



ČAHRĪQ

ČAHRĪQ, a *dehestān*, village, and fortress in Salmās (Šāhpūr in the Pahlavi period) *šahrestān* in Azarbaijan between K̄v̄oy and Urmia. The fortress served as the place of imprisonment of the Bāb.

i. History.

ii. Place of imprisonment of the Bāb.

i. History

Čahrīq *dehestān* is bounded in the north by Kora-Sonnī (Kurd. Kōra Sunnī) *dehestān*, in the east by the *dehestān-e ḥawma*, formerly called Kohnašahr, of Salmās, in the south by Urmia *šahrestān*, in the southwest and west by Gerdīān and Šīntāl *dehestāns* and in the northwest by the Persian-Turkish border (see map in Iran Government, 1966, unpaginated). The western parts of the *dehestān* are mountainous, giving rise to numerous snow and rain-fed springs, streams, and rivers including Zūlārūd (Zōlāčāy), which discharges into Lake Urmia. In 1329 Š./1950, Čahrīq, then part of K̄v̄oy *šahrestān*, had 35 villages (*Ketāb-e asāmī-e dehāt-e kešvar*, p. 451). According to the 1345 Š./1966 decennial census, the *dehestān* had a population of 5,348 (Iran Government, 1966).

Čahrīq village is situated about 20 kilometers to the southwest of Salmās town.



The fortress (Qaḷ'a-ye Čahrīq) is built on a rising rock formation in the gorge of Zōlāčāy. According to the 1335 Š./1956 decennial census, the village's population was 185 (Iran Government, 1961). The *dehestān* is populated mostly by the 'Awdō'ī clan of the now settled and largely detribalized Šakāk (Kurd. Šikāk) tribe (see Minorsky; van Bruinessen). They speak the Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish and are Shafe'ites. The traditional economy of the region is based on animal husbandry and agriculture (grain, tobacco, and cereals).

Čahrīq does not seem to have been mentioned in Safavid literary sources. Like other territories to the west of Lake Urmia, Čahrīq has had a troubled history especially since the 13th/19th century, when it became a scene of conflict between Ottoman, Persian and Russian states and between the Kurds and the Persian governments. These struggles for the control of the region resulted in ethnic and religious clashes involving the Kurds, Turks, Assyrians, and Armenians and were characterized by destruction and massacres (Tamaddon; Kāvīānpūr, pp. 197-284).

In 1243/1828, during the Perso-Russian wars of 1241-43/1826-28, Čahrīq was captured by Russian troops. Later, before and during World War I, the region fell to Russian hands again. In spite of the 1263/1847 settlement of the border between Persian and Ottoman Turkey, dispute over the region continued (Mohandesbāšī, pp. 170-71), and Turkish troops occupied the region several times as recently as 1324/1906 (Ghilan) and World War I (Tamaddon).

The conflict between the Persian governments and the Kurds of the region, which most of the time belonged to the Barādūst principality, dates back to the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries, when the Safavid state attempted to extend its direct rule over Kurdish principalities (See barādu'st). The Kurds were weakened by the Persian government policy of resettlement of Turkish tribes in western Azarbaijan. Resisting the centralization policy Kurdish princes and tribal chiefs revolted repeatedly, and the region changed hands between the Kurds and the central governments throughout the 13th/19th century (see, e.g., 'Alī Afšār on the 1880 revolt) and as recently as the 1300s Š./1920s (see van Bruinessen on the revolt by the Šakāk tribe led by Esmā'īl Āgā Simkō/Semītqū). Qaḷ'a-ye Čahrīq became a familiar name when the Bāb was imprisoned there before his execution (see ii, below) and when Simkō (q.v.) made it a base for his operations against the Persian army (Arfa, p. 137).



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ii. Place of Imprisonment of the Bāb

In Jomādā I 1264/April 1848 Grand Vizier (Şadr-e Aʿzam) Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī had the Bāb (q.v.) exiled to Čahrīq from the fortress of Mākū, both because he felt the young *sayyed* had too much access to the outside world from the former prison and because the Russian minister in Tehran, Dolgorukov, put pressure on the Qajars to remove the Bāb from the vicinity of the Russian border. The fortress and the new prisoner fell under the responsibility of Yaḥyā Kān-e Kord, brother-in-law of Moḥammad Shah and governor of Urmia. Although the Bāb faced greater restrictions in corresponding with followers in Čahrīq, he and his followers had letters smuggled back and forth. He spent the last two years of his life in the fortress, with the exception of his interrogation in Tabrīz in the summer of 1264/1848. Observers report that he gained enough freedom to address large crowds in the courtyard of the fortress, and that local Kurdish tribes people respected, after a manner, his religious charisma (Wright and Mochenin in Momen, pp. 73, 75). He produced manuscripts and letters that circulated in the Babi community during the clashes with the state that began late in 1264/1848 and intensified in the spring of 1266/1850. By these writings he brought into his religion such figures as the government official Mīrzā Asad-Allāh Dayyān and the Indian nawab he named “Qahr-Allāh,” who later became a Babi missionary in India. As his chief disciples gradually met their deaths in the clashes, he appears to have depended more and more in the spring of 1850 on a second rank of leaders, such as Shaikh ‘Alī Toršīzī ‘Azīm and the Nūrī brothers.

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