



BŪKĀN

BŪKĀN (Kurd. Bōkān), name of a town, a *baḡš* (district), and a river in the *šahrestān* (county) of Mahābād, West Azarbaijan.

The town is situated on the eastern bank of the Sīmīnarūd (Tk. Tatahūčāy), known locally as Čōmī Bōkān, on the road between Saqqez and Mīān-do-āb at about 56 km southeast of Mahābād. It functions as the administrative and commercial center for several dozen prosperous villages. As recently as the 1330s Š./1950s Būkān was merely a large village (*qaṣaba*) of 3,074 souls (Razmārā, *Farhang* IV, p. 98), but its population has grown rapidly, from 5,307 in 1335 Š./1956 to 9,307 in 1345 Š./1966 and 20,579 in 1355 Š./1976 (Sāzmān-e Barnāma [o Būdja], 1346 Š./1967, 1358 Š./1979), primarily owing to rural migration since the land reform of the 1940s Š./1960s.

The district of Būkān formerly consisted of three *dehestāns* (subdistricts): Āḡtāčī-e Būkān (48 villages, pop. 16,060), Behī (62 villages, pop. 16,177), and Torjān (Kurd. Turjān; 28 villages, pop. 7,548; Razmārā, loc. cit.). It is inhabited by Kurds, adherents of Shafē'ite Sunnism, who speak the Sōrānī, or central, dialect of Kurdish. The rural population is engaged in farming (wheat, barley and other cereals, sugar beets, tobacco, and some summer crops), gardening, and animal husbandry. Formerly the village housed a Jewish community of about 70 families (Razmārā, loc. cit.).

The geographical name Būkān is not recorded in historical sources before the Qajar period (cf. Minorsky, pp. 68-69, for etymology of the word). The region was part of the powerful Mokrī principality (q.v.; late 9th/14th-late 13th/19th



century), which had its capital at Sāvōjbolāg (Kurd. Sāblāg), now Mahābād. With the decline of the Mokrī princes, the Dehbokrī (Kurd. Dēbōkrī) *āgās*, a family of landed aristocrats (sometimes erroneously called a “tribe”) who owned numerous villages in Āktāčī, Behī, and Šahr-e Veyrān (in the *šahrestān* of Mahābād) rose to prominence in Būkān. They were staunch enemies of the Mokrī princes.

Despite its small size, Būkān has played a major role in the political and cultural life of the region. The prosperous villages owned by powerful *āgās* were able to support a sizable population of mullahs, religious students, and shaikhs (leaders of religious orders). The villages of Tūrjān and Kānaqā(h) (in the *šahrestān* of Mahābād) were famous for their religious colleges (Dār-al-‘elm-e Torjān and Kānaqāh-e Šayk-e Borhān/Kānaqāy Šēkī Burhān), which were attended by students from neighboring Islamic countries (Hēmin, pp. 8-9; Torjānī, pp. 536-37). Residents of Būkān were actively involved in the short-lived Kurdish Republic of 1324-25 Š./1946, which had its capital at Mahābād (Eagleton). The town acquired a printing press, and books and magazines were published in Kurdish there. Six years later the region was the center of a peasant revolt that spread to all the Kurdish provinces of Iran (Mokhammedov). Peasant forces were able to force the *āgās* out of the villages and besieged them in Būkān. The army interfered, and the revolt was ruthlessly put down (Hēmin, pp. 38-39; *Kurdistān* [publication of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Kurdish] 23, February, 1973, pp. 1, 3). The people of Būkān participated in the 1357 Š./1978-79 Revolution in Iran and in the subsequent movement for Kurdish autonomy.

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