



ČAHĀR MAḤĀ(L) WA BAḶTĪĀRĪ

ČAHĀR MAḤĀ(L) WA BAḶTĪĀRĪ, second smallest province (*ostān*) of Persia in area (Farajī et al., II, p. 533; after Kūhgīlūya wa Boir Aḥmad with 14,261 km², *ibid.*, p. 967), located in the Zagros mountains of southwestern Persia. It covers an area of 14,870 km² (14,820 km² acc. to Farajī et al., II, p. 533) between 31.14° and 32.47° N and between 49.49° and 51.24° E, bounded by the provinces of Isfahan on the north and east, Kūzestān on the west, and Kūhgīlūya wa Boir Aḥmad on the south. It was formerly included in Isfahan province and comprised the county (*šahrestān*) of Šahr-e Kord (Razmārā, *Farhang* X, pp. 126-28, 218-20); in Bahman 1332 Š./February 1953, it became a separate governorate (*farmāndārī*) under its present name, with Šahr-e Kord (formerly Deh-e Kord) as capital (Varjāvand et al., p. 37). In Šahrivar 1337 Š./September 1958 it became a governorate general (*farmāndārī-e koll*) and subsequently, in 1352 Š./1973, a province (Afšār Sīstānī, I, p. 45). Administratively it is divided into the four counties of Šahr-e Kord, Borūjen, Fārsān, and Lordakān, 8 districts (*baḷš*), 33 subdistricts (*dehestān*), and 793 villages (Farajī et al., p. 533). Other towns are Ardal, Boldājī, Ban, Jūneqān, Sāmān, Farādonba, Farroḷšahr, and Hafšijān (Markaz-e Āmār, p. 17).

The physical environment is dominated by the basin-and-range structure of the **Baḷtīārī Mountains** in the central Zagros. The tallest peak in the region is the perpetually snow-covered Zardkūh (4,547 m; Badīī, I, p. 51), and the Kārūn and the Zāyandarūd, two of the largest rivers in Persia, originate in these



mountains. The Zagros valleys sometimes extend into plains, as at Farādonba, Kīār, and Mīzdaj. The climate of the province is cold; the long winters generally begin in mid-Ābān (beginning of November) and continue until mid-Farvardīn (beginning of April). The average annual temperature does not exceed 12° C (Badīī, II, p. 135; cf. Amīr-Ḥosaynī, pp. 379-466), and the coldest temperatures in Persia are frequently reported from Šahr-e Kord. There are two rainy seasons: one lasting about six weeks before the cold weather (which lasts 100-140 days) sets in, the other after the winter thaw. According to Afšār Sīstānī (I, p. 445) annual rainfall ranges between 340 and 560 mm.

The diversity of vegetation found in some areas is remarkable in view of the harsh climate, thin soil cover, and high altitude of much of the region. In the north, east of the Zāyandarūd, the limestone hills and elevated plains are mostly barren, owing to insufficient topsoil, steep terrain, and lack of water. West of the Zāyandarūd, on northern heights like the Jahānbīn hills, there is no visible permanent vegetation, but during the spring various types of grasses, herbs, and other plants appear in the shallow lower valleys; they include mulleins, mushrooms, shallots, leeks, artichokes, goat's thorn, and astragalus. Large areas of the western and southwestern valleys are sparsely covered with oak forests interspersed with grass and thorn bushes, which provide rich pasturage. Overgrazing has, however, seriously damaged these natural resources (Sāzmān-e Barnāma, I, p. 178; cf. Wezārat-e Kešāvarzī).

Settlement patterns and economic activities in Čahār Maḥāl wa BaḲtīārī are largely determined by geomorphology and climate. The population density is rather low, owing to the rough topography and harsh natural environment. The province is the summer home of the great [BaḲtīārī tribe](#), which is still largely nomadic (Kešāvarz, 1355, p. 10; Afšār-e Nāderī et al., pp. 9-12) and winters in Kūzestān. Because of these migrations, it is difficult to collect accurate population statistics. The decennial census is normally carried out two months after migration out of the region begins in late Šahrīvar/early September; as a result, the nomadic population is usually underreported (ibid., pp. 9-12). According to preliminary results of the 1365 Š./1986 census, the population of the province was 637,167, only 1.3 percent of the total population of Persia, with a density of about 43/km² (compared to 30/km² for the country as a whole). Almost two thirds of the inhabitants (402,814) lived in rural areas and 230,742 in urban centers; only 3,611 nomads were counted. The average rate of population growth in the decade 1355-65 Š./1976-86 was 4.6 percent, the mortality rate 1.1 percent. Literacy among those over six years



old was 57.5 percent: 70.24 percent in urban areas, 50.24 in rural areas, 13.52 percent among the migrating population (Markaz-e Āmār, 1365; cf. *Iran Year Book* 88).

There are 793 villages in the province, 73 percent of them with fewer than fifty families each. In 1364 Š./1985 the total cultivated area was estimated at 125,043 ha (Refāhīyat et al., pp. 205-13). Agriculture and animal husbandry are the main economic pursuits, supplemented by some quarrying and a negligible amount of mining. Rural settlements are concentrated on the fertile plains and basins, where predominantly dry (*deymī*) farming of wheat and barley is conducted; in the river valleys and some basins, especially the large alluvial plain of Šahr-e Kord, irrigated (*ābī*) agriculture predominates. In the Baḳtīārī mountains to the east, agricultural activities, primarily a more primitive form of dry farming for domestic consumption, are subordinate to animal husbandry (Kešāvarz and Rażawī, pp. 28-31).

About 95 percent of all cultivated land is used for growing wheat and [barley](#) (93,000 and 26,000 ha respectively), compared to 75 percent for Persia as a whole, reflecting the predominance of dry farming (about 70 percent of cultivated land in the province; *ibid.*, p. 42). The next most important crops are rice (see [berenj](#)), with 2,310 ha; sugar beets, with 1,000 ha; and a small amount of other produce (Refāhīyat et al., pp. 205-13). In the census of 1364 Š./1985 the total livestock population of the region was estimated at 997,000 head: 468,000 sheep, 358,000 goats, 94,000 cows, and 77,000 beasts of burden.

According to the official census of 1355 Š./1976, 39 percent of the employed population was engaged in agriculture (cf. an average of 34 percent for Persia as a whole), while 48 and 13 percent were employed in manufacturing and services respectively (Soltani-Tirani). An important element in both village and nomadic economies was carpet weaving (see [Baḳtīārī tribe iii. baḳtjārj carpets](#)). The towns, which functioned as retail and wholesale centers for their districts, played an important role in the organization of this industry, especially Šahr-e Kord, where in the mid-1350s Š./1970s there were 2,297 carpet workshops employing a total labor force of 2,614 people. There were more than fifty workshops for spinning and dyeing wool, and thirty-eight enterprises employing forty-eight people were trading in wool and silk. Smaller urban centers like Jūneqān (more than 1,500 people employed in activities related to carpets), Farroḳšahr (ca. 2,000), and Fārsān (ca. 1,000) were also active in carpet making and trading.



Located in the four administrative centers of Čahār Maḥāl wa Baqtīārī is a variety of government agencies, including schools, technical-training establishments, hospitals (there were three in the province in 1362 Š./1983) and other health facilities, public libraries, and the like.

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