



## ARG

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**ARG** (or ARK), the inner fortress or citadel of a walled city. The *arg* may also serve as the residence of a ruler and include other court and government offices. From Safavid through Qajar times, the *arg* of a provincial capital was generally the military headquarters and administrative center of the city and its dependencies. Though an *arg* is sometimes referred to as a *qaḷ'a*, the generic term for fortress, the latter term should more strictly designate an isolated fort or one sited at a strategic point outside the town it defends. The *arg* always lay inside the city wall, sometimes adjacent to it and functioning as part of the defenses; it is analogous to the Roman *arx*, from which the Persian word may have derived, as well as the Norman keep (*donjon*). Its etymology is obscure: the term appears in Middle Persian only in the compound *argbed* a military rank and, though evidently in use during the 3rd/9th century (see under Arg-e Zaranj below), does not occur frequently in New Persian before the early 11th/17th century. It is used also by Persian writers of Central Asia and northern India to designate the fortress of a city (e.g., Bukhara, Delhi). The principal Iranian towns that have been noted for their *arg* are Bam, Kermān, Shiraz, Tabrīz, Tehran, and Zaranj.

*Bam.* On the border between Kermān and Sistān provinces, Bam probably had a fortress long before Islamic times. In 260/873, during the Saffarid-Taherid wars, it was used as a prison (L. Lockhart, "Bam," *EI*<sup>2</sup> I, p. 1008), and is described by Ebn Ḥawqal and other travelers from the 4th/10th century on as a large fortress in the middle of the town, containing one of the city's three mosques, and reputedly impregnable (Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 299, 312). Today



the fortress is still an impressive ruin of baked brick, rising in terraces at the northern end of the walled town; from the battlements of its forty-foot-high walls the plan of the fortress (entrance ramps, living quarters, stables, guardrooms) is clearly visible. In 1209/1794 it was the scene of Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār's capture of the last Zand ruler, Lotf-'Alī Khan.

*Kermān.* The provincial capital (variously known as Bardasīr, Govāšīr, and Kermān) has always been well fortified. Writing in Buyid times, Moqaddasī (Le Strange, *Lands*, pp. 303-04, 306) mentions a *qaḷ'a* outside the walls, a fortified gatehouse (*ḥeṣn*), and another *qaḷ'a* within the city, overlooking the houses. This latter fortress, the medieval *arg*, can no longer be identified; the former two are probably to be seen in the ruins of the Qaḷ'a-ye Ardašīr, on a hill southeast of the present-day city, and the smaller Qaḷ'a-ye Doḡtar. Between them lie the ruins of the old city, which was destroyed by Āgā Moḥammad Khan Qājār in 1209/1794. The 19th-century Qajar city, rebuilt under Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah, had a new *arg* at the southwestern edge; it formed a slight salient with the wall (see P. Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, London, 1902, pp. 188, 198) and contained the barracks, arsenal, and telegraph office, although the governor continued to reside in the Qaḷ'a-ye Ardašīr into the Pahlavi era.

*Shiraz.* The *arg* built by the Karīm Khan Zand who called himself by the title of Wakīl (-al-ra'āyā), that is, Deputy of the People, in about 1181/1767-68 is the best preserved and the most typical of its age as a combination of fortress and luxury residence (see [Arg-e Karīm Khan](#) and [Plate VII](#)).

*Tabrīz.* This strategically important and much besieged city has had a citadel, variously rebuilt and resited, at least from early Safavid times. When the Ottoman Turks captured Tabrīz in 993/1585 they built an *arg* in thirty-six days; when Shah 'Abbās recaptured the city eighteen years later this fortress was destroyed by the citizens; in 1020/1611 they erected a new one on a different site, in the Rab'-e Rašīdī quarter (Eskandar Beg, pp. 681-82, 826; V. Minorsky, "Tabrīz," *EI*<sup>2</sup> IV, p. 583). In 1224/1809 the governor Naḡaf-qolī Khan Donbolī began, or continued, the conversion of the mosque of 'Alīšāh (built by Oljāytū's minister in the early 7th/14th cent.) into a new *arg*. 'Abbās Mīrzā surrounded this one with defensive ditches in 1241/1825-26, and although the other fortifications of Tabrīz were demolished in the reign of Nāṣer-al-dīn Shah, the citadel remained (Minorsky, "Tabriz," pp. 590, 593). It consists basically of a rectangular bastion some 120 feet high flanked by semicircular towers.

*Tehran.* Begun by Karīm Khan Zand during his residence there in 1173/1760,



the *arg* of Tehran probably stood on the site of a residential complex dating from Safavid times. According to chroniclers, the Wakīl rebuilt the town wall and added a strong fortress with towers and a moat, as well as a *dīvān-kāna* with a garden adjoining (Nāmī, *Tārīk-egītigošay*, ed. S. Nafisī, Tehran, 1317 Š./1938, p. 96; Mīrzā Abu'l-Ḥasan Ġaffārī, *Golšan-e morād*, British Library MS Or 3592, fols. 65-66; Y. Ḍokā', *Tārīkča-yesāktmānhā-ye arg-e salṭanatī-e Tehrān*, Tehran, 1349 Š./1970, pp. 8, 18, 32). From 1200/1786 it was further expanded by Āgā Moḥammad Khan and Faṭḥ-'Alī Shah, and was described by a visitor in 1810 as the only building of any consequence in the capital (J. M. Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire*, London, 1813, p. 118). During the next fifty years this nucleus developed into the Golestān palace precinct, which by 1842 took up roughly one quarter of the area of the city, measuring some 600 yards east to west and 1200 yards north to south (Berezin's report, cited by Minorsky, in *EF* IV, p. 718). At this time it abutted the northern face of the outer wall (just south of the Kīābān-e Sepah). In the 1870s Tehran's outer fortifications were razed and the city was remodeled; by the 1890s the *arg*, while remaining as the palace and government administrative complex, was bisected by a new avenue and situated in the center of a city walled more for show than for defense. Its walls were finally demolished under Reżā Shah (see E. Pākrahān, *Téhéran de jadis*, Geneva, 1971, especially city plans pp. 129, 132).

*Zaranj*. The ancient capital of Sīstān had a fortress at least as early as the mid-1st/7th century when it was taken by the Arab armies. Ebn Ḥawqal in the 4th/10th century and several later writers record that the Saffarid 'Amr b. Layṭ had strongly fortified the city and erected between its Karkūya (northern) and Nīšak (eastern) gates a large building called the Ark, which he used as his treasury; this later became the seat of government and citadel (Le Strange, *Lands*, p. 335; Yāqūt, s.v. *ark*; C. Huart, "Zarandj," *EF* IV, p. 1218) and it is probable that the name of this famous building became generalized as the designation for all such fortress headquarters. The city was destroyed by Tīmūr in 785/1383, and was subsequently replaced as the provincial capital by nearby Zābol (called Noṣratābād in Qajar times), which until recently had a more modern *arg* at the northwest corner of the wall (Huart, "Zarandj;" Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles*, pp. 375, 382-83).

See also [Arg-e 'Alīšāh](#); [Arg-e Karīm Khan](#); and [Argbed](#).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Given in the text.