



CENSUS I. IN IRAN

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In medieval Persian the etymologically related nouns *šomār* and *šomāra*, *āmār* and *hamār*, *āmāra* and *amāra*, and *āvāra* and *āvārča* (arabicized as *awāraj*, *awāreja*; see K̲vārazmī, pp. 54-55, 78) were accountancy terms used in government offices (*dīvāns*) with reference to tax collection and to receipt and expenditure of revenue in general. *Saršomār* then meant “poll tax” (e.g., Aḥmad Kāteb, p. 255). *Āmārgar*, *āmārgīr*, and *āmāragīr* are defined in dictionaries (e.g., Qawwās, p. 92) as official “accountant” or “auditor” (*mostawfī*). In the modern period *āmār* has replaced the Arabic term *eḥsāʾīya* for “statistics,” and the Persian Academy (Farhangestān-e Īrān) has recommended that *āmārgar* should be used for “statistician” and also for “census official.”

No census for the purpose of ascertaining the population and acquiring statistical data was taken in Persia until the present century, but information about numbers of persons or families was sometimes collected for the purpose of fixing tax dues or conscript quotas. According to Mostawfī (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, p. 39), “Omar b. al-Ḳaṭṭāb counted the *ahl al-demma* (non-Muslim subjects). They totaled 500,000 persons. He divided them into three classes and fixed their *jezya* (poll tax) at 48 *derhams* for the upper class, 24 *derhams* for the middle class, and 12 *derhams* for the lower class.” For centuries the keepers of *awāreja* books (*awārejanevīs*) were grouped with the



controllers (*mostawfī*); in the *Tadkerat al-molūk* written in the first half of the 12th/18th century (ed. Minorsky, p. 54; ed. Dabīrsiāqī, p. 17), the *awārejanevīs* are described as underlings of the *mostawfīs*.

Head counts in preparation for troop levies were usually done on a local basis. In 1013/1604 Shah ‘Abbās I ordered the elders of the tribes in Azarbaijan and ‘Erāq-e ‘Ajam to keep detailed records of the households in their tribe or confederacy so that the quota of each might be fixed in proportion to its capacity (Eskandar Beg, p. 670; tr. Savory, II, p. 861).

The introduction of systematic census taking in Persia is attributed to Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Sepahsālār, the grand vizier from 1288/1871 to 1290/1873 and his enactment of the Reforms Council (Majles-e Tanzīmāt; Nawwāb, 1329, p. 4; Pākdāman, 1353, pp. 326-27). A passage from a decree dealing with counting families and individuals in the villages and districts reads as follows: “All the inhabitants of a village must be counted: the natives and the strangers, the men and the women, the children and the adults whether infants in the cradle or centenarian old folk, the rich, the landowners, the proprietors, the farmers, the businessmen, *k^{vo}šnešīns* (squatters), the laborers, the non-farmers, the outsiders, the able-bodied, the disabled, the lame and the one-eyed, the males and the females, the widows, the fatherless and motherless, the long-established villagers and the newcomers. The occupation or trade and the age of every person must be ascertained and recorded. As far as possible the age must be asked and recorded; otherwise estimates may be made. Nobody is exempt from this decree” (Nawwāb, op. cit., p. 4; Pākdāman, 1353, p. 326 n. 4). The law contained a provision that booklets were to be distributed among the village headmen to record in them the names and ages of every man, woman, and child in their villages, as well as a list of the dead and the newborn in each year. These booklets were to be returned to the government at the end of each year; then three auditors (*mostawfī*) would be appointed to make a clear assessment of life and death in the country (Ādamīyat, p. 221; for these reports see Afšār, pp. 5-37).

From that time on, censuses were taken with increasing frequency in several cities and provinces. The results were seldom published, but references to them are found in local histories. Ḥasan Fasā’ī Šīrāzī reports about Shiraz that “the households of eleven wards [*maḥalla*] were counted in 1301 (= 1883-84). There were 6,327 households. The population of the eleven wards was 25,284 men and boys and 28,323 women and girls” (Fasā’ī, II, pp. 22-23). In another work reflecting the revival of local historiography in Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah’s later



years we are told: “It is now the year 1291 (= 1874). Information from the headmen of the wards shows that the population of the city (Kermān) is 40,228 (Wazīrī Kermānī, p. 40).

