



GARMSĪR AND SARDSĪR

GARMSĪR AND SARDSĪR (warm zones and cold zones), two terms identifying regional entities that form a major geographical contrast deeply affecting the popular conscience in Persia. Both terms are currently used in the everyday language in the south, especially among the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. In cold winters, the high central plateau and its outer chains contrast with the peripheral lowlands that remained for a long time marginal with respect to Persia's high civilization; however, their mild winter climate soon allured Iranians to more or less prolonged seasonal stays. Already the Parthian kings had acquired the habit of spending the summer at Ecbatana (q.v.) and the winter in Seleucia (Strabo, 11.13.1).

It is in Fārs where this contrast is most clearly defined today and the stratification most complex. The coastal regions of the Persian Gulf, qualified as *garmsīr*, differ from the high basins of the interior, considered as *sardsīr*. But there are two additional concepts. The mountainous highlands where farming is no longer possible are called *sarḥadd*. And between the cold lands and the warm lands, there is an intermediary concept, that of the temperate region (*mo'tadel*), which is well known to the Qašqā'ī nomads (Garrod, p. 35). In fact, these notions are quite vague and fluctuating from one region to another. The distinction between *sardsīr* and *sarḥadd* is not always clear. Even in Fārs, these two expressions are often synonymous, and the definition of *sarḥadd* sometimes appears to be of a geographical order, indicating the high plains that are still arable and form the transition with inner Persia (Kortum, pp. 19-21). In southern Kermān, the concept of *sardsīr* does not exist. The Afšār



nomads there distinguish only two levels: The *garmsīr*, which includes a major part of the medium level, and the *sarḥadd*, which comprises more or less the *sardsīr* and the *sarḥadd* as conceived in Fārs. The contrast is defined by the respective human occupation in winter and summer (Stöber, pp. 39-40). This type of contrast continues in Baluchistan (q.v.), where the term *sardsīr* seems to be unknown.

In northern Persia the terms *garmsīr* and *sardsīr* are not used. Here the invasions of Turco-Mongol tribes, which began in the Middle Ages, generalized the vocabulary of seasonal migrations by using the Turkish words *qešlāq* for winter quarters and *yeylāq* for summerquarters (Doerfer, *Elemente* III, pp. 479-81, IV, pp. 252-54). The former term often became purely and simply a synonym for village, even in the Persian-speaking areas. These Turkish words even penetrated into the Zagros mountains and Kurdistan. There exists, however, a transitional zone. Among the Baḳtīārīs and their neighbors, the Boir Aḥmadī (q.v.) and southern Kurds, the Turkish term (under the form *eylāq*) was adopted for summer quarters, while the Persian word *garmsīr* is used for winter quarters (Digard, Planhol, and Bazin). This dichotomy corresponds with the following factors: In the 13th century, within the historical context of the nomadization of the country and the more extensive pastoral migrations (Planhol, pp. 199 ff.), the relatively close *sardsīrs*, which were so far occupied in summer by semi-nomadic populations on short migrations, were abandoned for more distant *yeylāqs*, causing an acculturation with Turkic tribes already frequenting these heights. A detailed study ought to be made of the respective distribution of Turkish and Persian terms all over the Zagros range, a work which is far from being accomplished.

The concepts of *sardsīr* and *garmsīr* were used at an early age in Greek geographical works, no doubt following Alexander's expedition, by Arrian and later by Strabo, who (15.3.I) described Persis as having "a tripartite character, both in its nature and in the temperature of its air." Strabo distinguishes in it warm countries, having no fruit except dates; high, cold countries in the north; and between them a tempered zone "which produces all things." These contrasts were mentioned also by Muslim geo graphers. Abū Eshāq Ebrāhīm Eṣṭakrī (q.v.), first distinguishes only two zones in Fārs, the warm (*zorūm*) and the cold (*ṣorūd*), but at the end of his account he mentions places (Shiraz, Kāzerūn, Fasā, Jūr, Šāpūr, and Nowbanjān) with moderate climates, where there grew trees of both warm and cold areas, namely walnut trees and date palms (pp. 135-37, tr. pp. 121-24). The same description was exactly repeated



by Ebn Ḥawqal (pp. 287-89, tr. Kramers, pp. 281-82), who also distinguished the three zones, of hot, cold, and temperate, and was referred to by Moqaddasī (p. 421).

