



HAŠTPAR

HAŠTPAR (or Šahr-e Ṭāleš “Ṭāleš City”), city in the western part of Gilān Province, center of the *šahrestān* (sub-provincial district) of Ṭāleš (or Tāleš). The city is located at lat 37°48' N, long 48°55' E, at the head of the delta of the Kargānrud River. Like Rudsar in eastern Gilān, it was turned into an urban settlement during the reign of Reżā Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925-41), who created the *šahrestān* of Ṭawāleš with Haštpar as its center by combining the five traditional khanates of Kargānrud, Asālem (q.v.), Ṭāleš-dulāb, Šānderman, and Māsāl (see ṬĀLEŠ; Razmāra, *Farhang* II, pp. 186-87).

Haštpar was the lowest part of Rig, a locality occupying the downstream section of the Kargānrud valley just before it reaches the narrow coastal plain, and throughout the 19th century it was the residence of the khans of Kargānrud and the center of the region (*nāḥia*) of Otāq Sarā, the southernmost of the three subdistricts of Kargānrud (Melgunof, p. 273; Rabino, pp. 90, 94; tr., pp. 97-104). Actually, it was their winter residence, linked to their summer residence of Āq Evlar in the upper Kargānrud by a caravan road. James Fraser, who followed this road in 1822 in his trip from Gilān to Azarbaijan and was received in Āq Evlar by Bālā Khan of Kargānrud, described the road as good, with a low gradient; difficult cliffside sections were shored up with beams or masonry (Fraser, pp. 287-89; Rabino, p. 93). Naṣr-Allāh Khan Sardār Amjad, the governor of Kargānrud, built in the last years of the 19th century two monumental residences, a winter palace in Otāq Sarā (Rig) and a summer palace in Āq Evlar. Both buildings were well-built, two-storey brickworks, each with a broad semicircular arch in the middle of



every level of the façade and numerous semicircular-shaped windows. Manučehr Sotuda (p. 49) described the one in Oṭāq Sarā as a large brickwork, which is quite unique in all Gilān. In 1907, the inhabitants of Kargānrud rebelled against Sardār Amjad, drove him out of the area, and set fire to his residences. Although his son Arfaʿ-al-Salṭana could take over the government of the district in 1912 with the help of the Russian army (Rabino. p. 91; tr., p. 99), the two buildings remained half-ruined for a long time. Later on, during the reign of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah (r. 1941-79), the Oṭāq Sarā mansion was restored with the funds provided by a royal donation and turned into a the hospital of Red Lion and Sun (Bimārestān-e Šir o Koršid-e Sorḳ), now Iranian Red Crescent (Helāl-e Aḥmar) located on the edge of the newly developed town of Haštpar (information given the author in Haštpar in 1972).

A significant development in the meantime has been the construction of a new road from Punel south of Haštpar to Āstārā, following the first foothills of the Ṭāleš chain. At the place where the road crossed the Kargānrud River on a strong bridge, a tiny row of eight shops (*hašt bar* in *ṭāleši* “eight doors,” i.e., eight shops) was first established, hence the name of Haštbar mentioned by Rabino as one of the quarters of Rig (Rabino, p. 98, tr. p. 108), which subsequently changed into Haštpar by assimilation of the consonants. For some time, Bāzār-e Kargānrud on the lower part of the plain remained the area’s main marketplace with its weekly market on Mondays, but it gradually lost its importance and disappeared while commerce was being developed along the main road.

Haštpar had about 300 shops in 1949 and, as the center of the *šahrestān*, was the place where the local departments of public administration were concentrated, including the bureau of the *šahrestān* government (*farmāndāri*), police and gendarmerie, the court of justice, register office, district bureau of finance, and offices of health and education (Razmārā, *Farhang* II, p. 320). Haštpar was developing rapidly into a township with approximately 2,000 inhabitants—a population slightly larger than that of Rig (about 1,920 souls) the original settlement. In the beginning, this rapid growth was essentially due to immigration of people from adjoining districts of Azarbaijan, mainly *Ḳalkāl* (q.v.), especially from Kurdish villages north of Herowābād just behind the summit of the ridge separating them from the upper Kargānrud basin, but also from the city of Ardabil and the rural district (*dehestān*) of Fulādlu and Vilkič (Bazin, II, pp. 180-81). In 1966, only 60 percent of the population was born in the *šahrestān* of Ṭawāleš; 15 percent were born in other parts of Gilān

(civil servants coming from Rašt and other cities) and 24 percent in other provinces, the bulk of them from Azarbaijan. Among the immigrants, the higher proportion belonged to those of rather advanced age (Markaz-e Āmār, 2006).

The town almost doubled its population between 1966 and 1976, from 5,867 to 10,444 inhabitants. In 1976, the town had around 900 shops and workshops in its bazaar, which stretched along the main avenue and a few cross-streets (data from the municipality). It was also beginning to implement a development plan, which had earmarked an extensive area to the southeast for building a new government center and several other offices. A number of these projects were already done by summer 1976. The town also planned to establish a modest industrial estate to the east and a high-capacity bypass in order to avoid transit traffic in the city center. Haštpar has kept on reinforcing its functions as the administration center of the Ṭāleš area as a whole, and especially of the Ṭawāleš *šahrestān*. The administrative reform of 1998, which reduced its area to its former district (*baḵš-e ḥoma*) under the name of Ṭāleš, while the two other districts of Rezwānšahr and Māsāl (qq.v.) became two new *šahrestāns*, does not seem to have slowed down the demographic and spatial expansion of the city.

The increasing significance of the *ṭāleši* component of the city's population and identity led to the point that the city was more often referred to as the city of Ṭāleš than Haštpar. When the present author visited the city again in 1992 (Bazin, 1996, p. 126), he was welcomed by a large board at the entrance of the city saying: “*Be šahr-e Ṭāleš koš āmadid*”; in fact the name of Ṭāleš has been substituted for that of Haštpar in the 2006 general census of population (Markaz-e Āmār, 2006). A Sunnite school of theology (*Ḥowza-ye 'elmi-e ahl-e sonnat*) was established in the city in the 2000 years (observed in 2007, by Christian Bromberger, personal communication).

The population of the city reached 24,182 in 1986, 33,640 in 1996, and 41,486 in 2006, which made it the fifth largest city of Gilān after Rašt, Bandra-e Anzali, Lāhijān, and Langarud (Markaz-e Āmār, 1986, 1996, 2006). The spatial expansion of the city between 1976 and 2012 has been considerable too. The urbanized area has extended both in longitudinal and transversal directions. Longitudinally, it stretches for some 6 km along the south-north, Anzali-Āstārā road; transversally, it extends only slightly to the west; there the narrow valley of the Kargānrud River gives little space to extension at the expense of the rural area (*maḥalla*) of Rig, but much more to the east and southeast, beyond



the periphery bypass, at the expense of paddy fields and rural areas of the Kargānrud delta.

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