One of the earliest, perhaps the first, of the modern-style censuses held in Persia was ‘Abd-al-Ġaffār Najm-al-Dawla’s count of the population of Tehran in Ramaẓān-Ḍu’l-qa‘da 284/January-March 1868. He did the count, which took fifty-six days, by the order of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah and with the help of eight of his students from the Dār al-Fonūn. The count covered the de facto population, that is, “the total number of people spending the night in houses” (Pākdāman, 1353, pp. 340-41, 343, 348). The capital’s population, thus defined, was found to be 155,736 comprising 8,480 military personnel and 147,256 civilians in the five wards of the Arg (3,014), ‘Awdalājān (36,495), Čāameydān (34,547), Sanglaj (29,673), and the *bāzār* (26,674), together with streets beyond the city’s boundary (16,853); the total number of houses was 9,741 (Najm-al-Dawla, pp. 351-63). Similar counts were made in some other cities, including Isfahan and Mašhad (Pākdāman, forthcoming).

Another population count at Tehran was undertaken in 1301/1883 by Mīrzā Šafī‘ Khan Mīr Fakrā‘ī Modīr-e Laškar (Baladiya-ye Tehrān, 1312/1934, p. 2). In a later period, censuses at Tehran were conducted by the statistics department of the Tehran municipality (Dāyera-ye Eḥṣā‘īya-ye Baladiya-ye Tehrān) in 1301 Š./1920 and 1311 Š./1932 (op. cit., p. 3).

In 1318 Š./1939 the government made what maybe described as the first real attempt to conduct a modern-style national census. Counting began in Kāšān on 1 Tīr/22 June of that year and was to have proceeded by stages in all parts of the country but was incomplete at the time of the Anglo-Russian invasion of Persia in Šahrīvar 1320 Š./September 1941, after which it had to be discontinued. Sufficient data were collected to give population figures for 35 cities and towns (Table 13); the figures include inhabitants of surrounding villages within a radius of 6 km, as well as actual town-dwellers (Edāra-ye Koll-e Āmār wa Tabt-e Aḥwāl, Farvardīn 1326 Š./March-April 1947, p. 40; Wezārat-e Kešvar, 1340, p. *lb*; Pākdāman, 1355, p. *h*).

The unsuccessful attempt to hold a national census in 1318 Š./1939 was made possible by a long series of earlier measures. A cabinet decree comprised in 41 clauses for the registration of vital statistics (*tabt-e aḥwāl*) was promulgated in Sonbola (Šahrīvar) 1295 Š./August-September 1916, and in 1297 Š./1918 the Department of Vital Statistics (Edāra-ye Sejell-e Aḥwāl) was created in Tehran

within the Ministry of the Interior, with provincial branches to be established gradually. In 1307 Š./1928 it became the Directorate General of Statistics and Vital Data (Edāra-ye Koll-e Eḥṣāʾi-ya wa Sejjell-e Aḥwāl). A statutory order with six clauses defining the functions and responsibilities of this department was approved in 1303 Š./1924. In subsection 1 of clause 2 ascertainment of the population of the country (*taʾyīn-e ʿedda-ye nofūs-e mamlakat*) was specified as one of this Department's functions; but although it was specified in the sixth clause of the order that it was supposed to come into force on 1 Ḥamal (Farvardīn) 1304 Š./21 March 1925, nothing was actually done until several years later. In 1314 Š./1935 a constitution was drafted for the formation of a High Council of Statistics (Šūrā-ye ʿĀlī-e Āmār), to be composed of representatives of all ministries and government agencies. A book containing the data collected by the efforts of the council was prepared, but political considerations prevented it from being published (Nawwāb, op. cit., pp. iv-vi).

Eventually the Majles passed a census bill consisting of 7 clauses on 10 Kordād 1318 Š./31 May 1939. This important law (see below) made census-taking an obligatory duty of the Ministry of the Interior to be performed by the Directorate General of Statistics and Civil Registration (Edāra-ye Koll-e Āmār wa Ṭabt-e Aḥwāl), the former Directorate General of Statistics and Vital Data (below, clause 7).

Text of the Census Law of 10 Kordād 1318 Š./31 May 1939.

Clause 1. Censuses of the population of the country shall be taken at times to be recommended by the Ministry of the Interior and announced in imperial decrees after approval by the cabinet.

