



ĀZĀD

ĀZĀD, *Zelkova crenata* or Siberian elm, a tree of the *Ulmaceae* family, for which also other scientific names, such as *Zelkova carpinifolia*, *Zelkova hyrcana*, *Planera crenata*, and *Planera Richardi*, have been proposed. It is one of the most typical trees of the hyrcanian forest and is found, always mixed with many other species, in the humid Caspian forests of low altitude, from the Lankarān lowlands to the Golī Dāg, where it reaches 900 meters above the sea level (Ḥ. Ṭābetī, *Deraktān-e jangalī-e Īrān*, Tehran, 1326 Š./1947-48, pp. 28-29), as well as in the Colchidian forests. It is one of the endemic species of the Euxino-Hyrcanian botanical province inside the Euro-Siberian territory, which are relics of the Arcto-Tertiary flora that was elsewhere destroyed during the Quaternary cold periods (K. H. Rechinger, "Grundzüge der Pflanzenverbreitung im Iran," *Verhandlungen der zoologischen-botanischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 1951, p. 187; M. Zohary, "On the Geobotanical Structure of Iran," *Bulletin of the Research Council of Israel*, section D, Botany, 11 D, supp., March, 1963, pp. 22-28; A. Noirfalise and M. H. Djazirei, "Contribution à la phytogéographie de la forêt caspienne," *Bulletin de la Société Royale Botanique de Belgique* 98, 1965, pp. 205-07).

The tree is called *āzād* (noble, free) in Persian and *Gīlakī*, *nīl* in northern Ṭāleš, *sāk* or *sīyā dōr* in central and southern Ṭāleš, *azedār* or *azzār* in Māzandarān and Gorgān and *āqča āgāj* in Golī Dāg (Ṭābetī, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-55).

Its leaves, serrate-edged and downy like those of the elm, but smaller, are often given to livestock as fodder. Siberian elms are sometimes kept up for that purpose, together with other forest trees, amidst fields and pastures, in a



park-like landscape (M. Bazin, *Le Tâlech, une région ethnique au nord de l'Iran*, Paris, 1980, I, pp. 146-47).

Other majestic *Zelkova*, some of them exceeding 30 m in height or 1.80 m in diameter, have been preserved around many sanctuaries in Gīlān, and often seem to have been an object of worship before the erection of the *emānzāda* (M. Sotuda, *Az Āstārā tā Astarābād I*, Tehran, 1349 Š./1971, passim; M. Bazin, “Le culte des arbres et des montagnes dans le Tâleš (Iran du nord-ouest),” in *Quand le crible était dans la paille . . . , Hommage à P. N. Boratav*, Paris, 1978, pp. 96-98).

The Siberian elm gives a hard wood of high quality. Gilak peasants make from it their shoulder-stick called *čāṇčū* (H. Tābetī, *Jangalhā-ye Īrān*, Tehran, 1346 Š./1967-68, p. 116), and carpenters regard it as the best building timber.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also H. Bobek, *Die natürlichen Wälder und Gehölzfluren Irans*, Bonn, 1951, pp. 16-17.