



BĪĀBĀN (REGION)

BĪĀBĀN, name of the coastal plain that extends south from the mouth of the Mīnāb river for 88 miles to the cape Ra's al-Kūh, which is 30 miles west of the Jask promontory. It is 10 to 15 miles wide and borders on the districts of Jāsk to the southeast, Rūdbār and Bašākerd (q.v.) to the east, and Mīnāb to the north. It faces the Sea of Oman to the west. Kūh-e Bīābān, which reaches a maximum height in the south at 3,946 ft, is the chief range of hills and forms the eastern boundary. There are also minor ranges between Kūh-e Bīābān and the sea. The ranges are generally of sandstone and have been eroded into fantastic forms. Kūh-e Mobārak (330 ft), which stands back from the promontory, is a landmark visible from great distances. A number of wide, deep seasonal streams (Gaz, Hevāy, Karāy, Berīz, Zangalī), which can become impassable for days at a time in the winter, bisect the plain. The coast is mostly low and sandy, with stretches of mangrove swamp in the north. The district is known for its dangerous quick-sands (Baluchi *mīn*), which occur chiefly on the coast between the firm, damp beach and the soft, dry ground further inland. They are formed by the sun drying the surface of the ground while the soil below remains in a semifluid condition. Inland the soil is firm, clayey in parts (which are impassable after rain), but otherwise sandy. Vegetation is mostly camel thorn (*Alhagi camelorum*) and tamarisk. (See Lorimer, p. 300.)

The district is referred to with Jāsk in the late Safavid period as Jāsk-e Bīābān (Röhrborn, p. 11). It is currently a district (*dehestān*) in the *baḡš* of Mīnāb, under the *šahrestān* of Bandar-e 'Abbās, in the Ostān-e Banāder o Jazāyer-e



Ḳalij-e Fārs. Sīrīk, which affords the only significant (though minor) anchorage, is the major settlement and is situated a little inland on a creek. Most settlements are inland. Before the modern period the area was generally under the *mīrs* of Jāsk, who held the title of *kalāntar* from the governor in Bandar-e ‘Abbās.

The only travelers to have reported on the area are Grant, who passed through it from south to north in 1809, and Gabriel, who visited Sīrīk in 1933 (Gabriel, p. 138). Gabriel writes that it had the largest date groves of the region but had sunk into insignificance.

The population is Baluch, mainly from the Ra’īs and Hot tribes. They are Shafē’ite Sunni Muslims, and until recently they were relatively uninfluenced by contacts with the Persian administration. The culture and the economy closely resemble those of the Makrān coastal plain to the east (see baluchistan, i). Drinking water is from shallow, often brackish wells. The major crop is dates, but there is also scattered cultivation of wheat, barley, millet, and sorghum, all rainfed. Date palms provide the major building materials. Most families own a few cattle, sheep, or goats. Small craft that can enter the coastal creeks ply the water between Bīābān and the islands off Bandar-e ‘Abbās, and there is some fishing and commerce. The population, which is generally poor, is estimated variously. Lorimer (p. 301) gives a gazetteer of 48 named settlements with a total of 8,000 population, plus 300 camels and 500 donkeys. Sadīd-al-Salṭana gives only 4,000; Jahānbānī gives 1,000 families under the leadership of Mīr Barakat Khan (of Jāsk), but the date of his estimate is not clear. The latest estimate before the beginning of decennial censusing is Razmārā (*Farhang* VIII, p. 254, s.v. Sīrīk, which gives 85 villages and a population of 14,945 (1332 Š./1953).

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Author’s field notes.

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