Clause 2. The day on which a census is taken shall be a public holiday for everybody except census officials. To make the taking of the census possible, the rest of the people must stay at home on that day except in cases of necessity which will be defined in the regulations (*āʾīn-nāma*).

Clause 3. The Ministry of the Interior, through the agency of the Directorate General of Statistics and Registration, shall take steps consistent with the relevant regulations to perform its task of census taking. Government officials, municipal functionaries, headmen (*kadkodās*), primary school teachers, high school teachers, lecturers, high school and college students, employees of institutions, and any other persons selected to help in the conduct of a census shall be required to carry out correctly whatever instructions may be given to



them.

Subsection 1. Persons selected to help in the conducting of a census shall be provided with identifying badges.

Subsection 2. Censuses of Persian citizens living abroad shall be conducted by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under special regulations.

Clause 4. Residents of Persia shall be required to answer the questions put to them by census officials and to give information corresponding to the facts.

Clause 5. Persons who do not fulfill the obligations defined in clauses 2, 3, and 4 of this law and in relevant census regulations, whether they be census officials or members of the public, shall be liable to prosecution under rules to be approved by the judiciary committee and the committee of internal affairs in the Majles.

Clause 6. The Ministry of the Interior is authorized to set up a permanent advisory council with responsibility for drafting census regulations, approving census forms, and conducting technical research on census matters and statistics; to fix the composition and duties of the said council, to build up a central store of statistical information; to arrange for taking the census; and to enforce regulations after approval by the cabinet.

Clause 7. Clause 13 of the Registration of Personal Status Law (Qānūn-e Ṭabt-e Aḥwāl) of 1307 Š./1928 is hereby repealed (see above).

After the enactment of this law, it was decided on the advice of the High Council of Statistics to conduct a trial census in the town and district of Kāšān; this was done on 1 Tīr 1318 Š./22 June 1939. The next step was the census of Tehran, which was completed on a single day, 10 Esfand 1318 Š./1 March 1940. From then until 3 Šahrīvar 1320 Š./25 August 1941 censuses were taken in 33 other cities and towns. The method used in these censuses was to count the *de facto* (i.e., actually present) population (*jam'īyat-e ḥāẓer*). Since the counting was done on a single day, people spoke of the “one-day censuses.” They had to be discontinued after the Anglo-Russian military occupation. A set of 16 new census regulations, defining the composition and responsibilities of the High Council of Statistics and Censuses (Šūrā-ye 'Ālī-e Āmār wa Sar-šomārī), was drawn up in accordance with clause 6 of the Census Law and was approved by the cabinet on Ordībehešt 1320 Š./12 May 1941, but, because of the Allied occupation, the council could not be formed until Dey 1325 Š./December 1946-



January 1947, when it held its first session (Nawwāb, pp. viii-x).

From 1331 Š./1952 onward, various steps were taken to prepare for the first complete national census. Trial censuses were held in seven *šahrestāns* (counties) between 1333 Š./1954 and 1335 Š./1956. The final plan was based on experience thereby gained. A new Statistics and Censuses Law with 16 clauses and seven subsections received parliamentary approval in Esfand 1334 Š./March 1956, and the government was subsequently authorized to put it into effect. Under subsection 1 of clause 7 of this law, “general censuses of population and housing shall be commenced after approval by the cabinet and in an imperial decree”; under clause 8, the Ministry of the Interior was required to take action to ensure that the program for a public census of the inhabitants of the country could be implemented in time for it to be held in 1335 Š./1956. For the commencement of the census, a date in Ābān (November) was chosen because the nomadic tribes have by then finished their migrations and encamped in villages.

To ensure proper execution of the law, the heads of the statistics and registration departments in the *šahrestāns* were summoned to Tehran and given tuition to prepare them for their role as local census directors. Advertising of the census began in Mehr 1335 Š./September 1956. Altogether 26,836 persons took part in the work of the census (Āmār-e ‘Omūmī, Ābān 1340, p. iv; Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Šahrīvar 1362, p. 7). The counting began on 10 Ābān 1335 Š./1 November 1956 and ended on 25 Ābān 1335 Š./16 November 1956 (Āmār-e ‘Omūmī, p. *lb*). The method in this census was that employed for the de jure (i.e., domiciled) population (*jam‘iyat-e moqīm*), except in the case of unsettled population groups, where the de facto population (*jam‘iyat-e ḥāẓer*) was counted. The country was divided into 25 census regions (*nāḥīa*) and 119 census districts (*ḥawza*). The head of the registration department in each district was responsible for a number of divisions (*manṭaqa*) varying with the district’s size. Each head of a division supervised four or five subdivisions (*qesmat*), and each head of a subdivision was in charge of four or five enumerators (*āmārgīr*). The enumerators, who formed the basic cadre, were each responsible for counting 200 families.

