



ĀBĪ

ĀBĪ, Persian term for those agricultural lands which are irrigated; unirrigated (i.e., rain-fed) fields are called *daymī* (see discussion s.v. [Agriculture](#)). Cf. also the more specialized term *fāyrāb/pāyrāb*, applied to lands irrigated by diversion of river water. The two traditional forms of irrigation are diversion of stream water and use of the *qanāt*; both can be traced to pre-Achaemenid times and may be seen as causes of the early development of strong political institutions and state formation in the Middle East (See K. Wittfogel, "Hydraulic Civilizations," in W. J. Thomas, Jr., ed., *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, Chicago, 1956, pp. 152-64). Both techniques have persisted despite setbacks and destruction (as at the hands of the invading Mongols in the 13th century A.D.) and are still important.

In recent years Iran's *ābī* lands have been expanded remarkably through new technology. The traditional techniques have been changed, particularly through the development of large irrigation projects linked to the construction of dams and drilling of deep wells. According to recent statistics, the total area of *ābī* lands can be estimated at 3.6 million hectares, of which 1.5 million ha may be considered as fully irrigated. Wells and *qanāts* each irrigate 800,000 ha totally or partially; diversion of river water and canal systems irrigate the rest.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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