



BAHMANŠĪR

BAHMANŠĪR (less commonly Bahmešīr, Bahmānšīr, or Baḥr al-Mašīr), the name of the distributary which branches off the left bank of the Kārūn river in the Kūzestān plain a short distance above Ḷorramšahr, and of a *dehestān* near this town. Approximately 70 km (43.5 miles) long, the Bahmanšīr runs parallel with the Šaṭṭ-al-‘Arab (Arvandrūd), from which it is separated by Ābādān island, and flows into a different estuary called Ḷor-e Bahmanšīr. At the turn of the century the banks of the Bahmanšīr were lined with villages and date-palms down to within 16 km of the Persian Gulf. It has a minimum depth of about three meters at low tide and increasing depths toward the estuary. Thus in the nineteenth century some small British ships were able to sail up or down the Bahmanšīr creek (Major Eastcourt’s ship the “Euphrates” in the expedition of 1836; Lieutenant Selby’s boat in 1841). The Bahmanšīr was sounded by the British for navigation in 1888 and 1890. At the end of the century there was talk of deepening the creek and draining the marshes so that Iran might have a direct river access to the Persian Gulf independent of the Šaṭṭ-al-‘Arab, but nothing was done then or later. Its impracticability for the use of ocean liners was demonstrated in 1890 (Wilson, p. 282).

According to Mas‘ūdī (*Tanbīh*, p. 52) Bahmanšīr was the Persian name of the lower stretch of the Tigris extending from Maftaḥ to Obolla and ‘Abbādān (Ābādān). The name Dahana-ye Šīr found in *Ḷodūd al-‘ālam* seems to refer to Bahmanšīr (tr. Minorsky, pp. 74, 214). The Kārūn then reached the sea by a course which lay further east (today known as the Kārūn-e A‘ma “Blind Kārūn”). At some unknown time, but certainly not later than the early



‘Abbasid period, the Kārūn was joined to the Šaṭṭ-al-‘Arab by an artificial channel. The name Ḥaffār (Digger) is given to this channel in Western sources and may be taken as a reference to its artificial origin but locally the channel was called Bahmanšīr according to Lorimer (pp. 209-10). The channel cuts across the Bahmanšīr creek, making it the recipient of part of the Kārūn’s waters.

The name Bahmanšīr is thought to be a contraction of Bahman Ardašīr I, referring to the Sasanian king Ardašīr I, who is traditionally credited with many public works (Ḥamza, p. 46; Yāqūt, I, p. 770).

See also [kārūn](#).

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