After the completed questionnaires from each district had been collected, the district head computed (manually) the population figures for his district and then reported them to Tehran. The provisional results thus obtained were published in a communiqué of the Public Statistics Department (Āmār-e ‘Omūmī) in Āḍar 1335 Š./November 1956. The provisional figure for the total



population given in this communiqué was 18,945,000; it did not differ much from the definitive figure, which was 18,954,704 (Table 14).

The 1335 Š./1956 census returns were published in 119 fascicles (one for each of the 119 districts) and two volumes of a summarized comprehensive report; English as well as Persian editions were issued, altogether 121 Persian and 121 English items. A detailed directive prepared by the Department of Public Statistics, contained instructions for enumerators on how to complete questionnaires and report forms (Āmār-e 'Omūmī, 1340, pp. *m*–*s*). This gives some of the definitions which were used in the census. The definition of a family (*kānvār*) as “one or more persons who live in the same abode and share food expenses” is similar to the definitions used in later censuses (see Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Mordād 1355, pp. 10-12; *idem*, 1365, no. 4, pp. 6-8); but in 1335 Š./1956 the directive (unlike the later directives) did not contain clear instructions on the subject of absent members of families. It is therefore possible that the figure for average family size shown by the 1335 Š./1956 returns, namely 4.76 persons, was too low and that this may explain the discrepancy with the 1345 Š./1966 figure of 4.98 persons (*Majmū'a-ye Ketāb-e āgāh*, pp. 155-56).

Another vague point in the 1335 Š./1956 returns compared with those of the later censuses was that the terms “work” (*kār*), “active population” (*jam'iyat-e fa'āl*), “employed” (*šāḡel*), and “unemployed” (*bīkār*) were not defined. In 1345 Š./1966 and the subsequent censuses the criterion for description as “employed” or “unemployed” was explicitly stated to be “activity in the past seven days,” in other words the person's current status, whereas in 1335 Š./1956 the person's usual status was implicitly regarded as the test. The seasonally unemployed were therefore included among the employed in the 1335 Š./1956 returns. In 1345 Š./1966 the number of seasonally unemployed was recorded as 442,000 (61% of all the unemployed and 5.8% of the economically active population); in 1355 Š./1976, nearly 644,000 (65% of all the unemployed and 6.6% of the economically active population; Table 15).

As already said, seasonal unemployment was ignored in the census directive of 1335 Š./1956. As will be seen, in the latest census of Mehr 1365 Š./October 1986, the seasonally unemployed were again, and this time explicitly, included among the employed, even though employment and unemployment were defined on the basis of current status.

The functions and staff of the Department of Public Statistics, from then on



called the Statistical Center of Persia (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān), were transferred in 1344 Š./1965 to the Plan Organization (Sāzmān-e Barnāma), now the Plan and Budget Organization (Sāzmān-e Barnāma wa Būdja). The law for the establishment of the Center, which received parliamentary approval in Kordād 1344 Š./May-June 1965, spelled out in clauses 2 and 7 its responsibility for conducting general censuses of population and housing. On 8 Kordād 1345 Š./29 May 1966 the cabinet issued a statutory order authorizing the Center to proceed with a census and, under clause 5 of the law, instructed all ministries and official institutions to cooperate with it. Trial censuses had already been held in the *šahrestāns* of Marāḡa and Sabzavārān. The main census operation took place in Ābān 1345 Š./November 1966; it was carried out by 12,885 enumerators (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Esfand 1346, vol. 168, p. *alef*) in a period of twenty days. The period was increased from the fifteen days of the previous census in order to reduce the required number of enumerators and thereby to enable the census management to select persons with educational qualifications not lower than high school diploma. The procedure in this census was again to count the *de jure* sedentary population and the *de facto* mobile and tribal population (tribes actually migrating at the time).

