largest village in the district and held a weekly market on Fridays and a number of services, has united with the adjacent village of Aminjān to become the town of ‘Anbarān, with a municipality and the center of a new district (*baḳš*) created in 1998. It concentrates more than half of the total population of the subdistrict, having 6,161 inhabitants out of 10,593 in 2006 (Markaz-e Āmār), while the rural part of the ‘Anbarān subdistrict (*dehestān*; i.e., ‘Anbarān-e ‘Olyā and related hamlets) counted 807 inhabitants and the population of the remaining four other villages, grouped in the Minābād subdistrict, was 3,625.



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