These two concepts also entered western geographical science. It was long believed that the term *garmsīr* had become known to the West at an early age through Marco Polo. An entire school of Marco Polo's editors and commentators (esp. Baldelli-Boni, II, p. 40; Pauthier, p. 60; Yule, I, p. 75; Charignon, I, p. 49) had read the word *cremessor* or *cremesor*, indicating the name of a distant country whence merchandise was transported to Tauris (Tabrīz), as the transcription of the term *garmsīr*, and this reading was accepted in basic historical works (Heyd, II, p. 108). However, William Marsden (p. 72) had long proposed that it was a copyist's error for "Curmos" or "Cormos" (Hormuz), as proved by the collation of all the manuscript traditions (Pelliot, I, p. 577; Gabriel, p. 70; Hambis, p. 28.). Indeed, it was only with the publication of the great 19th-century geographical treatises (e.g., Ritter; Reclus) that this concept entered European science of geography. Carl Ritter (pp. 723-24, 816, 847) still only knew the contrast between *garmsīr* and *sarḥadd*, and the latter term alone is used by Elisée Reclus (p. 172). Hans Bobek alone (1951, pp. 37-39; idem, 1952, pp. 245-46) clearly distinguished the whole sequence, while trying (followed by Ehlers, p. 225) to provide a precise bio-climatic content to these vague popular concepts.

In this classification, the highest limit of the *garmsīr* may be considered as essentially coinciding with the date palm (q. v.), starting with ca. 200 m of altitude at the mouth of the Little Zāb, rising to 1,300 m in southern Fārs, then to 1,400 m in the southern valleys of Kermān, dropping down to the southern edge of the Great Kavīr at 850-900 m, and as low as 500 m around the Hamūn-e Maškel on the border between Persia and Pakistan, and rising again to 1,250 m in the Baluchistan mountains. But Bobek himself warns against considering the date palm exclusively as the characteristic tree of the *garmsīr*, since it has been grown largely, especially since the Arab invasion, in many basins of inner Persia, to the utmost possibilities of its fruit-bearing capacities. Below a certain elevation, the *garmsīr* has a characteristic vegetation: light forest with prickly plants, *Acacia arabica* and *Acacia nubica*, bush with jujube trees (*Zizyphus spina christi*, *Zizyphus nummularia*, etc.), and in Baluchistan the palm tree with fan-shaped branches (*Nannorrhops ritcheiana*). Crops include citrus fruit, sugar cane, sorghum, etc. As for the *sardsīr*, its lowest limit can more or less be defined as the highest limit of the vine (in the northern chains,



a little less than 1,800 m in Azarbaijan, 1,600 m on the northern slope of the Alborz (q.v.), about 1,700 m in Khorasan; on the central plateau 2,400 m near Yazd and more than 2,500 m in Kermān, but less than 2,200 m in Fārs). The highest limit of the *sardsīr* should coincide with that of the growing of cereals, which is 2,700 m in Azarbaijan and in the Alborz, at about 3,000 m in the Yazd region and in Fārs, and up to almost 3,500 m in the Kermān mountains. Farming in the *sardsīr* consists of the characteristic crops of temperate zones such as potatoes, fruit trees (cherry, pear, plum, etc.), but excluding rice and millet. Between *garmsīr* and *sardsīr*, Bobek has also tried to lend more precision to the rather vague popular concept of a “medium” zone, characterized by crops requiring more heat, such as rice, tobacco, sesame, vine, and fruits such as the fig, the pomegranate, the apricot, the almond, the peach, etc. Above the *sardsīr*, the *sarḥadd* is marked by the absence of cultivation and the sole function of summer pasture.

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