The household questionnaire in this second national census contained some new questions in addition to those asked in the first census: notably about education, weekly working hours of employed persons, type of dwelling unit, number of rooms, and the age of the building, source and conveyance of water supply, means of lighting, kind of fuel in use. On the other hand three questions about agricultural matters (ownership of arable and pastoral land, crops grown, kinds and numbers of animals kept), which had been asked in 1335 Š./1956, were omitted. A village questionnaire in this census brought in much useful information about economic and social institutions, welfare facilities, crop areas, and livestock resources in the villages.

The census of 1345 Š./1966 was conducted almost entirely on the basis of the country's administrative divisions, at that time 13 provinces (*ostān*), 8 small provinces (*farmāndārī-e koll*), and 146 counties (*šahrestān*). The smallest geographical unit was the enumeration area (*ḥawza*), for which a single enumerator was responsible.

The 1345 Š./1966 census returns were published in 230 fascicles (not including advance notices and early results): 146 volumes of returns from the *šahrestāns* and 21 from the *ostāns*, one volume of aggregate national returns, 41 volumes of a national gazetteer of villages and urban settlements, and 21 volumes of



names of rural settlements with their populations (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Šahrīvar 1362 Š./August-September 1983, Bulletin 2, p. 9; Table 16). All were issued simultaneously in Persian and English editions.

Out of the total population of 25,789,000 in Ābān 1345 Š./November 1966, the sedentary population amounted to 25,079,000 persons and 5,029,000 households (including 1615 collective households with 159,000 members). The mobile population (non-tribal households without fixed abode) comprised 244,000 persons and 45,000 households, of whom more than 13,000 persons (2,725 households) were found to be living in towns and the remaining 231,000 persons (42,000 households) in rural areas. The tribal population in 1345 Š./1966 was recorded as 466,000 (92,000 households), but it should be noted that the dividing line between mobile and tribal population was not clearly drawn in this census; this is acknowledged in the main census report, which states that “part of the tribal population has been confused with the mobile population” (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Esfand 1346, vol. 168, p. d). The numbers involved, however, were too small to make much difference.

A summary of the definitions used in the 1345 Š./1966 census was published in the general introduction to the census reports, and a full list was printed in the directive to enumerators. The term “urban” was applied to places with 5,000 or more inhabitants and also to 22 other places, namely 15 *šahrestān* centers with less than 5,000 inhabitants and 7 places which had acquired municipal status before the census but were found by the enumerators to have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants; the combined population of these 22 “towns” was 79,000, that is, only 0.8% of the total urban population. The definitions of dwelling unit (*wāḥed-e maskūnī*) and room were made more precise, but the minimum area and height of a room were still unspecified. A kitchen was not counted as a room in this census, in contrast to the later censuses; this point should be borne in mind when their figures are compared, particularly those for the big cities.

A law for the reorganization of the Statistical Center, with sixteen clauses and one subsection, was passed by the Majles on 10 Bahman 1353 Š./30 January 1975. In the first paragraph of clause 3, census taking was again named as one of the Center’s functions, and in clause 4 the taking of a census once in every ten years was made obligatory and the next census was fixed for 1355 Š./1976. Clause 5 again required all governmental institutions to cooperate with the Statistical Center in the conduct of censuses, and clause 6 authorized the payment of bonuses to census enumerators.



This time trial censuses were held in the *šahrestāns* of Langarūd (in Gilān), Īda (in Kūzestān), Mīnāb (in Hormozgān), and Semnān (in the province of Semnān), and in parts of the cities of Tehran and Isfahan; in all, 134,000 households and 657,000 persons were enumerated.

After the issue of the necessary imperial decree on 11 Mordād 1355 Š./2 August 1976, the third national census began on 8 Ābān 1355 Š./30 October 1976 and was completed punctually on 28 Ābān/19 November, the same length of time as the previous census. As regards the staff employed, fuller information was given than previously: 16,600 enumerators in fieldwork and direct services (including 600 enumerators of mobile groups), 4,007 heads of subdivisions each supervising 4 enumerators, 2,315 technical officers engaged in checking and editing questionnaires on the spot, 626 heads of divisions (*manṭaqa*) each supervising 6 heads of subdivisions (*qesmat*), 614 technical officers responsible for zones (*nāḥīa*), *šahrestāns*, and *ostāns*, 31 heads of urban zones (in Tehran and Mašhad only), 161 *šahrestān* managers, 23 *ostān* managers, 4,326 drivers, and 1,655 officials responsible for administrative and financial matters in the *šahrestāns* and *ostāns*, in all 30,358 persons. In addition, considerable numbers (not included in the above figures) were employed after the completion of the fieldwork in coding and computing the data from the questionnaires and in printing the reports. The high school diploma was again the minimum educational qualification for enumerators.

