



# BONGĀH-E MOSTAQELL-E ĀBYĀRĪ

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**BONGĀH-E MOSTAQELL-E ĀBYĀRĪ** (Independent irrigation agency), established by the Majles on 29 Ordībehešt 1322 Š./19 May 1943, during the administration of ‘Alī Sohaylī, to improve irrigation in Iran by building dams, managing distribution of river resources, digging deep wells, resolving water distribution disputes, assisting agricultural projects, and cleaning the *qanāts* (underground aqueducts). It provided for a three-member executive board (*hay’at-e modīra*); the first board consisted of Ğolām-‘Alī Meykada, chairman, Kāzem Ḥasībī, and Jawād Ganjaī.

Matters pertaining to irrigation and distribution of water had previously been regulated primarily by Islamic law (*feqh*). After the initiation of a large-scale modernization program by Reżā Shah (r. 1304-20 Š./1925-41), however, agricultural development and the concomitant increasing demand for water required a more complex administrative apparatus; the government thus became directly involved in expanding and improving irrigation. Initially the annual budget for the agency was Rls 45 million, though the Majles often voted additional funds for individual projects. The agency was located in the Ministry of Agriculture building of Ferdowsī Avenue until 1327 Š./1948-49, when it moved to a new building on Bahārestān Square. The first two years were devoted largely to preliminary investigations and planning for various projects.



The agency then entered a period of intense activity. In Mehr, 1325 Š./September-October, 1946, during the government of Aḥmad Qawām (Qawām-al-Salṭana), Jaʿfar Šarīfemāmī was appointed chairman and executive director (*modīr-e ʿāmel*), with Abuʿl-Ḥasan Behnīā and Mortazā Sarmad as the other members of the board. A number of irrigation dams were constructed: the dam on the Ḥešmatrūd tributary of the Safīdrūd, the Golpāyegān dam, the Mīānkangī dam on the Helmand, and the Kohak dam on the Parīān tributary of the Helmand in Sīstān. It was also during this period that the Kūhrang tunnel was dug and the preliminary plans for the Karaj dam were prepared. Other irrigation canals were built at Behbahān, Jahrom, Bandar-e ʿAbbās, and Dašttestān. The *qanāt* systems in Tabrīz and Nāʾīn were expanded, and several deep wells were dug in Qāʿenāt. The distribution of river water was organized, and many *qanāts* with multiple ownership were cleaned. In addition, 5 million date palms were planted in Dašttestān.

When the government of Ḥājī-ʿAlī Razmārā was formed in 1328 Š./1949 Šarīfemāmī became minister of roads (*wazīr-e rāh*) and Abuʿl-Ḥasan Behnīā chairman of the executive board and executive director. Under his leadership the agency also remained active. On 11 Mordād 1334 Š./2 August 1955, in the government of Fażl-Allāh Zāhedī, a new bill designed to bring the agency up to date and to strengthen its performance was approved by the Majles (*Ešlāḥ-e qānūn-e taʿsīs-e Bongāh-e Ābyārī* “Emendation of the statute for establishment of the agency of irrigation”); under its provisions the annual budget was increased to a minimum of Rls 600 million. After the formation of the Ministry of Water and Electricity (Wezārat-e Āb o Barq) on 22 Esfand 1342 Š./13 March 1963, the agency was absorbed into it (27 Farvardīn 1343 Š./16 April 1964), and its duties were taken over by the Ministry.

The agency followed a policy of engaging Persian engineers and experts for its staff, though it occasionally brought in foreign consultants on contract. No program for training irrigation specialists was undertaken, however, and the agency remained primarily a planning and executive body.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Search terms:*

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