The procedure in this census, as in the two previous ones, was to count the de jure population (*jam'iyat-e moqīm*) except in the case of mobile and tribal groups actually on the move, where the de facto population (*jam'iyat-e ḥāẓer*) was counted. The country was divided into 16,000 urban and rural enumeration areas (*ḥawza*) with approximately 400 resident families in each rural area and 500 families in each urban area; thus each enumerator was responsible for completing questionnaires about 400 to 500 families.

The 1356 Š./1977 census returns were published in 304 volumes. Among them are one volume of provisional (manually computed) returns and 25 volumes of 5% sample returns (including one volume for Tehran and one for the whole country together with volumes for the *ostāns*). The definitive returns consist of statistics for the *šahrestāns* (162 vols.) and the *ostāns* (24 vols.), numbers of disabled persons in each *ostān* (23 vols.), numbers and types of workplaces (23 vols.), gazetteer of rural and urban settlements (23 vols.), and lists of names and populations of settlements (23 vols.) (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Šahrivar 1362, p. 18; [Table 17](#)). All were originally published in English as well as



Persian editions.

Out of the total population of 33,709,000 recorded in this census, the sedentary population was 33,361,000 (6,646,000 households including 2,560 collective households with 358,000 members), the mobile population more than 10,000 (2,000 households), and the tribal population 337,000 (63,000 households) but it must be remembered that the mobile and tribal population figures in Persian census returns do not represent the whole of these groups, because mobile and tribal households living in summer and winter quarters and villages or in some cases towns and cities at the time of the count are treated as part of the local sedentary population.

The urban population of 15,855,000 in 1355 Š./1976 formed 47% of the total against 38% in 1345 Š./1966. As in the previous censuses, the term town (*šahr*) was applied to places which were the headquarters of a *šahrestān* or had a population of 5,000 or more at the time of the count. The number of places thus classified as urban in Ābān 1355 Š./November 1976 amounted to 373; only six of them had fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, and their combined population of 22,000 was a negligible fraction of the total urban population.

The census terminology in 1355 Š./1976 was more or less the same as in 1345 Š./1966 but in some cases more precise, particularly in the definition of employed and unemployed and the classification of types of employment and economic activity. For the latter, United Nations nomenclature was used, the ISCO (International Standard Classification of Occupations) categories of 1968 for employments and the ISIC (International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities) categories of 1968 for activities. Area and height became the criteria of a room, and a kitchen was counted as a room if it had the required dimensions.

The Revolution of 1357 Š./ 1978-79 did not cause the country's statistics system to collapse. The law of 1353 Š./1975 remained in force, the only change being substitution of "decree of the President of the Republic" for "imperial decree." An amending bill, drawn up with the approval of the cabinet, was introduced in the Majles on 1 Esfand 1361 Š./20 February 1983 but got no further. In 1361 Š./1982 there had been much talk in official circles about the desirability of making an exception to the ten-year rule and holding the next census in 1363 Š./1984. At meetings of the High Council of Statistics (Šūrā-ye 'Ālī-e Āmār) in the spring of 1362 Š./1983 it was decided to set up a joint board to arrange and supervise the census consisting of representatives of the ministries of the



Interior, Labor and Social Affairs, and Plan and Budget, the Construction Crusade (Jehād-e Sāzandegī), the Central Bank, and the Statistical Center (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, Šahrīvar 1362, p. 1). No reports of this board's activities were published, and the census did not take place in 1363 Š./1984; but the desire to advance the date of the census had at least the positive effect of getting the preparations under way in good time from late in 1361 Š./1962-63 onward.

One important preparatory step was the production of census maps with the help of the National Cartographic Institute (Sāzmān-e Naqša-bardārī-e Kešvar). These were based on aerial photographs taken in 1362 Š./1983 and after. According to oral information, the surveyors traveled more than 3,500,000 km and visited 120,000 villages and settlements in order to identify the places on the maps. For large villages as well as towns and cities, ward maps were prepared.

It was eventually decided to hold the census in Mehr 1365 Š./October 1986. To help in the planning, trial censuses were held in Ābān 1362 Š./October-November 1983 in three *šahrestāns*, Āstāna-ye Ašrafiya (in Gīlān), Sarāvān (in Sīstān wa Balūčestān), and Šādgān (in Kūzestān), with an aggregate population of 100,000 households, and in some representative areas in other provinces. After this, the final plans for the main census were drawn up (Markaz-e Āmār-e Iran, Ordībehešt 1365, pp. 2-4).

No details of the organization and numbers of the census staff have been published so far, but it is known that some 40,000 persons, mainly first and second year students of teacher training colleges, were employed in completing some ten million household questionnaire forms. The Ministry of Education and other bodies cooperated with the Statistical Center in training and organizing these persons and arranging board and lodging for them. The census was carried out from 16 to 30 Mehr 1365 Š./8 to 22 October 1986.

Although the procedures in this census were in general much the same as in 1345 Š./1966 and 1355 Š./1976, certain changes of definition significantly affect the comparability of some of the returns. To avoid confusion over the meaning of "town," it was decided that in this census (unlike the previous ones), the administrative definition of "town" should be adopted, and any place that at the time of the census had a municipality (*šahr-dārī*) should accordingly be placed in the urban category. Thus in 1365 Š./1986 the number of places classified as urban rose to 496, including 83 with less than 5,000 inhabitants. In



some cases the population of a town was affected by the then existing war conditions, but in most cases it depended on the new definition of “town.” Against this must be set the fact that, in contrast with the previous censuses, many places with more than 5,000 inhabitants were not classified as towns. Since a complete list of villages and rural settlements with their populations has not (at the time of writing) been published, it is not yet possible to calculate the effect of this definitional change with any precision; but it can be taken for certain that if the previous criteria had been used, the proportion of the urban to the total population in 1365 Š./1986 would have been somewhat higher than 54.3%, the figure obtained under the new definition (see [Table 18](#)).

The description of the economically active population was on the whole the same as in 1345 Š./1966 and 1355 Š./1976, but two significant changes were made in the definitions of its components. 1. In the previous censuses, a seasonally unemployed person was defined as one who, because of seasonal factors or the seasonal nature of his job, was out of work and received no pay in the seven days before the enumerator’s visit but was not seeking other work. In the census of 1365 Š./1986, however, the seasonally unemployed were classified as employed, and the term unemployed was applied only to a person who had been out of work in the seven days before the enumerator’s visit and was seeking work (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, *Ordibehešt* 1367, p. iv). 2. A person without a permanent job who had done at least two days of work in the seven days before the enumerator’s visit was also classified as employed (Markaz-e Āmār-e Īrān, *Rāhnamā-ye ma’mūr-e sar-šomārī*, 1365 Š./1986, p. 71), whereas in 1355 Š./1976 the qualification had been “at least eight hours of work.” In other respects, the definitions were the same as in 1355 Š./1976.

Several new questions were asked in 1365 Š./1986, among others about the number of children born alive, the number of children still living, the number of children born alive in the past twelve months, and the extent of the family’s knowledge of the Persian language.

The census of Mehr 1365 Š./October 1986 recorded the total population of Iran as 49,445,000 (9,674,000 households), the sedentary population as 49,194,000 (9,628,000 households including 1,454 collective households), and the non-sedentary, that is mobile and tribal, population as 251,000 (nearly 46,000 households). According to the census of 1365 Š./1986, out of the total number of 32,874,000 of the population of working age, 12,855,000 were economically active, 11,036,000 employed, and 1,819,000 unemployed looking for jobs. The percentage for each category was 39.1, 85.8, and 14.2, respectively. Further



details of the mobile and tribal population have not been published. The aggregate returns are shown in [Table 19](#), and the age and sex distribution in [Table 20](#).

The urban population of 26,845,000 in Mehr 1365 Š./October 1986 was reckoned to be 54.3% of the total population but, as said above, since the definition of a town was not the same as in the previous censuses, this percentage is not strictly comparable with the past figures (31% in 1335 Š./1956, 38% in 1345 Š./1966, 47% in 1355 Š./1976).

The main items on the household questionnaires in the four national censuses are listed in [Table 21a](#) and [Table 21b](#).

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